

Transcript for: Making music to find things out with Richard (Sun Drawings)

Practice podcast, episode 01.

<https://practicepodcast.co.uk/>

Interview between Richard (Sun Drawings) and **Ffion Atkinson** (in bold type). 29th August 2025.

Duration: 1 hour, 9 seconds.

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[Music from The wind's a song in the distance pt.ii by Sun Drawings]

Hello.

Hiya!

How you doing?

My voice sounded so pretend then... Hello. Hi. Thank you so much for coming.

It's okay, no worries. Thank you for having me.

So we were gonna talk about your EP, EP 01, your debut cassette. And you already know how much I love it. It's very, very beautiful.

Thank you.

And it feels like I've found a sort of home in it, so I really appreciate that. And I'm really looking forward to talking to you and finding out a bit more about it. I remember reading you saying that you were happy to have released some music after a long time of not really doing much. I didn't know if that applied to life in general or music, but I wondered what the conditions were that allowed you to step back in and how you might sustain them.

Yeah, I think that, I haven't really, well I've been making music on my own for quite a few years, but I think the most difficult thing was like once I started and got going with, it was kind of finding a voice I don't know, maybe I was thinking that things needed to be overly complicated or that I need to do something really technical and challenging and difficult. But I think that when I began to strip back the music and just kind of let ideas emerge almost quite organically really. Then that's when I kept coming back to wanting to do things, you know, when I simplified the process of writing and recording, which in a way are almost like the same thing. Like the recording process is so important to the sort of creation of this music. Like it might just start with pressing record on an eight track tape machine and then seeing what emerges. So I think another big thing for me was like, life is quite busy. There's a lot to sort of get on with generally, like most people. And I think that finding little pockets of time as well, allowed me to kind of know that I could continue to do this and not just make music for a week at a time and then stop. That this is something again, that's sort of sustainable and that I can maintain, so.

Sometimes I can struggle with that. Like if I don't have a huge stretch of a whole day ahead of me. Yeah. So I'm glad to hear that you've been making that happen.

Exactly. And I think that a big part of it as well, is kind of, it's often easier *not* to do things. So I think that giving myself that little bit of a push to make something... and what's lovely about, as well as it is, sort of that creative process, like making music and making this EP, especially like a physical release, has kind of given me that kind of creative outlet. Like it occupies a different part of my brain almost, which I really enjoy because it allows me to sort of switch off and in a strange way, almost like meditate into the process, you know, of creating and making something.

That really makes sense, mmm. And I was interested in what you were saying about simplifying things and how that was connected to you finding your voice. Cause I think one of the things that strikes me so much about the music is maybe that it does feel like, maybe it's hard to say this because I don't know you, but it feels like an authentic expression. And it does feel very simple and natural and like it's flowing from somewhere quite real. And as a listener, that allows me to connect with my own authenticity. And I find that really inspiring.

Hmm yeah, no, I get that. And I think that maybe it's that sometimes the music is written quite quickly in that, it could be, you know, there's no real sort of preconceived ideas sometimes in going in. Cause I record a lot of stuff at home just onto this tape machine. So I'm in a room without anything almost. And it's just this idea of kind of putting something down and playing it and then letting these kind of layers emerge out of that process. So sometimes the music is written, I say written, essentially recorded and put out on the same day. That really helps because there's not space to overthink it.

Definitely, that's lovely to hear. Yeah. I was just reflecting on the fact that maybe those ideas about what you could or should do probably don't really come from inside. They probably come from somebody else and outside pressures. And it's really great to hear that maybe you've like, noticed that and then connected with something that's real for you and made it happen.

That's it, I think so, yeah, I think that there's a lot of things, especially around music and production, or like you know, I do everything myself, so sometimes you can spend more time looking into how to do stuff rather than actually doing it. So I think that that's been the main push for me. Like yeah, forgetting, like you say, those kind of, not that it's necessarily a pressure, like it's not, but these kind of, these things happening around music and making music and creating music when it's, yeah, it's just something that you do. You know, if there isn't an instrument being played, like, you're not gonna be able to do anything are you, necessarily, you know?

I like the thought of your recording or writing, or we need a word that's somewhere in between the two, but these sessions sort of being a bit like a process of discovery. And then I think it's quite a generous thing to share that. It's quite a vulnerable thing too.

I don't know. Like I think that having a space to put the music or somewhere that it can live as in, for me, it's kind of Bandcamp and using that as a platform to put music out. Really that was just a space for it to sort of live and exist and just to say that I've done something really like, this idea of any kind of audience or thinking that people are listening is, is quite new in a way. So yeah, it's something that I think about like, how positive living with the music is for a while before you put it out to the world

and things like that and vice versa. So I suppose it's just finding a balance really. Like, I don't make my music always in that way, you know, that, it's like, idea, or not even idea again, in a room, hit record, see what happens. Put it out. Like

[Music from *Wooden Ribs* by *Sun Drawings*]

I was thinking about Bandcamp, um, and, you know, how they have the option to choose a favourite track when you've supported an EP. And because I've been listening to your music on Bandcamp, it's been leading me to question, do I have a favourite track from the EP... maybe in a way that I wouldn't normally concern myself with that. I'd just like, listen to something as a whole. Um yeah, and I think initially I was thinking *Daytime Moon* was my favourite, cause it just kept looping in my head. And then it was overtaken by *Northumberland*, but *Wooden Ribs* is creeping up now. I was thinking about, I wonder if Bandcamp lets you change, change your selection if you do, cause I think I would need to change it every day.

Yeah, that's it. It's always changing. Yeah that's interesting.

But anyway, I wondered, out of the five tracks on the EP, if there was a particular one that you were fond of, or maybe that you feel represents the collection, if that feels like an applicable question.

Hmm yeah, I think that from the five pieces of music, I'd probably say *Daytime Moon* is the one that I don't know, that kind of brings everything together because some of the songs have singing vocals, some of them are instrumental. But I think that with *Daytime Moon* having this kind of vocal line and also containing a lot of the kind of instrumentation that I like, you know, there's guitar, vocals, field recordings, which are kind of a part of the process. And then these kind of little, very subtle sort of tape loops that come in at the beginning of the song. I think that that probably defines what it is that I'm doing, with the most, you know, accuracy. I think that that's often one of the hardest things, it's like, what do you sound like? What do you do? What is this? So I think that that's often a challenge. But yeah, I would say that this kind of feel and this kind of the percussive element as well, this kind of, this rhythm that continues right the way through the song, almost takes on this, yeah, this life of its own, which I really enjoy. And that kind of brings everything together, really, I think.

[9 minutes, 56 seconds]

Hmm. Thank you. Yeah. That's nice to hear. And yeah speaking of that hypnotic rhythm, I think that's something that I enjoy too about the music, it sort of feels meditative in its repetition. Yeah. I've also been thinking about how, at the end of, it's the end of the first one, *The wind's a song* [...], there's like a sort of secret piano section. And then also at the end of, at the end of *Northumberland*, there's a sort of extended period of quiet. There's some textures. But yeah, I just love that sense of spaciousness which really allows the things that you've introduced to settle. And I value that a lot. Yeah, so I have been thinking about the whole EP as a sort of 20 minute meditation, with that soothing repetition, there's echoes that rise and fall a bit like breath and the imagery that you use in the lyrics too, like, quite simple impressions from nature, they all feel very mindful. Yeah, and with, so, you know, with those secret –I'm calling them secret as if it's like a bonus track – but those little sections that are perhaps unexpected, they make me think of sort of feelings or sensations that arise during stillness or during a sitting practice. And that sometimes, well they arise and then they come and go, but they often

don't really last that long if you just allow them to be. And yeah, that is mirrored in the EP in a way that I really appreciate. As well as that, as well as those unexpected track separations, there is this real sense of aliveness and liveliness. And I think that also comes in a big part from the field recordings and the field textures. It sort of, yeah, to me it feels restful but not sleepy, which is perfect. And like it fosters a really nice kind of attention. Yeah. So I wondered about the field recordings, if you wanted to share anything about your noticing and gathering and incorporating process.

Yeah, I think that with the field recordings, the main thing really is like a lot of the things that you've already touched on really is that it is this sort of opportunity to slow down and listen to the world around you. I think geographically, living in quite a sort of, area with lots of nature surrounding it, like I live in Huddersfield, so having kind of like the Marsden Moors and places like that and you know, beautiful walks and things like that. I think that being in those kind of spaces really helps me to kind of, to tune into that kind of thing and to listen and essentially to pay attention to what's around me. I think that one of the main things as well, in a similar way to making the music, when I create these field recordings, I'm often wandering around with this handheld recorder with this pair of headphones on. So to hear the world kind of amplified and through this microphone with these headphones is like, it sounds a little bit cheesy but it's quite magical really because it's like the world but sort of completely elevated, you know, these sounds. So I think that that's a big part of it. And as you kind of alluded to earlier, it's like this idea that sounds come in and out, almost like, you know, it could be –we can hear sort of birdsong and the rustling of trees out here in the background, which is lovely– but it's like different things coming at different times. And I sometimes treat the field recordings almost like instrumentation itself or like a composition, with things coming in and out. So, I don't know, sometimes if I'm making music on a particular day, I make the recordings on that same day and then embed that into the music. So it's like, this is what was happening at the time of writing or recording, or that kind of yeah, that difficult to define process, really. But I think that also, sounds generally shape our behaviour and the way that, you know, just as an obvious example, it's like, it's difficult to focus and concentrate for some people, or for a lot of people when you're in a very loud environment or there's lots of distractions. So I think that having these kind of quieter compositions, through field recording fits with music. And it fits with the sort of almost, again, that fact that it feels or the nature of it feeling quite natural. Sometimes it's almost like there's in a way, there's nothing happening.

Hmm, that's an interesting question, isn't it?

Which is like, you know, a part of it as well that, you know, there's always something that's being recorded, but it's like, yeah, it could be seemingly really inconsequential, And I'm not overly kind of picky about sort of editing bits out of these recordings as well. So it's like, if it's something that, oh, that like, well, maybe I don't want a car in the background, but it's like that's just part of it and something, yeah, is embedded and put into it.

I do love that idea of, um yeah, not really editing too much and just letting it all be. That's sort of, well, it's connected to what you were saying about your process in general earlier. Just really, it's just momentary and real. And it's like a sort of holistic way of creating and sharing and expressing. Yeah, that's lovely... And I also found it interesting that you were talking about the field textures being like instruments in themselves or compositions in themselves. Cause one of the things that sort of came to mind with *Northumberland* and I particularly love the field textures in that, they're quite papery, like scrunching sounds and then pages turning. And

yeah, I just really had this sense that you were giving them a voice of their own and that is really quite refreshing and quite striking.

Sometimes it almost feels like revealing another kind of character, or like it could, again, just letting things unfold, like somebody leafing through the pages of the book around, and so often it is, again, it feels like a slightly obvious thing to say, but it is so unnoticed and so unconscious that, you know, making sure that I listen and pay attention, I don't know, it just feels like, right, feels really natural. And just sort of, yeah like you tuning into something that maybe you'd miss ordinarily.

And that's actually quite a radical thing to do or quite a healing thing to do, to sort of refuse to be just part of the noise and the speed of everything and to actually pay some attention. Yeah. So I'm glad you're doing that.

It's almost like an excuse to slow down isn't it? Yeah.

[Music from Northumberland by Sun Drawings]

Just to go back to the idea of paper and those papery textures. I know that you are a photographer and a publisher and you obviously value printed materials. So I was curious to ask you if, how your other creative practices maybe inform or enhance each other.

Hmm yeah, I think they do. I think that what I try to do, or aim for, like just from thinking about it a little bit recently, is to see it all as being one thing, like a kind of creative practice. You know like working visually and the way that I work with sound, obviously helps keep life interesting. It's something that I enjoy doing and it's like, yeah, definitely something... but I feel that making music and working with photographs, like I said earlier, occupy and satisfy a similar part of my brain that like, removes me from, you know, it's something that I can really be in that moment with and focus on and kind of just let happen. Like I try not to, when I make music and when I, when I go out into the world and make photographs, I try not to have too many sort of preconceived ideas, you know like this sort of I, I use the process of making work or making works, or this creative practice to find things out. Working on music, working on photography, making some books...they all kind of talk to each other, really, I think.

[19 minutes, 44 seconds]

That makes sense. Yeah. I loved what you were saying about not really having preconceived ideas or expectations and treating the creative practice or process as a research process. That was making me think –to go back to the idea of meditation or mindfulness– of this idea of a beginner's mind and really trying to meet each moment with fresh eyes and fresh ears. And yeah, so that's really lovely... Yeah, another thing about the creative process that I'm always quite curious to ask other people about is just the challenges involved. Like it's obviously a very vulnerable thing to do, to put your work out there. I remember when I first got in touch with you to say, I think this EP is really special. You were like, thank you for listening, and it does feel like throwing yourself into a void, which, yeah, I understand, I resonate with that. And yeah, I wonder if you wanted to talk about how you sort of, ride the waves and if feelings of doubt arise, or, you know, feelings of like, this is the best thing I've ever made... I'm speaking from my own, my own thing, but like when you're really feeling really in the flow with something you're like, yeah, this is amazing. And then the next day you're like, shit, I need to

hide for a thousand years. So, yeah, please tell us about your experiences of being in the song making process and EP making process, because that's another level again.

Yeah, I think that it's hard to sort of even think about any kind of audience or people hearing the songs and the music. But I think that that's something that builds over time. I'm very aware of that. But yeah, like I said, it's like just giving them somewhere to live or maybe to just box off and to sort of say, right, this is a period of trying something out and being kind of happy and comfortable with the process and the type of music that I'm making. So I'm gonna kind of put that together and release it. I don't know, it's always hard to think, like when somebody asks, when's it finished? When do you know, when, it's like, I think that the thing with that was that it just felt quite cohesive and it felt like, using the process or using an outcome, more of an experiment rather than something that's, this is how it is, and this is how it's always gonna be. And this is interesting to think about the music, like the potential of playing these songs live as well, because sometimes I can't remember the parts or I can't like, because I, sometimes I just don't replay them. I think that's quite interesting, this sort of ongoing process and this music as something that's fluid rather than fixed. Thinking about the potential of playing the songs live is that maybe they're sort of semi improvised, or it's that you know, I use these limitations and then right well, I have some field recordings here. I have this, some samples, or whatever, and I have a guitar. This is it. And I understand that there is that when you put something out into the world and when you say it's finished and it's an EP and it's something that, you know, you're sending to shops to sell and things like that, it's like yeah, there is a sort of end point of course. But yeah, I just see it as being like, maybe just a little bit before an end point, then see what comes from that. But yeah, this sort of fluid rather than fixed, you know like, the nature of publishing as well. It's very similar in book making: it's like, well, your work's finished now, it's in a book, but maybe it doesn't have to be that. So I'm just kind of yeah, playing with that a little bit. Not really playing with it, but just thinking about that more and more.

Thank you for sharing. That was gonna be one of my next questions about playing live actually. And well, and you've already touched on it. I was wondering about your relationship to sharing the work and like how important that is to your practice. But yeah, I'll invite you to share any more about that that you would like to.

Yeah, I think that it's about building things, isn't it? It's like kind of small steps and yeah like just making... I wouldn't *not* make the music. So I think that I'd always be recording and doing something, the same as photography and any kind of process. I couldn't not engage in that because, yeah you know, it wouldn't be the same! But yeah, I think that playing live is a totally different thing because I'm, the process of making this music is quite insular. So I'm at home, on my own, feel quite comfortable and feel quite safe and feel quite relaxed in that kind of environment and those moments. Same when I'm out in the world making field recordings and it's quite quiet and I can find these spots where maybe I can go unnoticed and just be on my own, by myself, kind of thing... makes me sound a bit weird, doesn't it?

Going unnoticed almost, sorry to interrupt, but just feels like the opposite of performing live, doesn't it?

Exactly, this is what's happening. So yeah like, I'm gonna play, I said that I'll play a show in November for Red Deer Club, who do a lot of really nice things around Huddersfield. But yeah, it's interesting, but it's one of these things I need to really think about...

[Music from The wind's a song in the distance pt.ii by Sun Drawings]

That quite spontaneous process of making the music, that could be what I take into a live setting, you know, not necessarily setting up with a tape recorder, but something along those lines could be really interesting. Like maybe they're live kind of productions of work or music. Dunno. Who knows?

Yeah, I was just thinking about what you said about it being a research process. I guess this is just another, another delving, you know, another thing to experience and see what you can make from?

Yeah it's actually quite fun in a way, to think what could come from that. Going back to that sort of fluid nature of things, it could be that it's a little part of the song, but everything else around it, maybe is different. Or maybe the vocals on the songs that have singing are the same, or similar, but there are different things building around it.

I think it could be quite a beautiful thing, as somebody watching and listening, to be let into that process and in fact even to be part of it, because perhaps you'd be sampling there and then and playing things back and you might have them sort of talking or coughing, and what you could create together in those spaces, energetically as well as sonically, it's all very juicy... it'll be good.

That's it. I used to, I say used to, there's a musician called David Thomas Broughton, and I always used to love the way that he kind of played live, and there's a similar thing that you know it could be sort of sampling things live and just, yeah, this quite spontaneous method and means of making music. It always felt really exciting watching that and going to those shows and yeah, things that I've seen.

And you were saying something about the environment and whether it would be comfortable or not... I think it's actually only one gig I've been to put on by Red Deer Club but I can tell from their presence online how much care there is for the performers and the audience, and just like, there's so much warmth, which is really beautiful and special. So I think you'll be in safe hands.

I think so yeah, I've been to...

[Music from Daytime Moon by Sun Drawings]

There's a line in *Wooden Ribs* or two lines in fact "And I'm running / Blind down the avenues", which I really love. And for me it sort of epitomizes that discipline and faith that you need to be in the creative process. Like, and just as you've been saying, to sort of let it unfold and stick with it. Yeah

Yeah, I think that it could certainly be related to that creative process. Definitely. Yeah. I think that that kind of, kind of going with something and doing it anyway, even though it kind of like, again, it feels like sometimes you're just opening up a wardrobe and singing into it or talking into it. Yeah, that blindness, but also in that, it offers that kind of freedom to do something.

[29 minutes, 32 seconds]

These small poems almost, it's just like, carrying around a notebook and writing things down as I go and note making, again, paying attention and noticing. And looking, um, you know, things that, things that I see... sometimes it's almost like, like I said, with sound recordings, it's like very little happening. Things that maybe seem that they shouldn't be noticed or they don't need to be noticed, or that there's, there's this kind of consciousness which I really kind of enjoy. Again, tuning into just being around and being, you know? So I think that that's a big part of this. So it's like I make the music, I record things, and then the lyrics and the poems or the, the words, 'cause sometimes it's more of a sort of spoken word thing as well. Which is, -I don't know if I'd define them as song lyrics or poems. So it's hard. Again, just something that as we talk and as we discuss it, that I'm sort of figuring out and beginning to think about. Yeah.

Mhmm. Yeah, I was, oh, we've got a cat visitor.

Little visitor. Hello.

I was just thinking, when you were sharing about just going around with your notebook and earlier with the field recordings and being open to what is happening... how, and also to go back to the way that different kinds of creative practices inform each other as well. Like for me, writing, like words, is so connected to walking outside. It's like I, when I walk and when I notice something, that's when the ideas bubble up. I can't really seem to separate them or create one without the other. Um, I have this sort of idea in my head of switching into poem mode, which I often come back to and enjoy. And it sounds like you have similar experiences. And yeah, it's nice that you are able to share what comes out of them.

That's it. I think that that kind of history of creativity or art and walking and people like Rebecca Solnit that kind of write about that experience and yeah, there's some really lovely stuff and yeah, it's, again, it's just that openness and attentiveness and wanting, not necessarily wanting something to happen, it's just like, making note of things when they do-or when you think that they're...

That's making me think about, just, the importance of the quality of attention that you pay to things. How it doesn't really matter what you're paying attention to, but that kind of devotion or giving something space allows it to shine and so, yeah, I'm interested in the ways we create that kind of energy and those opportunities.

Yeah. I think that almost, you know, there's a really close link to the notion of the mundane. And it's like, yeah, just drawing attention and tuning in and singling things out and there's something really lovely about that.

There is, and I feel like it creates work that is perhaps more generous because it's more accessible to everyone. Like we can all connect with those experiences of seeing the light move on the wall in the house or listening to a bird or something like the sky changing colour and really being there for it.

Yeah, exactly.

Beautiful. So yeah, in those three tracks from the EP that do have vocals, all the lyrics have imagery from the natural world. Like you said, there's birds, lightning, there's wind. It was

funny how I interpreted a part of *Wooden Ribs*. You know, when you say, when you say “its wooden ribs breathing”. Cause at first you'd introduced these branches, which are bending in the wind. And so I just assumed that the wooden ribs breathing were the tree's branches. And I was really like, oh, that's quite cool. Like thinking of them as ribs. And then when I actually read the lyrics after asking you to send them, the typed up versions so I could be sure about what I was hearing, I realised, oh no, it's actually this house that's, the house sighs and its wooden ribs breathing. And then I realised, oh, right, it's the beams of the house

Mmm like the structure of the house. Yeah.

Yeah, but that kind of made me think about, well, connectedness and how maybe it could be both. Mmm. And it's all,

Yeah.

and that's quite fascinating.

Yeah. I think that in, in that, like, as you were speaking, it was like this, the intention was to sort of talk about this interior and exterior. Like, you know, the words and the imagery really is built out of, again, just sitting and being in the space and something as simple as looking out of the window and again, observing, but then thinking about where you are and the environment that you sit in, and this kind of, again, this house that maybe feels alive and things like that.

So yeah, I think that that was, that was the intention with it. Yeah this kind of interior, exterior. When I think about my practice as a photographer, I mean there's such a big connection there. You know, like photography and the sort of, again, the everyday and this kind of practice and everyday life, like it kind of all seems to, seems to connect.

Mhmm. Yeah so just thinking about everybody who's present, like the moon and the wind as well as the birds. Um, we've already talked about the field recordings and the textures and voices that you incorporate from them, but I wanted to make some space for you to talk about all the instrumentation. And yeah, I was thinking of it as everybody who gets to speak, because like I was saying before, you do give voice to lots of different things, not just your own voice through the lyrics and spoken word. So as well as the instrumentation, or especially, I'm interested in your approach to percussion and how you record the percussion because there are so many different sounds and I can't quite picture, you just sat there with a drum kit. I know that's not quite what's going on. But yeah. I would love to hear more about that.

Yeah. I think that with the percussion, it's more about giving, again, like another sort of texture, or like you said, a voice or a character like in, in terms of that instrumentation. And I think that one of the nicest things about it is that it's quite light touch really. It's like, I think that I was thinking about this the other day. And it's like the way that I like to approach rhythms or percussion or if we call it in inverted commas “drums” is that, like, I want to make something that feels, or that doesn't feel like a trained drummer is actually playing. Cause I think that I can play so many different instruments and it's like, no, you know, not really. I can kind of like make sounds and sort of, yeah, like that idea of more, more using percussion almost as another sort of field recording in a way.

I think that also what's important with the percussion or what seems to happen is that when I am recording, I very rarely use a metronome. So there's no kind of click track, which means that that's, I kind of do it to myself really, that's difficult and also quite nice at the same time, because often if I record some percussion and then play something over the top of it, it's like, if I haven't quite got the percussion right, rhythmically or technically then if I play the guitar over the top of it, that's not gonna be quite right. So the music almost doesn't quite join up.

Again, in inverted comments. "Join up". Um, so like, I think that there's something really nice about that though. That's something that I love. I love that kind of, the fact that it is a human and it's coming from me and it isn't this kind of, again, it's not about humans and machines and those kind of things, but it's like this very human thing.

And I think that, you know, we make mistakes like generally, you know, whether it's whilst playing something musically or generally in life, day to day, of course we make mistakes. So I think that having that and embedding that into the music, whether, you know, not, not intentionally, it's like I don't kind of write mistakes or create them, but it's like, yeah I really like this idea that it, it kind of creates a certain looseness in a way, but something that maybe feels more human, which I think is, is important. Yeah. Like that's, that's definitely a part of it.

But yeah, I think in terms of percussion, it varies from song to song. Sometimes it's like a little bit more kind of straightforward, it could be just a shaker or a maraca, but then it's like, kind of hands hitting symbols and things like that. And it varies really, but it's more about again, that, that spontaneity and just being like in a bit of a creative, in that creative process and amongst it and just again, letting things happen really. Like less premeditation and more action and just something physical. Again, that sort of points to that humanness, if that's a word.

[39 minutes, 41 seconds]

Sure. Yeah. I'm curious about, for example, *Wooden Ribs*. I think that's probably the one that has the most sort of straight, I don't wanna call it straightforward, but it's like there's a pace that picks up with the percussion. And I really do enjoy that shift of pace, but to me that sounds like you've maybe recorded a drum track sort of thing, whereas in some of the others, the percussion sounds more spliced together. So I wondered if that was true, or,

I'm trying to think. I think that maybe with *Wooden Ribs*, I think that the drums were the first thing.

Oh right!

So it was like, it was just this, I just sat and recorded this kind of continuous beat. It was just like ride cymbal and snare, I think. And it, I was like, I'm just gonna put it down and record it and then see what happens. Then I think it was a guitar or other little bits. So yeah, I think in, in that one that, that was, because that came first and it felt, it feels a little bit more formed. But yeah, that is the one, I think on the EP that maybe does sound like it's a, like drums? Yeah, like proper, yeah. Proper drums, like somebody that's playing them. So yeah, that was just like a really simple thing. And I think that the nature of recording to tape as well, it's like they're typically quite long. I'm gonna refer to them as sort of loops, but it's like I'm maybe playing the drums for like four minutes. So it's just one continuous kind of take, rather than, oh yeah, I'll go into a computer and take that nice little bit, those few bars and then put them down so it's, yeah, it's this kind of continuous thing, which again relates

to the idea of, you know, there will be some errors it's a little bit more open to that, but I think that, yeah, embracing them and learning to live with them a little bit is probably better than trying to patch 'em up. But I dunno,

I think so. I was just thinking how it probably adds to the naturalness, which is what you are hoping to share.

Yeah.

The humanness.

I was thinking about how I'd sort of fare in a recording studio. Like, I think I'd be a nightmare. I think like any kind of producer like yeah, would be like, what are you doing? Why are you doing it like this? What is this?

But yeah, I think that there's something, I dunno, there's something in that I think that, that I'll keep, keep going with, yeah.

That's like, you know, that's kind of a conscious choice I guess. Like we were talking earlier about a bit of a refusal to, to follow other people's expectations or to make things the way they should be made? That's quite boring, to be honest.

I think so, yeah. Almost like another sort of method to make something and, and to maybe to. Help you find a voice. Yeah, but I think that often, like slightly sort of more technical. Slightly boring, techy thing is that like when I record tion, I often put it through like this kind of, I have this old on the verge of breaking down this kind of tape delay machine. So I often kind of put percussive elements and things like that through this tape machine, which give it this kind of slight, like this echo that again makes it feel like it's, I dunno, like looping or kind of repeating and like again, adding to that kind of, I dunno, like, I don't want to use the word hypnotic, but it's this kind of like, it almost makes me feel sort of

Grounding maybe?

Maybe yeah, yeah. Or that I'm just kind of, yeah. That it's like this kind of almost, like I zone out a little bit and kind of, yeah, it, it sort of takes over a little bit. But yeah, I think that that's a part of it as well. This kind of method of, again, whether the production is kind of correct? Probably not, but it's just kind of, yeah, a part of it and something that I'm kind of happy to, that I'm quite comfortable in that sort of unknowing, you know?

Yeah. When you mentioned mistakes earlier, I was questioning like they're only mistakes according to some set of guidelines, aren't they? Yeah, so it's interesting definitely to question that.

Yeah, exactly.

An idea just came to mind as you were speaking as well of like, you know, we've been talking about the naturalness and humanness that's inherent in this way of making music, and I was just thinking about like, the percussion or any of the elements really being a bit like a beating

heart. And like, you know how your own pulse is not a fixed thing, it's not mechanic. It is in one sense, you know, but it's not on the beat. And that is a beautiful thing about being alive. And so I feel like that is mirrored in the music in a way that it couldn't be otherwise, if it was recorded more straight up.

Yeah, those kind of fluctuations and... exactly.

And that does make it more engaging.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I think again, those little waves, like these kind of, yeah, ups and downs and slight changes and transitions, like, that's a big part of it, isn't it? You know, you can apply that to many, many different things. But yeah, again, it's a part of it and I think that definitely, it feeds into the music quite nicely.

So I also wanted to mention that I appreciate the way the vocals are mixed in. Cause it's done in a way that's clear, but still quite soft. There's a sort of gentle crispness, which is really nice. So yeah, we have touched on this a little bit, but I wondered about the way that the songs are built and what the sort of order of operations is. I'm especially curious about the way, well, whether the poems or the lyrics come first, or if they arise out of the music. So I wondered if you wanted to share about that.

Yeah. I think that, as I've mentioned briefly previously, that it can be going into a room, picking up a guitar, or hitting a cymbal, and just like maybe tuning into that and seeing what comes from it. So the music, it really is created and develops in different ways really. But I think that one of the biggest things, and one of the key things is that they're almost like layers of sound. And what I notice is again, when I make music, is that there's often quite a lot happening at the same time, but quite often they're kind of subtle. Or there's little things that are going on and what that enables you to do in a way that we talked about, or I talked about when we were talking about field recordings. It's like you kind of tune into different things at different times. But typically it's all actually happening at the same time.

Interesting, yeah.

There's this kind of block of sound and then it's like, whether it's that there's a peak in the sound of a bird or, or something that's outside. And you tune into that, and then there's this guitar but they're actually typically happening at the same time.

So it's built on these kind of layers really. And this sort of, yeah, whether it's percussion or whether it's, yeah the harmonium or yeah, all of these kind of things that I have set up in the room. But the words and the lyrics or the melodies definitely come once the music is there. So I think that on the very odd occasion, there's like, I'm playing the guitar and it's like, it becomes more of a kind of singer/songwriter type thing. And it's like, okay, yeah, that works and that's fairly straightforward and that's fine. But typically it is very much about this layering and then using the vocals as, and you alluded to this, like the way that they're mixed, like they're fairly low and I think that that's probably just my own confidence and singing and lyrics and things like that and kind of burying them a little

bit. But again, using them as an instrument rather than something that's... and there's a certain ambiguity in the lyrics as well that's like, maybe again, it isn't that kind of "this is my story" or this is like, I'm trying to sort of put this across in this way, like which removes it from that kind of, again, more traditional sort of singer/songwriter thing. But it's more about, yeah, using them as like little, what would you call them? Like little kind of fragments, which links to the sounds that you're hearing.

So it's like, yeah. It's not like, there aren't reams and reams of lyrics. There aren't like pages and pages and pages. It's just like, it might be four lines. And I'm like, well, yeah, that works. And often it's about this repetition or using them quite sparingly. Yeah. Just sort of using them, as an instrument really. Just to add interest.

Mhmm. That's nice. I do remember feeling quite surprised almost when I saw the lyrics. You know, for the entire EP, it fit in one Instagram message. And I was like, oh, yeah, I see. It's just repeated, but when you're listening, it doesn't feel like that because of the way they come in and out and yeah, the words that you have chosen seem to say a lot. There's a lot of spaciousness, so, yeah.

[50 minutes, 12 seconds]

Yeah. And I think that that's, yeah, it's not sort of... it's not wanting to... it's not trying to do too much, you know, but it's like, yeah, almost like, they're not haikus, but just these little short kind of, again, little sections of extra information or...

I was actually thinking about haikus, you know, yesterday when I was considering, I think in particular in *Daytime Moon*. Cause it's "full of light / full of shade / slowly clears". They, it does feel like those kind of ancient, sort of Buddhist poems perhaps. Just really simple things that you're paying attention to that then become quite profound through the act of attention.

Exactly.

And giving them light. Yeah, beautiful.

There's something else that really adds to the aliveness of the whole collection, and that's the sort of sense of diversity. I feel like there are quite a lot of distinct landscapes that are created throughout the EP, but it's still very cohesive, so yeah, I wondered if you wanted to share anything about that, or what your feeling is about

Yeah. I think that, I remember sharing the music with a friend before I released it, just to get some sort of thoughts around running order, things like that. Like the kind of sequence and the way that I sent it to them was as like a single song. And I think that that was quite interesting. The main comment was that it was almost like a mix kind of thing in that it was like something that a DJ might do. And I thought that that was quite interesting because they sort of, I wasn't overly paying attention to this, but there was something about the use of field recordings and the way that they sometimes sort of bookend the songs like there's some kind of sound at the beginning, some kind of sound at the end. But the way that they kind of, I dunno, almost like passing on a baton like that they kind of take over from one another into the next song. So there's something really nice about that in that, yeah, they seem to work as single songs, but also as one larger.. it'd be nice if it was just like one side of a cassette. You didn't have to stop it and turn it over and it just ran and that was it. And then

in terms of, yeah, I think the instrumentation kind of helps with that and yeah, this kind of continuous use of guitars, like acoustic guitars typically, but then things like *Wooden Ribs* are a little bit, kind of, wouldn't say louder. It's sort of quite quiet, but yeah, like there's that kind of electric guitar kind of feeling.

Yeah. I think that maybe it's just the use of kind of continuous, whether it's imagery through the lyrics or the poems or whether it's these kind of sounds that are external that are coming from the field recordings, but that's what kind of gives it that sense of cohesion.

Yeah, that makes sense.

Because there's piano as well, yeah. Like Northumberland just has this and it's quite, that is almost like has this more sort of electronic sort of feel to it, even though it's an organic kind of acoustic piano, there's quite a lot of delay and repeats on it that makes it feel a little bit more digital in its nature. But I think that because it is this kind of acoustic instrument and it is something that again feels like, you know, you're hitting it and it creaks and there are sounds that it makes when you're recording it. I treat that as an extra kind of, almost like another form of embedding a field recording.

So I really like those kind of... or not that I really like them, but I include a lot of the kind of sounds that maybe people wouldn't always want when they're trying to record something. And it's like this kind of, if I'm playing the piano and the sustain pedal makes a really kind of, quite an awful noise really cause it's such an old piano. And like those kind of hands on guitars, like once you've stopped playing and things like that. And it's like, that for me is just like extra sort of information or extra sort of, adds to the experience of listening. Like even to like some of the songs are recorded outdoors as well. Like just with one microphone and a guitar and then I carry on inside the house. Add more, add more things to it. So yeah, like even, even recording with the windows open and things like that. So there's stuff going on and this kind of life coming into them and it relates to something that you were talking about as a prospective audience member. It's like, well, I could be in these songs. And it's like, you know, the builder that's shouting outside the house doesn't know that he's in this music, but it's just this kind of subtle remnant of something that happened and that took place and of that, that experience of, again, of doing and making.

Mhmm. That's, yeah. That's beautiful.

I was just thinking about in, just when we were talking about cohesion and how, because you mentioned *Northumberland* with the piano. That one actually does kind of stand out as a bit more of a somber kind of melancholic song, doesn't it, out of the five? Um, but yeah, it definitely has its place. And I'm with you. I'm glad you don't get rid of those extra sounds or those sounds that are perhaps wrong in some people's eyes

Exactly. Yeah. Like those kind of little imperfections

because it does really draw you in.

Yeah, I don't really mind that kind of thing. It feels like part of this, a little bit like a collage, you know, a part of this kind of, you know, the thing that's happening, the thing that's being recorded, the, again, the experience and this moment of making something. And typically, you know, it's creating something out of nothing really. Whatever that means.

Yeah. But I feel like it really means that you're creating something very honest and in a way that you wouldn't if, if you were trying to strip back to the yeah, like to go back to the idea of mechanics or perfection or being in the studio.

Yeah, so it, it's really good to sort of think about these things as well and sort of just have these kind of conversations, you know, like, because it does make you think that there's quite a lot, maybe more sometimes than you think when you're in this process and you're focusing so much on what's happening. When you actually sit down and talk about it, it really opens up quite a lot about the process and about the experience and about, not just about my own relationship with sound and music and creativity, but you know, generally, about other people's as well.

Mmm. Aww I'm really glad it's felt like a useful and enjoyable reflection.

Really good. Thank you.

I've really loved talking to you about it.

Same. Thank you so much.

Yeah, thanks for making the time. It's really nice to be sitting here with the doors open in the garden as well, and I wonder how much... I think, I'm sure those leaves will be present. They're very rustly, aren't they?

They must be. They must be.

But I'm interested to listen back with all this in mind. Yeah. Well, let's bring the conversation to a close, but before I do that, I just want to invite you in case there's anything else that you feel like sharing.

The main thing that I'm doing now in focusing on really in relation to the music is thinking about, it isn't until November, but thinking about that kind of process or how that's gonna, how the music is gonna translate into that kind of live, you know, it's only gonna be a short set, but it's that idea of trying something and doing something, you know, like

Getting information from it.

Exactly. It's about learning from it, I think. I think that's the main thing. It's like, it might be terrible. Who knows.

Well, and that will be good. That'll be interesting. I look forward to being there.

Something worked. Yeah.

I'd like to think that. Well, you know, it's the responsibility of everyone in that room a bit like we were saying about Red Deer Club and their approach to promoting and hosting and things... we all create it together. It's not just you, so, I dunno, remember that

Exactly. Yeah. It's more of a sort of collective experience, isn't it? Yeah. Which is nice.

Cool. Well, I'm looking forward to that. Thank you again.

Yes. Excited. Thank you very much.

[Music from Wooden Ribs by Sun Drawings]