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ADDICTIVE TV'S ORCHESTRA OF SAMPLES

Once so eloquently described as 'next level shit' by Grandmaster Flash, British electronic duo Addictive TV create music with a difference; it's music you can see. They've been travelling round the world for five years, meeting and recording samples from over 200 musicians, and have worked their technological wizardry on them to create a live show that mixes them all together to make pieces. It's marvellous, and its coming to Norwich Arts Centre this month. I spoke to Graham and Mark about where the idea came from, who their influences have been and what piece of technological kit they most wish existed.



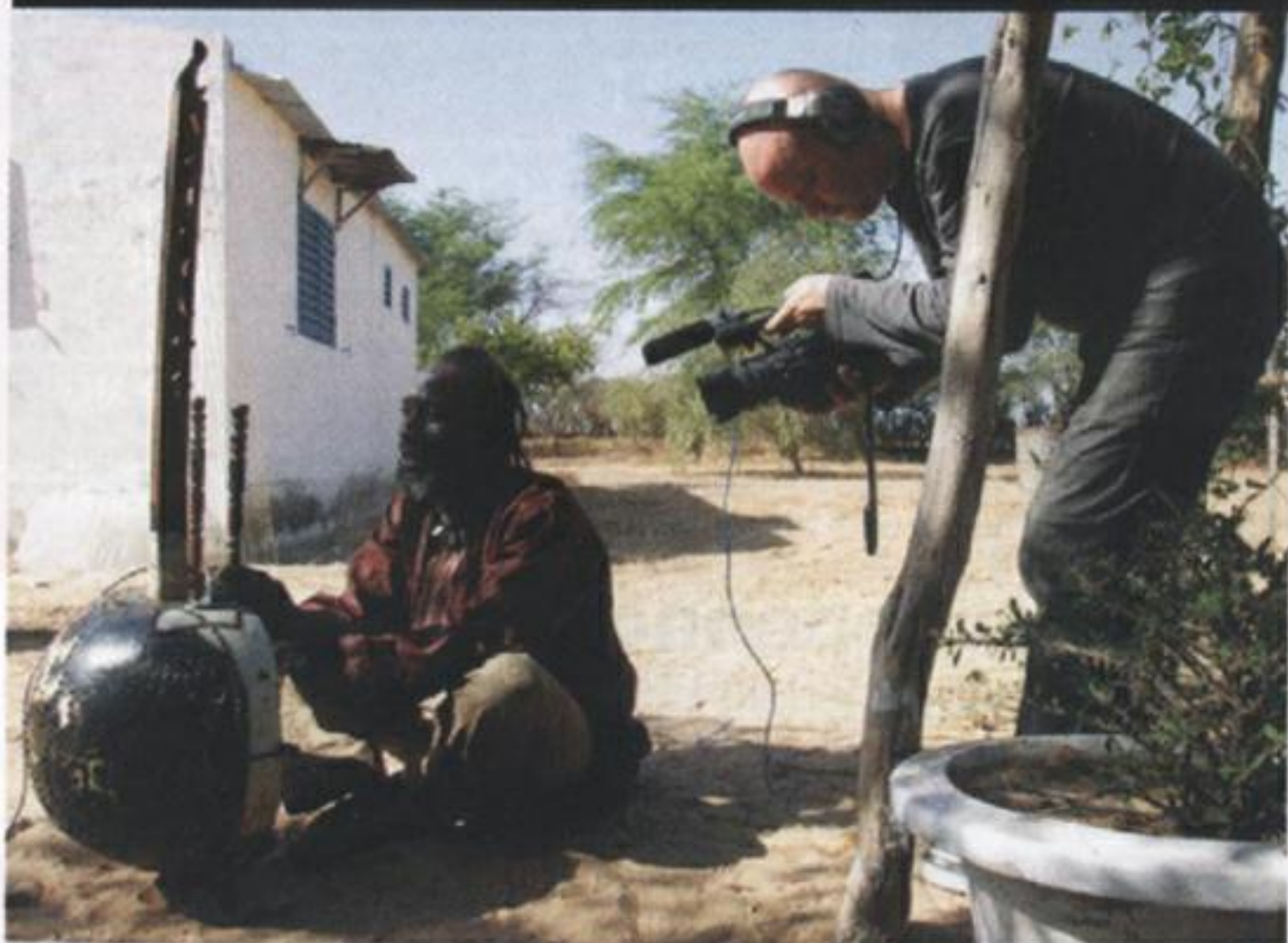
Basically what you do as a duo is to blend images and music together using samples. Who has inspired you in terms of musicians, videographers and musical innovators?

Mark: Musically speaking, although not directly influencing our work as Addictive TV, I've personally been inspired by all genres of music but primarily late 60's psychedelia, late 70's pop with bands like XTC but also soundtracks from 60's/70's science-fiction and exploitation movies.

Graham: I've always been influenced by science fiction and the earliest of electronic musicians since I was a kid like Vangelis and Kraftwerk. In the early days I'd say Emergency Broadcast Network from New York were influential and also Canadian

DJ and producer Akufen. Where did the idea for Orchestra of Samples come from? I've seen something similar before, but nothing quite like this.

Mark: There have been similar projects that may contain a basic element of what we've done with Orchestra of Samples but in no way have they even scratched the surface of how far we've taken things. Our creative approach is simply seeing which samples work together. The whole idea is an exploration into musical probability, about bringing together really different musicians who wouldn't normally play together, and more to the point their instruments which wouldn't normally be heard together! It's far more than just different people in different countries playing together and I've



found working in this way fascinating, especially as I'm also a guitarist, and working outside of normal musical conventions has really opened my eyes, finding really unexpected combinations of instruments we didn't know about.

Graham: The idea came partly from travelling so much but also about wanting to create something much bigger than just a project, more than just a show or an album, a kind of entity that brought people together regardless of musical or cultural background, who they are or where they're from – something that illustrated how we're all connected. We also wanted to utilise our particular skillset and take things somewhere else to another level of creativity entirely.

You filmed over 200 musicians around the world who never met but are sampled and play together on screen. It took five years. That's a long time to working on a project whilst not seeing any money coming in from it! What kept your belief in the project going through those times?

Graham: Yes, it's been a massive undertaking, which is why I guess very few artists have ever attempted to create something like this. We really wanted to collaborate with loads of different musicians internationally and that's pretty impractical in the real world, unless you're Bono or Sting, but obviously in the digital world of sampling, it's very practical! So we cleverly integrated recording sessions into our travelling schedule that was already happening, making it work in tandem with gigging, which kept costs to a minimum. We took a camera and recording kit with us around the planet year after year, spending time with local musicians everywhere we performed. And over time that's been everywhere from Brazil, Colombia and Mexico to countries in North and

West Africa, the Middle East and even Egypt during the Arab Spring, then to Asia and countries like Kazakhstan, China and even Bhutan up in the Himalayas, plus of course all over Europe! I'd say definitely the musicians themselves have helped us keep faith in the project, they all thought it was a great idea and wanted to be a part of it.

How did you find all the people to contribute, and did they have to audition?

Mark: The whole process has been very organic, it's via a mixture of friends in different countries introducing us to musicians, who in turn suggest their musician friends, plus many of the festivals we played at suggest artists they know and then a few venues in France where we've been artists-in-residence have also organised recording sessions with musicians they regularly work with. Orchestra of Samples has slowly built a huge network of musicians all over the planet, all brought together in a very unique way! **How did you go about translating the online project into a live show?**

Mark: Because we always envisaged live musicians performing on the shows, including myself on guitar, we created the tracks in specific ways that could incorporate their involvement and that's been everything from beatboxers, rappers, keyboard players and violinists to guitarists, trumpet players and many percussionists! The album mixes vary slightly in that they are much more produced and mixed for audio only, but whether you're listening to the album at home or seeing the live show, both experiences are pretty unique!

What do you two do on stage when you play live? Are you playing with the sounds, and how does that affect the video footage that plays alongside it?

Mark: We mix the basic audio

beds of each track, pretty much in the way a DJ would, via a digital controller that live triggers (by MIDI) the corresponding video element on Graham's laptop, which he looks after. On top of this we're live scratching various extra sections, flying in audio-only triggers, adding FX plus on certain tracks I'm also playing guitar.

You have a new album out on June 2nd. Who do you imagine is your target audience?

Mark: A broad one! Reactions from a number of Orchestra of Samples performances so far have been very healthy across all ages. There's a strong world element to it stylistically but so much music these days is incorporating a 'world feel'. I think that the story behind the album and essentially the stories behind every 'instrument' sampled on the album, are also appealing across many levels.

Graham: Yes, the other week in Hull was the first date on our tour and the age range at the venue was incredible, a real fantastically mixed audience from electro-head youngsters in their early 20s to hip middle aged world music fans, all absolutely loving it! We ended up doing 3 encores! In fact we're performing the show at the BBC Music Day event in Sheffield and one of the reasons they chose us was that Orchestra of Samples was a project that brought generations together they said.

What would be your dream in terms of a new musical/ technological invention – something you've always wished existed?

Mark: A destruct button that kicks in every time a lighting technician hits the 'strobe' effect!

Graham: A teleport device built into a small whistle! **Sometimes live musicians play with you – in fact Stomp percussionist Paul Gunter will be joining you for your**

Norwich show – how was he involved?

Graham: We performed Orchestra of Samples in London and one of the original duo who formed Stomp was in the audience and loved the show! We spoke afterwards and he wanted to bring us to Brighton where they run a venue called The Old Market and suggested we perform with Paul, who was one of the original Stomp performers. It was a fantastic show, so we simply wanted to do it again! Paul's playing with us on a number of the tour dates, including at the BBC Music Day in Sheffield, at both Womad and Shambala festivals and of course the Norwich Arts Centre!

What's next on Addictive TV's agenda?

Mark: Our UK tour that's only just started! But as well as dates the UK and Europe, we've also got gigs coming up in China and the Philippines – so looking forward to those. Would be nice to get back into the studio and work on some new tracks for Orchestra of Samples, as we've still lots more recording sessions to sample from since finalising and producing the album.

Graham: We're also working on a large project with sitar master Baluji Shrivastav, who in fact received an OBE earlier this year! Baluji happens to be blind and the project is supported by Unlimited, the UK arts programme that champions work by disabled artists and we're going to India with Baluji to collaborate with other blind musicians there.

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Read this interview in full at outlineonline.co.uk

INFORMATION

Addictive TV will be bringing Orchestra of Samples to Norwich Arts Centre on 16th June. Tickets available from norwichartscentre.co.uk