



FULL TRANSCRIPT OF MUSIC TRIBUTE #2 - HENRY ROLLINS Pt.2

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Henry Rollins Music Tribute to Mick Geyer - recorded 26 May 2005 at PBS-FM

(NB: This transcript reflects the content of the streaming audio version. This hour was edited for broadcast due to time constraints.)

0:00

My name is Henry Rollins and I'm hosting this little show playing the music that was given to me as a gift by the many, many conversations I would have with Mick Geyer from the late '80's until 2003, the last time I ever saw him. We did speak a few more times via email, but we were never phone pals, we would communicate via email. And thankfully, one of his many gifts to me was about 12,500 words in letters that he left me in correspondence, and I wisely saved every letter he ever sent me via mail, via email, so I've got it all. His emails to me are very articulate and eloquently written. They're also like this mother-load of factual information - like, if you like this lady, then read this book, if you like that, then check this out. And that goes from every artist, all kinds of music, into films, into directors, and through Mick I've been buying all kinds of Russian film directors, I can't even pronounce their names!

And I wish I could say this guy's name, he's an author, French author, Michel... everyone talks about him, he wrote that book Platform, Atomised, (Henry tries to pronounce his name) Holbeck?, Wellbeck (sic.) Thank you. Here's a funny Mick story, very quick. I was reading a review of Michel Houellebecq's book Platform, and the review basically said "This guy's a wise arse with the talent to back up his pretension. He's awesome, and he's completely depressing. Really great." And I went, "Sounds like the guy for me!" So I read Platform, turned right around bought Atomised his other book, one of a few books he's written, went out bought multiple copies for people I know would like him. I'm sending the books out like I'm donating alms to the poor, like "Here's the best book you're going to read this summer", and I thought "Look at the cool discovery I've made. Boy if Mick was around, I would turn him onto this book." So one night I'm going through the letters of Mick Geyer, from like, I don't know, 2 years before he passed away, one of those letters I stupidly just blew through instead of really reading as closely as I should. "Henry, there's this book by this guy Michel Houellebecq you might want to check out, called Platform." And I yelled out loud, "Mick, damn man, I thought that was going to my turn-on!" But he'd been there, done that and left it to me in a letter, and if only I had read it I would've been into that book a good 20-some months before.

And that, is kind of Mick Geyer in a nutshell, in that anything that you discovered, chances are he'd been there, interviewed the guy, and not "been there, done that", but been there, dwelled and could articulate it and be conversant in it. And so, one of the reasons why Mick has so many fans for a guy who never made a rock album, never wrote the great book, never starred in the big movie, he sure has a lot of people in his thrall, myself being one of them.

OK, so, enough of me, let's get into some music, we're going to listen to something... What are we going to listen to? Oh yeah, the Beasts of Bourbon, off Sour Mash? Early, early Beasts of Bourbon. I think I saw one of those tours the first time I came here. Blanc, how do you say it, Garson? (sic.) I'm not good with French. A lot of American's aren't. So here we go. Play it please. (laughs)

3:19

MUSIC: Beasts of Bourbon - Blanc Garçon (Black Milk)

5:36

It's a wonderful tribute to Mick Geyer if you think about it, after he passed away. Here's a guy who had a lot of friends in life, I don't know if he had any enemies, but he sure had a lot of friends, and it's often really the measure of someone, is how they touched other people, and you see the reflection in somebody, and you see what they left behind.

And Mick touched so many people while he was around, and like so generous with his time, and such a fascinating guy to hang out with. You would be just awed by how much information he carried around in there, and how he could just kind of dispense it in this very casual manner, as if all of it was on the tip of his tongue, he never had to go, "Oh let's see, it's some guy, he's .. " It was all right there. I'm always searching for something I learned 2 minutes ago. I can't keep it together, but Mick had this way of keeping an infinite amount of knowledge just kind of right in the palm of his hand. In any case, I'm sitting in a room full of people who are very devoted to Mick, and many of you (will have) either heard a show of his, or read an interview with someone, or were somehow moved by the man, and it's such a wonderful thing he left behind.

But in any case, we're going to get into a little Art Ensemble of Chicago. This is from a CD that he actually bought me, many years ago in probably the early '90's I believe, somewhere in Melbourne. We were walking around and we went into a record store and he said, "Here, I bought this for you. Go start listening to it often." And he loved the Art Ensemble of Chicago and this is Variations sur un thème de Monteverdi:

7:15

MUSIC: Art Ensemble of Chicago - Variations sur un thème de Monteverdi (Les Stances A Sophie)

11:58

That was the Art Ensemble of Chicago. That was a group near and dear to Mick Geyer and he turned me into a fan. I'm not all that conversant in that, bebop, there's a lot to learn in bebop. I've been kind of studying it, reading the books and listening to the records since the late 80's, but there's always a whole lot to go.

Anyway, we're going to get out of that, and into kind of a crazy guy around the same era as Slim Gaillard, his name is Babs Gonzales and he would do a lot of crazy vocalizing. He also wrote this book, it's super rare, but if you ever get a chance, find his book called I Paid My Dues. It's amazing. Someone should re-print that, if only anyone would buy it, I would. Anyway, we're going to listen to something off his greatest hits thing, I think it's on Capital, it's called 'Weird Lullaby', that's the name of the compilation, and we're going to listen to the cut Capitalizing and we're going to jump out of that into a tune called Lyric from Julius Hemphill, another CD that Mick generously gave me years ago, from a CD called 'Coon Bid'ness'. Anyway, here comes Babs Gonzales.

13:11

MUSIC: Babs Gonzales - Capitalising (Weird Lullaby)

15:52

MUSIC: Julius Hemphill - Lyric (Coon Bid'ness)

22:54

That was Julius Hemphill, he's a guy from the World Saxophone Quartet. My name is Henry Rollins by the way, and my unit, The Rollins Band, we were part of this multi-day festival and we did a show with them, in 1989 I think, in Linz, Austria, in this beautiful performance space. And I actually sat down and had breakfast and dinner with these guys and their road crew. And I believe, and you'll correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe David S. Ware is also part of the

World Saxophone Quartet. In any case, one heavy sax player man. He's done a lot of really powerful records, so if you ever see David S. Ware coming to town, run, do not walk to that bandstand, because I've seen him live and that is some strong stuff. I've never seen Julius Hemphill play, nor do I know a great deal about him, but I like this record, Coon Bid'nness, and that tune we heard was called Lyric.

Coming up is a guy named Albert Ayler. If you're an out bebop fan, no doubt you've run into Albert Ayler and his very well known records on the ESP Label, stuff like New York Eye & Ear Control, Spirits Rejoice, Bells, stuff like that, Witches & Devils. He did a lot of really good records. He got really far out towards the end. Right in the early '70's when he threw himself off the Staten Island Ferry I believe, his music had gone really cool and crazy, ended up on the Impulse label. He did a lot of really cool records, like one called 'New Grass' was his version of funk, which is completely 'out to lunch'. This, what we're about to hear is Albert Ayler very early in his career, doing his version of the Gershwin classic, Summertime. Summertime's has been covered by people such as Janis Joplin and the wonderful Matthew Shipley, avant player, funk piano player from New York, but this is Albert Ayler's distinct version, complete with that very sad and very nervous sound of his.

We're here basically celebrating the music and influence of the amazing Mick Geyer who was a very good friend of mine, and very generous with his time. We would always hang out in St Kilda, which was sort of his roost. You Australians know how you are, and you Melbourne types know how you are. You're very hip. You are, I mean, come on! I've been all over Australia. People from Brisbane would stick out in Melbourne. You would not see the 'hipster-pointy-shoe-wear-sunglasses-24/7-drink-Espresso-and-talk-about-art-types' necessarily in a place like Byron Bay without them getting their asses kicked. So, this town is kind of the town for the cool Bohemian hipster, and if you have ever seen me, I don't look like that at all. I look like the Cro-Magnon man jocular who has no brains. So Mick would take me into the ultra-hip places where he would wine and dine, and he knows everybody in the place. Like, "Oh Mick... who's the idiot with you?" And I could tell they would kind of look at the two of us in the ultra-hip café that he would frequent and he would bring me along. I don't know. I would get these looks from people, like, "Wow, why is Mick slumming it with that rock dude?" And I often felt that I was not cool enough of hang with you guys. But I love you all the same! [PBS Station ID]

We're going to listen to a track off a live album by the late great Curtis Mayfield. Curtis did a couple of different live albums, and this is off a record called 'Curtis Live'. On this night, he's playing at the Bitter End in New York and he has basically most of the Bar-Kays, if not all of the Bar-Kays, are his backing band. You may be familiar with the song, "If there's a Hell Below, We're All Gonna Go" from the 'Curtis' album, a totally mandatory purchase, but this is the live version where he breaks it way down, all the way down to the congas and tumbas and he interacts with the crowd. Classic Curtis Mayfield, and here we go, right now.

26:12

MUSIC: Curtis Mayfield - If There's A Hell Below, We're All Gonna Go (Curtis Live)

35:33

That was Curtis Mayfield, off the 'Curtis Live' album. In my opinion that's mandatory listening. My name's Henry Rollins, and now I'm telling you what to buy! But it's just a great album - if you like what you heard, the whole album stands up. He's really into it with the crowd. He's got this ridiculous back-up band with him that night, and so, a good piece of work. And he's even questioning heaven and hell in the song - IF there's a hell below, we're all going to go.

I always said I'm a layman when it comes to religion, but I've always been curious about the Catholics, they seem to be such a strict bunch. I guess masturbation is out with those Catholics, and if there's a hell for people who jack-off, boy, I will see you there!

Anyway, we're going to go up to someone who's a big deal mutually to Mr Geyer and myself,

one Ornette Coleman. This track is called, I Heard It Over the Radio. I don't know if this is from 'This is Our Music' or that other album, 'The Sound of .. ' Whatever. I'm sorry. I just forget. But it's a good track anyway. So right now, without any further hesitation we go right into mighty Ornette Coleman,

36:45

MUSIC: Ornette Coleman - I Heard It Over The Radio (Beauty Is A Rare Thing)

43:06

That was Ornette Coleman. Something off that huge box set of his. I used to have all the individual albums, then the box set came out, 'Beauty is A Rare Thing', and I sold all the albums and bought the box set. So, quite honestly folks, I don't know what damn album that's on, but it sure is good.

My name's Henry Rollins and I'm kind of pinch-hitting for somebody somewhere on this radio station, playing music that Mick Geyer turned me onto.

Here's a guy who we were both into, one Johnny Cash, no doubt most of you are fans too. I got to see Johnny play a couple of times before he passed away. If any of you heard that remarkable Rick Rueben produced album 'American Music', there was one cut on there called Walk On, which is live at the Viper Room, a small club made famous because River Phoenix died in front of it, and Johnny Depp owns it. About an hour before Johnny was going to hit stage to do the first acoustic gig he'd done since the '70's, Rick Rueben called me and said, "Hey, you wanna go and see Johnny Cash, solo acoustic, sitting on a stool, playing in front of some people?" I went, "Yeah." " Well, get up to the Viper Room, I just put your name on the door." And I sat with Flea and Tom Petty and we watched Johnny Cash.

Rick came over to our table right before Johnny hit stage and said, "He's back stage, he's nervous." I said, "Why?" He says, "He doesn't think anyone in the building is going to know who he is." I said, "Oh, come on!" He says, "He thinks you're too young to know who Johnny Cash is, and so he's actually nervous." So, he walks out and says, "Ah, ah, I'm Johnny Cash", like we don't know! Johnny Depp introduced him, and Johnny Depp was fairly blown away that he's in the same building as Johnny Cash, and Johnny comes out and introduces himself. People are stomping the floor, they're howling! And he loosens up a little and he goes right into Folsom Prison, and you fall out of your chair at the fact that he can just hold a solo guitar and just, the voice comes out, that *huge* voice. So he goes, song, song, song, and then he goes into an old Roy Orbison song, a Sun Studios classic, called Oobey Doobey, a very uptempo cool Roy Orbison tune, and he goes into Oobey Doobey and just rips it, and on one of the verses he goes into the most perfect Elvis Presley imitation you've ever heard. So he finishes Oobey Doobey and he kinda goes, "Thank You, thank you very much". And Barbara Orbison, wife of the late Roy, runs out of the audience and fairly tackles him in this bear hug. Like, wow, this is going to be one of those great nights!

In any case, I got to see that show, and then a while later I got to see Johnny do what he called The Family Show, which is the full band, the full two and a half hour show, with the gospel section and the wonderful lovely June Carter comes out to sing with him. Beck opened acoustic and he was brilliant that night, he actually held that crowd right in his palm. And then Johnny Cash comes out with the whole band, with his son John Jr playing guitar, and they did everything, and then June Carter comes out, and she's just magic. They did Jackson of course, they did Ring of Fire, of course, the whole nine yards. So they finished the show, and I find myself in the VIP area because I got the cool laminate and I'm standing there and I see Joe Strummer, one of my big heroes. I run over to Joe Strummer and like, "Joe!" and he goes "Hey Henry!", and I was blown away that he remembered me. And I start buggin' him, "You gotta make more records, you gotta stop not being in the studio", and I was bugging him.

Rick Reuben came up and said, "Do you guys want to meet Johnny Cash?" And we both say, "Yes!" And he says, "Your time is now. Come with me." Johnny was standing all by his

lonesome, and we walked up there, and he doesn't know us from Adam. Rick says, "Henry, er, Johnny I'd like you to meet two friends of mine. This is Henry Rollins and Joe Strummer". He says, "Joe, it's a pleasure to meet you. Henry, it's a pleasure to meet you." I'm like, "Hey, Mr Cash". "Call me Johnny". I said, "Johnny, thank you so much for your wonderful show, big fan, long-time fan. (He says), "Henry, I really appreciate that". Complete gentleman.

Then Joe Strummer says, "You know you did your American Music record, and Rick asked me to write you a song, and I wrote you this song and you didn't put it on your record", kinda joshing. "Well Joe, had a lotta songs and we couldn't play em all." (Joe) said, "Well, do you remember the song that I gave you?" Cash says, "Ah, I don't remember." And Joe says, "Well, if I *sang* you the song, would you remember", and he goes, "Joe. Sing that song!"

I pulled back for a moment, "Am I going to see Joe Strummer sing acapella to Johnny Cash? Is this going to happen in my lifetime, right in front of me?" And it did. He sang a song called We're on the Road to Rock & Roll, or something. Joe eventually put it out on a Mescaleros Record. But to watch two of my heroes together like that and to watch Joe Strummer with his eyes closed concentrating, auditioning for Johnny Cash, was one of the better moments in my fairly wretched life.

So in any case, we're going to listen to a track that Johnny Cash recorded in a very small store-front studio in Tennessee, a place called Sun Studios, and this song is called The Rock Island Line.

48:23

MUSIC: Johnny Cash - The Rock Island Line

50:30

That was Johnny Cash doing The Rock Island Line. That's from a Sun Studios box set of the Johnny Cash recordings, which includes a lot of really interesting out-takes where you hear Johnny going after some of his classic sides in different vocal registers, and doing I Walk the Line with different vocal attempts, really cool to kind of get into the mechanics of the man. Rock Island Line - you hear that refrain, "You gotta ride it like you find it, get your ticket at the station for the Rock Island Line" - it's a really big mouthful of words.

I must admit, when Johnny hit stage at Pantageous Theatre, when I saw him with the full band, he's an old fellow at this point. You don't really have... I don't have lowered expectations, but if he went out there and couldn't hit all the notes, he has an excuse, he's old and it's OK. Instead of that, he comes out and completely defies expectation by having this massive, cavernous voice. The band is unbelievably on top of it. He's got the same bass player for like 20 years. The guy's so deep in the pocket you can't even see him. His voice is completely intact, he sounds just like he did when he was a young man. At one point, of course he did Rock Island Line, and he snaps that lyric like he was gonna just rip you apart. What a gig. What a man. Anyway, that was the great Johnny Cash.

My name is Henry Rollins and I'm kind of sittin' in here on PBS, playing the music that I was introduced to by one Mick Geyer, good pal of mine.

We're going to listen to a guy that I'm a huge fan of, and of course Mick Geyer was a huge fan of. We're going to listen to the legend, Herbie Hancock, doing a track called The Maze.

52:16

MUSIC: Herbie Hancock - The Maze (Takin' Off)

59:01

Herbie Hancock, The Maze.

I'm kinda out of music. We're going to finish this marathon with Gil Evans again, but this time

he's partnered up with some guy named Miles Davis. Apparently he's supposed to be really good!

My name's Henry Rollins, I've been hanging out with you for an extremely long amount of time, I hope you've endured me OK. The spirit of all the music we've been listening to is kind of saying thank you to Mick Geyer, for turning us onto so much good music and so many great nights of conversation. And like I said at the top of the first hour, I've met a lot a lot of people, I've been fairly far and wide, but I don't *know* many people, and I wouldn't consider many people friends, just 'cos I don't have time to hang around. But I knew Mick and Mick was my very good friend, and his generosity and his friendship means more than I can explain. And so, thank you for letting me occupy your time, and thanks to the Station for letting me bring all this music and gush on and on about my friend Mick Geyer, as we all would probably do if they let us have more tape because we could be here all night telling Mick stories. I know I would.

In any case, Mick, if you're out there somewhere, we're bopping down here. This is Miles and Gil.

60:23

MUSIC: Gil Evans with Miles Davis - Saeta (Sketches Of Spain)

Total Duration 65:09



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