

**PC-PRESS present extracts from the book
TEST DEPT: TOTAL STATE MACHINE
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for the Mark Fisher Memorial Lecture 2021 –
NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND @
GOLDSMITHS Friday 6 – 8pm 29th January
Book Available to buy from:
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How did a group of disaffected young people come to pose a serious threat to the symbolic order of the Thatcherite British state?

Test Dept were on the front line of struggles which are still playing out in the present day; raising questions, galvanising resistance and unnerving the titanic forces unleashed by the Thatcherite doctrine that still dominates the political mainstream. Their music was a full-frontal assault on the senses that also contained moments of reflection, beauty and the echoes of post-industrial decay

Until now the full history of British music, culture and politics in the 1980s and 1990s has not been told - a chapter has been missing. Total State Machine is this missing chapter. More than just a history of the group, it captures the wider history of those troubled times



TEST DEPT

TOTAL STATE MACHINE



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***'Art is not a mirror to reflect reality, but a
hammer with which to shape it'*** Bertolt Brecht

Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar and Paul Jamrozy

Assisted and Edited by Alexei Monroe and Peter Webb.



PC PRESS

Bristol, England

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INTRODUCTION

‘Measured against their goals and the hopes that they carried, all revolutions have failed: this fact does not lessen their historical significance. But it is precisely in its extravagance that the project of the avant-garde serves as an indispensable corrective to a society foundering in its pursuit of egotistical goals.’¹

Looking over the range of viewpoints and stories gathered in this book, it doesn’t seem fanciful to summarise it as a book of challenges, and even as a book of revelations. The challenges were, and remain, numerous – political and moral, sonic, artistic and technical. Test Dept is one of the most challenged and challenging British music / art / performance groups, and trying to piece together contradictory memories and accounts of events dating back as far as three decades is itself a challenge. The revelations are equally numerous – of monumental concerts never reported in the British media, tapped phones, undercover raids, unsuspected connections between political and cultural events, and previously undocumented networks animating the underground culture of the 1980s and 1990s.

My own first revelation occurred in 1985. Sitting with the BBC2 youth programme ‘Red Herrings’ in the background, I was suddenly captivated by something entirely new – a filmed studio presentation of Test Dept’s ‘Gdansk’.² As a teenager with an interest in the unfolding New Cold War and Eastern Europe, but no previous exposure to radical music, it was both intriguing and something I couldn’t immediately get a handle on. Although I had no frames of reference for it and no easy means of tracking down the music, it left a lasting impression. I later learnt that this had been my first exposure to something called industrial music (until then the closest I had come to experiencing this was Depeche Mode’s ‘People Are People’).

Fast forward to Autumn 1988. By now I was aware of industrial, and of Test Dept and similar groups, and had read all the material I can find on the phenomenon, though there was still much to discover. One Sunday evening BBC2 again exposed me to something unexpected (and nowadays utterly unimaginable).³ This was Test Dept’s film *Albion*, produced in collaboration with the radical composer Steve Martland (whose work I became aware of then for the first time). It presented some of the music that would find its way into the *Pax Britannica* album, along with other pieces that never found a home. The visuals were largely composed of news footage from the years of cultural and political struggle that had unfolded since Test Dept’s inception

in 1981 – the Miners Strike, the Falklands War, Wapping and more. This transmission was a massive rebuke to the powers that were and it seemed to make sense of many recent events and their enormity. One moment I have never forgotten was that of the singer Sarah Jane Morris’s broken adaptation of the music of Gustav Holst as used for the patriotic hymn ‘I Vow to Thee, My Country’. The desolate new version included the line ‘my children have been taken, I think it’s for the best’. Like ‘Gdansk’, *Albion* has stayed in my mind ever since I saw it, and the film’s mix of severe socio-political critique and audio-visual innovation gave me an influential marker of what truly challenging art should be.

(H)ailing frequencies / Extreme conditions demand extreme responses

‘Many ideas and inventions, which have been considered as utopian, are reinvented after decades abroad, we use them today not knowing their origin, and many ideas, apparently, are waiting for rebirth.’⁴

Like several other seminal industrial groups, Test Dept’s work is much wider and more varied, sonically and thematically, than that label implies. However, the group would not have made such a strong and distinctive impact in the 1980s without its dynamic and militant embrace of the emerging industrial form. An important symbolic precedent for its approach can be found in the sound work of the Soviet film-maker Dziga Vertov. In 1929 Vertov made the first field recordings using portable equipment, capturing urban and industrial sounds for use in the film *Enthusiazm* (1930).⁵ Here was a model of a politicised use of sound and technology alongside film footage, and some scenes from Test Dept’s *Program for Progress* films seem like a 1980s sequel to Vertov’s innovative work. Other precedents for Test Dept include *musique concrète* and the work of experimental composers such as Luigi Nono, particularly his 1964 work *La Fabbrica Illuminata* [The Illuminated Factory], which incorporated actual industrial sounds. The first wave of industrial groups emerged in the 1970s, led by Cabaret Voltaire and Throbbing Gristle. Test Dept would go on to work with members of both these groups, and, while there are differences, their influence is clear. As Graham Cunningham states, seeing the industrial-associated American percussionist Z’ev was also important for the group.⁶ These influences were processed into a stripped-down and overpowering sonic format that was ultra-industrial, and yet, as Brian Duguid has written:

“Test Dept were unusual among industrial



musicians in that their disgust for the society they found themselves in led them to a politics of protest that directly embraced the ideas of the left; solidarity being the major one, leading the band through a series of concerts opposing the Conservative assault on the trade union movement, supporting the striking miners’ unions, ambulance workers, print workers, and anti-poll tax campaigners. They remained sophisticated enough never to match their strong political feeling with simplistic and unequivocal support for any of the parties of the left, but nonetheless, their allegiances had little in common with most other industrial groups, who distrusted all conventional politics, of whatever wing. Groups like Throbbing Gristle, S.P.K. and Cabaret Voltaire all saw society as a whole to be too corrupt for conventional politics to be worth bothering with.’⁷

So while they shared the anger and brutality of the earlier groups, Test Dept tried to construct more positive mindscapes through their industrial soundscapes. The real alienation they also felt was channelled into a more positive direction, trying to build awareness and consciousness, and not only trying to break down established mental structures and playing in their ruins. From the mid-1980s until the end of that decade, their industrial brutality ran alongside an exploration of more emotional, and even spiritual, moods and themes, yet without any diminution in the group’s sonic force.

It was critical that industrial emerged just at the moment when industrial society seemed to be in a process of rapid disintegration. Aesthetic re-industrialisation was a reaction against the gathering force of neo-liberal de-industrialisation. Whole technologies, populations, towns and regions were suddenly declared ‘obsolete’ and in need of clearance. In the early-1980s, the already blighted areas of South London where the group lived and worked also felt the force of these rapid developments and the ensuing austerity.

Tim Edensor notes that ‘one of the lineaments of power is the authority to make waste, to decide what is no longer of use and disseminate common-sense ideas about what ought to be over and done with.’⁸ Even before their lyrical content, Test Dept’s choice of samples and materials were a direct rejection of such arbitrary ideologically driven decisions. The recorded sounds of local scrapyards, foghorns, crane noises and sirens weren’t just part of the sonic arsenal, they were also documentations of sounds that were rapidly vanishing from London. Together with the accumulation and abuse of scrap and re-purposed metal, the group forged sonic weaponry with which they challenged the imposition of Thatcherite ‘common sense’. Throughout the decade, these sonic templates were developed and modified, complemented by lyrics, photography, video and performance, until the group itself decided that the industrial templates were largely obsolete in the post-industrial 1990s, and moved on to experiment with contemporary dance music.

During the 1980s, one of their closest sonic counterparts was Einstürzende Neubauten, and we see in the ‘Concrete Sound in Found Spaces’ text in Chapter 5 (p 182) that Test Dept collaborated with the group’s F.M.Einheit. However, while some of the materials and techniques used were similar, and Einheit assisted Test Dept, the spirit animating the groups was very different, as Neubauten were always more individualistic and used nihilism and decadence as aesthetic sources. Test Dept played at the still renowned Berlin Atonal festival in 1985, which is seen as a definitive moment in the history of industrial. Also present were new Test Dept allies – Hungary’s Art Deco and Yugoslavia’s Laibach – in some ways the closest to Test Dept in terms of the seriousness of their engagement with ideological themes. Both groups recall their connections with Test Dept in the texts ‘Art Deco Meets Constructivism’ (p 114) and ‘Anglo-Slowenische Freundschaft’ (p 118).

Test Dept inspired a wide range of industrial and other producers and listeners, but in terms of their combination of radical/non-aligned leftist politics and industrial sounds, they still have few counterparts. The closest is the eco-anarchist Dutch group Militia, which has directly incorporated Test Dept’s use of metal instruments on stage and historical-political themes in its work. A more electronically oriented group, which also attempted to carry out social criticism from a viewpoint further to the left than is usual in industrial, is the German act Thorofon. Their compatriots S.K.E.T., known for a harsher digital sound, use former DDR / Soviet imagery and directly confront issues such as the use of depleted uranium weaponry in Iraq.

A more ambivalent example is the post-Soviet project Linija Mass, which makes extensive use of recordings made in late-Soviet factories to produce impressive and oppressive studio-created soundscapes, featuring samples from Lenin and references to the constructivist era and the Proletkult. During the mid-1990s the creator of their sounds, Aleksander Lebedev-Frontov, was a member of the Russian National Bolshevik movement, but claims to have been the most anti-racist member of this ideologically contradictory post-Fascist formation. Other contemporary Russian groups experimenting with metallic forms of post-industrial include ZGA, Vetrophonia and Stalnoy Pakt.⁹

From the outset, the gamble of industrial has been that it can successfully de-materialise violence and force, but it has often yielded to the temptation to materialise and fetishise (if not advocate) them, as the Italian Futurists did. Parts of the scene have metaphorically ‘fallen into darkness’, sometimes flirting one-dimensionally with, or even advocating Fascist ideas. This is a particular problem on the ‘martial industrial’ scene (which Test Dept works like *Pax Britannica* and *Gododdin* are considered to have influenced). However, beyond the strange case of Linija Mass, there are no rightist (per)versions of the ‘metal-bashing’ industrial templates of Test Dept’s early years. Of course, it is also true that few groups have attempted

this labour-intensive form, but the association between this mode of industrial and leftist / oppositional aesthetics remains intact and this is largely due to Test Dept’s influence. Another reason for the lack of groups using post-industrial templates more radically is the puritanical suspicion of, and contempt for, industrial as such (and not just rightist examples) among sections of the radical left, which may deter some who would otherwise consider taking up the powerful symbolic vocabulary that industrial provides. This absence leaves more space for rightist infiltration of the scene.

The voices of industrial Britain merge
as one scream of pain,
defiance and hope
The time is now
The merging of voice and machine¹⁰

It is important to remember that the industrial sound was rarely purely industrial or mechanical – short-wave radio, samples of political speeches and orchestral, and even dance and dub elements, all helped build the definition of what we now understand as industrial. Live, Test Dept’s sound man Jack Balchin produced what Angus Farquhar calls ‘mutated dub’.¹¹ The cumulative effect of all these contradictory, but complementary elements was a monumental and forceful sound able to make tangible the dreadful euphoria of an ideologically polarised era. To give one example, Jonathan Moore recalls how ‘Test Dept had sampled a tube station escalator and worked their magic on it so that it sounded like a Dante-esque hell train.’¹²

Test Dept were prepared to take musical, aesthetic, personal and political risks (they also attracted suspicion from some on the far left) to produce a uniquely forceful aesthetic and sonority, but did not do this at the expense of, or in opposition to a moral and political conscience.

The extent to which the group managed to break out of the subcultural industrial ghetto without aesthetic compromise remains striking. The testimonies and memories in this book of the range of choreographers, composers, dancers, writers, directors and others Test Dept have worked with, illustrate that despite what some would wish to present as history now, the industrial aesthetics they and similar groups presented did have a much wider cultural impact than some claim. Their work in this sphere remains a positive model for what industrial can be, and the cultural impact it can have when it breaks free of the temptations of nihilism or affirmative power fetishism.

Discipline and corrective force

It was Throbbing Gristle who introduced discipline to industrial as a motif and as a practice – presenting a dual threat/promise of regimentation and imposed discipline as a counterbalance to the slackness and commercialised, go-with-the-flow *indiscipline* of mainstream music and culture. Throbbing Gristle

were very well aware of the decay and abuse of hippie idealism, and the rapid domestication of punk. Besides the extreme sounds and lyrical and visual content, seeming to advocate discipline was a key way to challenge and disturb.

Test Dept’s aesthetic model of discipline was both more constructive and more constructivist. Their uniforms were those of Stakhanovites, and they appeared as shock workers rather than as a paramilitary death squad (the image with which Throbbing Gristle, Front 242 and many others in industrial, power electronics, and electronic body music have flirted). Despite the severity of the image and some of the material, there were many moments when Throbbing Gristle would have benefited from much *more* (self)-discipline. In this sense, the more collectivist and regimented Test Dept were *more* industrial than Throbbing Gristle, but while they never engaged with para-militarism, they did publicly embody (self-) and cultural discipline and rigour.

Following the dissolution of Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret Voltaire’s departure into twisted pop, the way was clear for second-generation industrialists to introduce self-discipline and then to re-apply it as a counterbalance to the disciplining agendas of the conservative government and its media allies.

Test Dept tried to engage with discipline as an aesthetic-political virtue and as necessity. It was through this approach that Test Dept were able to exert a symbolic ‘corrective force’ on the cultural and political dynamics of the time. They and their allies could not prevent the defeat of the miners, or halt the march of privatisation and social atomisation, but they could make themselves felt as a symbolically corrective force – evidence for which we only have to look at the unprecedented surveillance and apparent media censorship deployed against the group by the British state. In the no-holds-barred struggle that marked the 1980s, the group was able to inflict serious symbolic wounds and discomfort while simultaneously radicalising audiences that may not have been reached by or even have been repelled by the traditional campaigning modes of both the mainstream and radical British left. They tried to enforce awareness rather than conformity and to shock the audience into consciousness and action.

It was a mode of politicised cultural opposition that tried to steer clear of the authoritarian and nihilistic temptations that have always been present in industrial. Robin Rimbaud is correct when he observes that ‘With performance titles such as *Ministry of Power Presents Convention of Hysteria*, *Programme for Progress*, and *The Unacceptable Face of Freedom*, Test Dept pointed towards a political agenda that was suggestive more than didactic.’¹³ The *Programme for Progress* was never clearly spelt out, but through Test Dept’s work, a programme for militant cultural resistance was made clear and people were insistently alerted to developments they might rather not think about.

As well as discipline, Test Dept relied on force and scale – micro-political aesthetics and tactics were rejected – in the first decade of their work they operated and fought on an increasingly monumental scale, attempting to expose and resist the colossal forces of reaction unleashed in Britain at the time with something equally forceful and determined. Imperial, police and military aesthetics were incorporated, not for their own sake, but as an inherent part of Test Dept’s corrective response. Through the work the targets were interred in a symbolic ‘Corridor of Cells’ of their own making. For all their aesthetic militancy, the group was concerned with exposing and correcting the enemy’s programme rather than imposing their own. In this sense the group was corrective of their audience as well as the historical and political processes exposed.

Finally, we shouldn’t forget how Test Dept sometimes marshalled the correctional forces of the Thatcherite state for their own symbolic warfare. Angus Farquhar recalls how at the 1985 Canon Street Station performance:

‘At this point we were actually choreographing the police and we got them to line up in front of the aerial gymnast who was bouncing up and down on the trampoline... the first thing the audience got when they came up the steps was the person... just this body bouncing up and down behind a line of police, it was absolutely wonderful.’¹⁴

Graham Cunningham also recalls how in the *Demonomania* performance ‘we came in as soldiers and kicked down the doors, rather like the police did at Titan Arch, and then spread out, dividing the audience up... that Titan Arch police technique.’¹⁵

As well as imitating police or using military ‘choreography’, they also appropriated police-style poses and equipment, including riot shields, at a time when they and many others were confronted by a new para-militarised police force with an appetite for repression. These tactics confronted and corrected cosy ignorance about the boiling tensions, and the unresolved and only vaguely documented traumas of the imperial state. In contrast to the black propaganda of the Thatcher government and its allies (and successors), Test Dept’s work was commanding but did not command. In the more fluid circumstances of the 1990s, the libertarian/anarchist and spiritual impulses within the group would come to the fore and the adopted discipline was gradually relinquished.

Perhaps Test Dept attracted so much police/state attention because they were astute and fore-sighted enough to recognise and warn of the severity of the neo-liberal agenda that was only just beginning to show its iron fist in a tatty fake velvet glove.

Current Affairs

‘The local [miners’] club posted notices warning miners that the “walls have ears”, and to be careful not to organise pickets on the phone, which may be tapped.’¹⁶

‘They captured the zeitgeist perhaps more than

anyone, a bunch of battle-fatigued Joshuas drumming down the walls of the new Babylon.’¹⁷

If, as they claimed in the 1980s, Public Enemy were the ‘Black CNN’, and if, as I have argued, Laibach in the same period was the ‘Yugoslav CNN’, it doesn’t seem unreasonable to argue that Test Dept was the ‘British CNN’. Performing a documentary role was key to the corrective effect, and the BBC’s news manipulation, the massive police violence and corruption, Murdoch subversion and post-imperial follies commented on by Test Dept have all in the last few years been shown to be truths previously denied by the state.

Some of what we now know to be fact was too shocking or cynical even for the group to imagine. While they openly fought their struggles in the 1980s, News International’s agents were penetrating and subverting the rotten heart of the market state structures, and Britain’s politicised undercover police were spying on activist groups and even impregnating women who had the temerity to hold dissident views.

The real shock(ing) work comes out of fully understanding Britain’s history in this period, acknowledging that the surveillance and politicised policing deployed against miners, protesters and confrontational art groups was a test-bed for the immanently fascistic surveillance state we now inhabit. Test Dept’s *51st State* has been so far surpassed by the antics of Britain’s quisling power elites and GCHQ’s collaboration in American mass surveillance that its challenge now seems mild and understated. Yet the fact that the group’s direst warnings have been so massively superseded by grim reality does not diminish their value. Nobody exposed to Test Dept’s work in the 1980s can say that they weren’t warned – so much of what we are confronted by in our neo-feudal era was documented and exposed in embryonic form in their work.

They had many enemies, and few, but important, allies. Independent journalists, underground film-makers and others were part of a tendency to document not just what was actually happening, but also how what was happening was made visible by most of the mainstream media to seem something quite different.¹⁸ Their work with the miners and with NUM activist Alan Sutcliffe (interviewed here) is significant; not just because it inspired great artistic work and kindled a spirit of resistance and solidarity, but because it *documented* the civil war by other means waged in Britain in 1984–85. *Statement* and other works were complementary aspects of the fight against the media blackout of police brutality against the miners and others. As Twitch observes:

‘The anger and passion in Alan Sutcliffe’s speech at the start of Side 2 [of the album *Shoulder to Shoulder*] was my equivalent of Martin Luther King’s ‘I Have A Dream’ speech. To this day, it still sends shivers down my spine when I hear it, and that anger and passion is as relevant and needed in current times as it was 29 years ago.’¹⁹

Reading the group’s tour diaries is especially poignant in this respect. They read partly as the

wanderings of partial exiles and dissidents, especially in the 1990s when the Conservative regime intensified its war on British counter-cultures. The late phase of their work represented an attempt to find a less confrontational, but equally politically challenging way to expose current events and document more obliquely, but still effectively, the cultural-political dynamics of the time.

Going to the People/Art and life

‘In 1918 Lunacharsky, the people’s commissar of education, officially proclaimed that the arts should be developed on an experimental basis. As he told the composer Sergei Prokofiev: “You are revolutionary in music as we are revolutionary in life – we should work together”.’²⁰

Test Dept’s mode of political engagement can be understood using parallels from Russian and Soviet history, specifically the radical ‘Going to the People’ tendency of the 1870s and the Soviet avant-garde’s attempts to bridge the gap between art and life.

For a period of two years, starting in summer 1874, radical upper-class youth and students went ‘to the people’, leaving the cities to try to spark revolution among the peasantry. This farcical episode is notorious as an example of how not to spark revolutionary agitation. The peasants were bemused, if not hostile. Even in their poverty they remained largely loyal to the Tsar, to the church and to their folk traditions. While a few of the youths managed to settle among the peasantry, most soon hit trouble or were denounced:

‘In the first two months of “going to the people” in 1874, 770 such young people were arrested, trying to make revolutionary a class that was too backward and too downtrodden for anything like the enlightenment they had in mind.’²¹

Communities at the receiving end of economic, cultural and political oppression can be notoriously resistant to messages of resistance or emancipation, often (sometimes rightly) suspecting that revolution or even awareness is a threat to their communal identity, which is partly shaped by the harsh conditions they endure. A later example of this failed radicalisation from without was the attempts of 1960s American students to radicalise and engage with Detroit car workers.

On paper, the idea of an artistically radical group going ‘to the people’ in the early 1980s might have been expected to end equally farcically – local workers turning on strangely-dressed and dangerously intellectual urbanites. Yet Test Dept managed to successfully engage with mining communities and organisations, and later with the print workers and others. How did this happen? Reading accounts of the *Shoulder to Shoulder* era, what’s striking is that these beleaguered communities were able to accept and even *enjoy* the group and their work, not just for political, but sometimes also artistic reasons. Perhaps there was also a respect for the hard physical labour and discipline the group committed to on stage. It was surely important that the group weren’t

there to impose party discipline, spread ideology or sell newspapers, but to learn, help and document the struggle artistically.²² As Stephen Mallinder comments: ‘The band had energized communities through direct action. They had managed to show the value of concern, the power of noise, and demonstrate that a tool is simply a means to an end.’²³

The Bolshevik-dominated Russian Revolution itself was often brutally and centrally imposed from without and the mutual suspicion between many peasants and the Bolsheviks later provoked forced collectivisation and the resulting famine in the Ukraine in the 1930s. Yet in the first decade of the revolution, before the systematic imposition of Stalinism, constructivists, suprematists and other artistic experimenters briefly gained unprecedented freedom to innovate and to engage directly with the public, in total contrast to the conservative cultural politics of Tsarism and the bourgeois, conservative aesthetics of socialist realism. The use of large-scale multi-media presentations for political education, the development of new film techniques and the radical sonic innovation of the period were direct and vital precedents for Test Dept’s aesthetics and means of engagement. Andrey Smirnov describes how ‘in increasingly extended forms the new “machine music” made itself felt, and soon noise symphonies, noise operas, and noise festive performances were composed.’²⁴ A direct line can be traced between Avramov’s 1922 *Symphony of Sirens*, and other experimental work of the period, and Test Dept’s work. There may also be another factor that binds them. Just suppose for a moment that an actual civil war had broken out in 1980s Britain, and that the forces of the right had actually been defeated. What would the new radical authorities have made of Test Dept? Would they have been heroes of the revolution, would they have been free to create, or would they eventually have suffered the same fate as the Soviet avant-gardists under Stalinism?

In specific moments of crisis Test Dept did manage to transcend the boundaries separating art from life and make art from the brutal pressures shaping the everyday lives of some of those Thatcher termed ‘the enemy within’, many of whom are still subject to harsh or even harsher treatment. This was the result of a militant but empathetic and non-doctrinary approach. As Angus Farquhar says of Test Dept’s last monumental performance, *The Second Coming*: ‘The work stands as a testament to non-aligned left-wing artistic thinking and lives on through the legacy of the ever-growing field of site-responsive art and theatre practice over the last 25 years.’²⁵

‘They drove East’ or ‘Fuck off back to Moscow’

‘It’s always the unwritten story that behind the mainstream is often where the most powerful work is taking place, there’s actually this sort of invisible thread of how creative people support other creative people over time.’²⁶

The extent of Test Dept’s engagement with the

countries of the socialist bloc was one of the most intensive of any Western group. The accounts here of trips to and performances in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and non-aligned Yugoslavia are powerful time-pieces that raise issues as vital now as they were three decades ago.

Obviously, there were strong ideological-symbolic reasons why Test Dept’s work was relevant in countries where art and culture were still partly shaped by socialist realist aesthetics and its taboos (even if in more contemporary forms). They were part of a wider trend to aesthetic self-Sovietisation, an embrace of the symbolism of the opposing bloc that was seen widely among artists, musicians and designers of the former Western Bloc in the New Cold War period. Just as industrial music emerged when the dominant economic logic of the West shifted decisively towards aggressive de-industrialisation, Western artistic Sovietisation emerged as the USSR entered its terminal phase, irreparably damaged by ruinous military spending and the kleptocratic Brezhnev regime. Jon Wozencroft explains this tendency as follows:

‘The imagery and rhetoric from the Dada/Surrealist /Constructivist periods had become a strong current because it was also echoing general strike and economic crash and also the glamour of that. The fact that this was all pre-World War II is significant, in the sense that it was a sign of the (countering) culture digging deeper than Warhol, and a generation fed up of the drip drip drip of British war films that masked the reality of what the UK had inherited.’²⁷

Musically, Test Dept used the ambivalent Soviet musical icons of Prokofiev and Shostakovitch, as well as the work of Polish composers, including Gorecki and Penderecki. These were complemented visually by their use of constructivist, Soviet avant-garde and socialist realist references. The fascinating/oppressive aura of state socialism was very apparent in early Test Dept.

We have to remember that this was borne from personal histories and a genuine interest in ‘the other Europe’. Paul Jamrozy’s account of his Polish background and travels to Poland in the martial-law era gives an insight into the group’s ambivalent position in opposition to nascent neo-liberalism and authoritarian late socialism. In his tour diary, Angus Farquhar describes their work in the East as ‘our attempt to dissemble the unquestioning myth that the “west is best”, while acknowledging the basic freedoms which are denied here.’²⁸

Reading the accounts of these interventions the reader can trace the shifts in Cold War politics. At the time of the 1985 tour, they were under active surveillance and harassment in both the West and the East. By 1989, when they took part in the *Elijah* performance in Poland, the British state felt it had found a use for them:

‘The British Embassy agreed to cover the expenses for flying the Test Dept to Poland. In those days it seemed funny that this London-based group, famous for their strong commitment to socialist ideas, would

be considered a force to dismantle the real-socialism system in Poland. But today I must say – the British were right. A few months after the opening of *Elijah* socialism ended in Poland.’²⁹

The US-NATO cultural conquest of Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR should quickly dispel any notion that the cultural war was a defensive action. Beyond the irony, this also brings an awareness of the tragedy of hindsight. The democratic awakening the group witnessed in Hungary has twisted and mutated into NATO-sponsored Fascistic authoritarianism. In Poland clerico-fascist forces compete for attention with neo-liberal nationalism, and in the Czech Republic it is now clear how the Prague Spring acted as a vanishing mediator for a neo-feudal politics strongly inspired by British conservatism and American republicanism. The young democracies celebrated by the liberal media have become fanatically obedient 51st Statelets. As Dean Whittington says: ‘The twenty-first century was hatched in the 1980s.’³⁰

It Happened Here (and is happening again)

‘We’ve undergone what John Ralston Saul calls correctly a *coup d’état*, a corporate *coup d’état* in slow motion. And it’s over. They’ve won. We live in what the political philosopher Sheldon Wolin calls a system of inverted totalitarianism.’³¹

Looking back from 2013 with a ‘Critical Frame of Mind’ – the economic, welfare and security regimes that Test Dept engaged with in early-1990s Britain now seems almost idyllic, a lost Golden Age in comparison to what we live under now. A similar group operating in the Blair era would probably have been questioned by anti-terrorist police for lurking around scrapyards, or for taking photographs, or filming in public without permission, and would quite conceivably have been served with Anti Social Behaviour Orders. If such a group emerges now they will have to use extreme caution and covert tactics to avoid the omnipresent web of surveillance. Unless they emerge ‘clean’, without previous reason for the authorities to have looked into them (already near impossible now), they will have to work ‘off the grid’, avoiding networked computers, mobile phones and other seductive devices.

This context of hyper-surveillance raises the question of how the group and this book will be seen in a decade’s time. Will it seem like an impossibly utopian relic of a lost era of freedom (as it already begins to): will it be softly suppressed and disappear without much trace?

‘Don’t expect us to respect your authority, living in a bankrupt economy, all the people that are in a minority, fighting for a little autonomy.’³²

The year 2014 is the thirtieth anniversary of the Miners’ Strike, which looms large in this book. Documentaries and books are being worked on, and both sides are preparing to resume the ideological struggle over what really happened. New facts come to light here, but there is still much more to come. Britain’s ‘30 year rule’ should see many official documents about

the period released, although probably some of the most sensitive material related to police and intelligence activity will be kept back. It would also be interesting to know more about Orgreave and the policy of the BBC in relation to coverage of the strike.

The ‘unofficial’ narratives presented here are part of that process. One thing that comes out clearly is the extent of surveillance and intimidation carried out by state agents. Some of the tactics used against Test Dept and their allies were first used on the British mainland during the strike. It marked a watershed in the politicisation and para-militarisation of the police. Activists and artists are now surveilled by default, or simply because they have been in contact with someone who is, or has been in the vicinity of a suspect gathering. It is no longer enough to warn people to ‘assume this phone is tapped’, as Throbbing Gristle put it, especially when much of the British population seem to have granted wholehearted consent

Yet perhaps this is not the real problem. Perhaps the power of transgressive monumentalism has been forgotten or dismissed as too much work. If so, this book may serve as a reminder of its power, even in a very different time. In 2011 Joe Kennedy condemned what he called the ‘False Folk Culture’ dominating English popular culture and wrote:

‘The organic, “real” provenance of movements which affirm the ideological status quo is offered as proof that challenges to that dominant order are regarded by the majority of the nation’s population as undesirable and inauthentic. Low-level quirkiness does not pose political questions; indeed, resistance is best achieved in forms of collective organisation which rebuke nostalgic representations of communal belonging with a broader sense of social purpose.’³³

Monuments

‘One of the things with doing this book; like a lot of people who were in the real underground in the 1980s, you ended up being quite detached. You felt sometimes like you were pissing into a vacuum or shouting into the wilderness and you didn’t know who was really hearing, so one of the things that this has revealed is the extent to which the underground was really influencing things. Influencing new generations of artists and how they take strength from your work.’³⁴

This is a large and complex book dealing with a large and complex body of work. It is a kind of folk history, with some differing accounts of the same events and multiple timelines. Test Dept worked at scale, revealing the extent of their ambitions and the oppressive forces they marshalled and confronted.

The large-scale works documented here (*The Unacceptable Face of Freedom*, Expo 86, *Gododdin*, *The Second Coming* and more) represented a very powerful form of transgressive monumentalism that tried to compete with, and even overshadow, actual state and corporate rituals. Test Dept made an art form out of finding and creating vast spaces in which audiences

could have their perceptions challenged and their narratives questioned. The use of orchestras, willing and unwilling police and military elements, film, dance, and the spaces themselves were the means through which they made such a strong cultural-political impact. Jonathan Moore reminds us how Test Dept ‘worked open-heartedly with like-minded sculptors, painters, banner makers, Welsh mining choirs, classical composers, actors, writers, directors, political journalists, film-makers to create such large-scale and hard-to-avoid works.’³⁵

Despite (or partly because of) these huge efforts, there was a period in the second half of the 1980s when parts of the British media and the art world found Test Dept easy (or necessary) to ignore. It emerged from interviews that the group suspects there may have been something similar to a D-Notice censorship order in force against coverage of the group during and after their provocative performance at Expo 86, which was one of their most spectacular, but least known performances, especially in Britain, the country it represented there. Of course, such things are hard to prove, even now, but it does not seem implausible. In the light of ongoing revelations about the extent of the surveillance and infiltration culture perhaps we should ask: is it *not* possible?

There were probably also other factors in the sudden drop of coverage during one of the group’s most productive phases. The British music press may well have looked askance at how the group gave such importance to playing in mainland Europe and embracing theatrical and art elements, both of which would count as sins in the eyes of what could still be a pretty macho and insular British music press.

This book contains interviews with and by Test Dept, featuring some of their many collaborators plus the members of the group speaking frankly about their history. There is a wealth of memories, anecdotes and facts previously scarcely discussed. The material ranges from early experiences and interviews to detailed discussions of albums and performances, and sober present-day comments on the past. One of the narrative threads running throughout comprises the tour diaries, providing a contrast with the longer texts and a unique view from the frontline of Test Dept’s struggles. There are accounts of significant personal, political and stylistic journeys, the consequences of which are still unfolding today. The aim is to embed Test Dept’s work in the history of its time and vice versa. What is next for the group and their audience is uncertain, but for now it seems fitting to finish with the description Jonathan Moore gives of many people’s nervous reactions to the group and to pose a question for the reader to decide: ‘Too honest, brutal, prophetic’[?] ³⁴ ✖

Addendum to the Introduction:

Beyond the Industrial!

Test Dept’s work moved quickly beyond the confines of the industrial genre, not just musically but politically, aesthetically and in terms of performance and production. In their first vinyl release you can see this trajectory. *Compulsion* contained ‘b’ side remixes of the main track called Pulsations 1 and 2. Both contained an undulating electronic keyboard melody (a collaboration with Cabaret Voltaire) that could have placed the track as part of the nascent Electronic Body Music) scene. EBM had a foot in the industrial camp but would also feed into the rising techno/house music of America from Detroit through artists like Derrick May, Kevin Saunderson, Juan Atkins and Jeff Mills (of Underground Resistance) and found the electronic aesthetics of Kraftwerk, Daniel Miller’s The Normal and groups such as Nitzer Ebb incredibly affective. Throughout their recorded work, there are continual elements that link TD to the wider dance music culture partially through their commitment to percussion and its connections to Burundi drumming, gamelan, samba and Celtic culture whilst also maintaining a machine-like 4/4 rhythm on some tracks.

This element of Test Dept’s methodology is often overlooked. When you listen to tracks like ‘Fuckhead’ on *The Unacceptable Face of Freedom* LP you can hear an approach to the rhythm that shares ground with groups like Tackhead, Mark Stewart and The Mafia’and Adrian Sherwood’s On-U-sound label who also cut up beats, layered them and often mixed political commentary over the top.

The group was also more clear-cut about their politics than the majority of industrial artists. They supported the Miners Strike through the tour with the Striking South Wales miners Choir and the album *Shoulder to Shoulder*, the Print Workers Strike at Wapping, the anti-poll tax campaign and later on the anti-Criminal Justice Bill campaign. Their politics supported a leftist worldview without aligning to any of the many Marxist organizations and this spoke to a large audience across the world. As Paul Hegarty describes in his book *Noise/ Music* (2007):

‘Test Dept engaged with actual politics..... They used Communist imagery in a way that was provocative, but also pretty clearly symbolized their views. The difference between them and the established Communist parties was that power could be harnessed at individual and micro-levels: ‘all power that stands

against you is your potential power. You stand as the transformer, where power against weakness becomes power against power.’¹

The later years of their work where they collaborated more with theatre companies like Brith Gof, reinitiated the Beltane Fire and moved towards creating highly percussive dance music also spoke to wider audiences than they had previously. Beltane in Edinburgh, for example, has grown and continued as its own annual event beyond its establishment with Test Dept and for its first decade with Angus Farquhar’s NVA arts organisation.

Subsequently events in the early to mid-1990s with Mutoid Waste Company and Megatripolis and the increasing politicisation that had happened within the dance music milieu since the Criminal Justice Bill had been put into place in 1994, gave Test Dept a much more receptive audience within this scene. Their 1995 album ‘Totality’ was a sumptuous techno and breakbeat album that had symphonic arrangements and the voice of Katie Jane Garside representing a further move away from their more classical and militaristic albums.

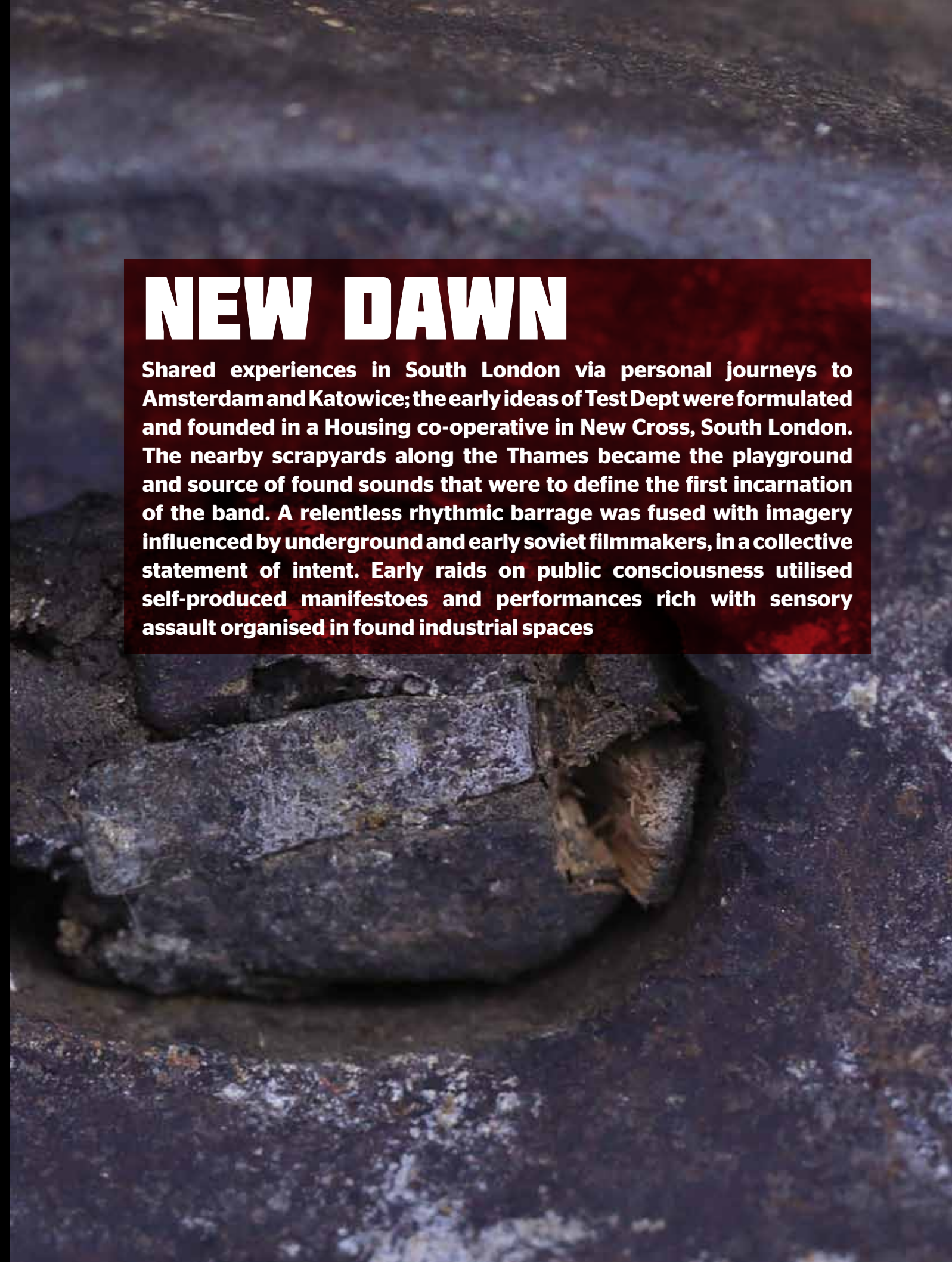
Test Dept’s continuing legacy is one of experimentation with the structure of music, its aural components and the marrying of that with audio-visual and theatrical scale that present compelling, emotive and affective events. Their work has moved through a number of stages and thankfully is continuing in a variety of forms today. I believe they are the most constructive, critical and motivating of groups to have risen from the urban wastelands of Britain and they have moved far beyond their initial categorization as an Industrial act. They have affected an incredible array of people from many different backgrounds and with very varied musical tastes. But the critique of State power, State control and support for ordinary working people across the world have shown Test Dept to have a much more inspirational and motivating agenda than many other artists who have worked within an Industrial categorization. Their continued ability to experiment and change their musical stylization didn’t weaken their impact or critique, in fact, because of it they were strengthened as an organization that maintained relevance with a continually developing audience ✕

Peter Webb June 2014.



NEW DAWN

Shared experiences in South London via personal journeys to Amsterdam and Katowice; the early ideas of Test Dept were formulated and founded in a Housing co-operative in New Cross, South London. The nearby scrapyards along the Thames became the playground and source of found sounds that were to define the first incarnation of the band. A relentless rhythmic barrage was fused with imagery influenced by underground and early soviet filmmakers, in a collective statement of intent. Early raids on public consciousness utilised self-produced manifestoes and performances rich with sensory assault organised in found industrial spaces



Paul Jamrozy

NOISE: THE ECONOMY OF POLITICAL MUSIC

From Industrial Wastelands to Industrial Culture

*Music makes mutations audible. It invites us to invent categories and new dynamics to regenerate social theory, which today has become crystallized, trapped, moribund.*¹

The formation and early musical development of Test Dept from 1981 onwards cannot be separated from the political, social and economic landscape of London at that time, which acted as both a resource and cultural amplifier for the group. It arose as an idealistic scream of anger, emerging from the firebrand energy of punk, its nerve endings exposed, emanating a raw sense of ‘unfinished business’. It was born out of the crumbling inner cities and economically decimated ‘ghost towns’ of Britain, where the desolate boarded up high streets resembled the array of riot shields that first appeared in South London during the Brixton riots in 1981, known locally as ‘the uprising’.

Margaret Thatcher’s election in 1979 had been the catalyst for the introduction of ‘Reaganomics’, opening the floodgates to an untrammelled free market. It heralded a rampant ideological drive which had little concern for any human consequences as a result of its implementation. Thatcher herself proudly stated there was ‘no such thing as society’, polarising the population into hardened positions that offered no opportunity for consensus or compromise. Such moments developing were to become the key cultural signifiers in the forming social psyches of the fledgling Test Dept.

The proliferation of squats and thriving housing co-operatives in South London encouraged a disparate group of the socially disaffected and mostly unemployed to set up base in New Cross. Here they integrated with local students from Goldsmiths College, completing Test Dept’s first membership. This enabled free access to multi-media resources and created a burgeoning support network and fan base.

It was also here, at the edge of the decaying docklands along the Thames, that Test Dept first uncovered its creative inspiration. Their rough excavations tapped into a latent energy, releasing an increasingly relentless sonic battery, which years later became the driving force behind the expansive multidisciplinary collective titled The Ministry of Power.

The regenerators of bust and boom undertook pitiless gentrification programmes on the edges of the industrial hinterlands, driving out established

populations while grasping new fortunes into the bargain. Simultaneously Test Dept, as self-styled recyclers, looked to sift and re-construct the debris. New sound possibilities were sculpted, creating a *living instrument of change*, a sonic war machine wired into the unrest of the times.

They formed themselves collectively, royalty shares and rights were split equally and the individual was submerged within the group identity. They took up a self-conscious anti-rock stance, issuing a statement of intent by outlawing the phallic symbolism of the guitar as an influence on their aesthetic development. Pop culture was also unanimously regarded by the group as an obsolete response to the challenging economic situation that the UK was facing. A new attitude was deemed necessary, embracing experimentation, transgression and sonic extremity. Visionary manifestos, such as the Italian Futurists ‘*Art of Noises*’, confirmed and gave validation to an emerging radicalism, and recognition of beauty in the noise of machinery and the re-appropriation of found objects.

New Hammers

New Rhythms

New Chants

The Italian Futurists heralded a modern technology of killing on an industrial scale, whilst nodding to the allure of totalitarianism waiting in the wings. This was sound presented as a modern dystopia stridently forcing its way into the present. ‘A channelizer of violence, a creator of differences, a sublimation of noise, an attribute of power... it announces the installation of a new totalizing social order based on spectacle and exteriority.’²

In 1982, as her Imperium entered a new epoch, Thatcher waved missile-laden carriers off to the South Atlantic from the naval hub of Portsmouth. To the Argentine foe that had raised their flag on South Georgia, a previously forgotten corner of a fading empire – the militarised message was bellicose and clear. Britannia still ruled the Waves.

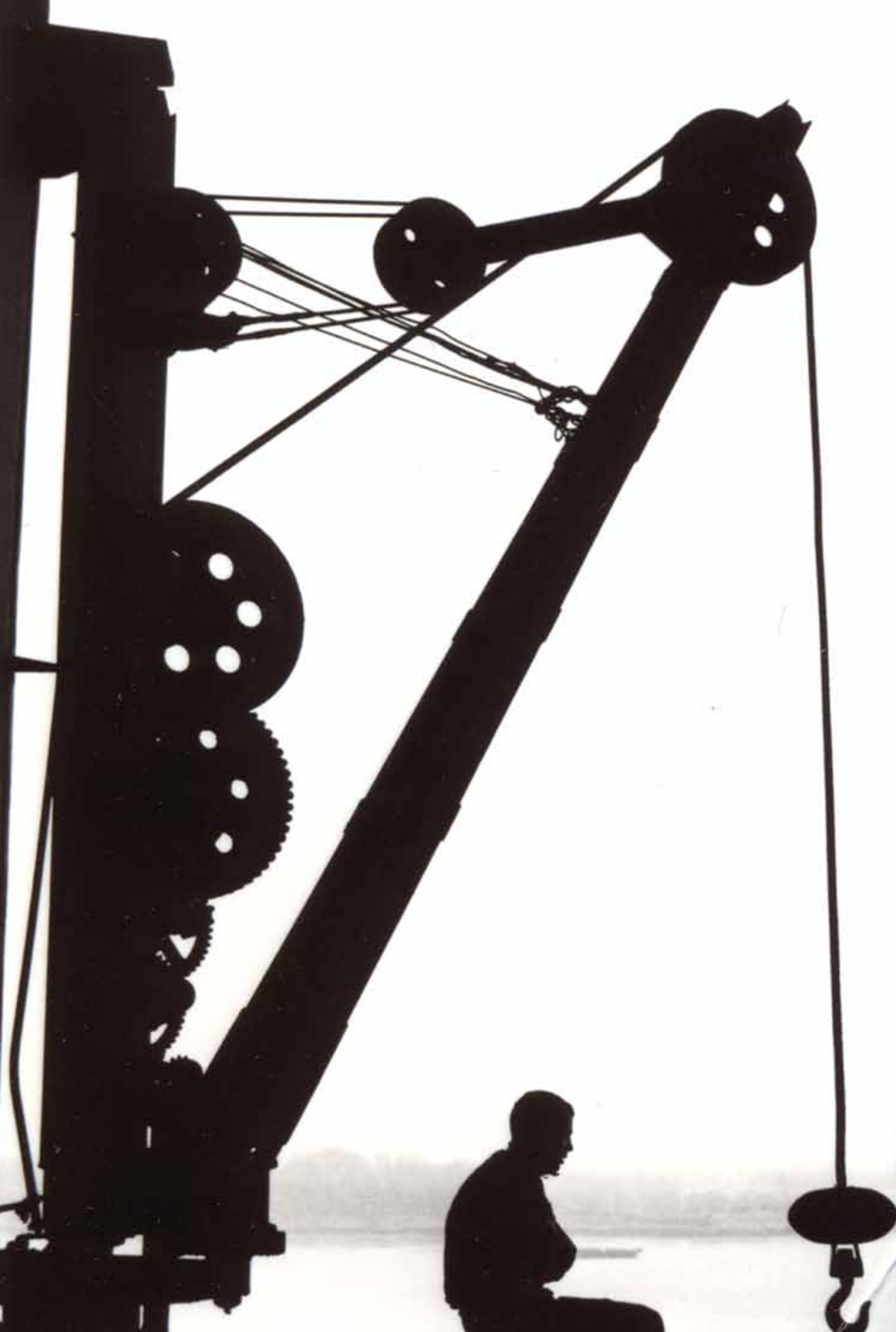
In Deptford’s Creekside, bordering the ancient base of Maritime Greenwich, lay the residue of the ‘glorious’ imperial past: rusting hunks of industrial machinery shimmering in the heat of spring sunshine. Amidst the towering cranes and mechanical claws sweeping through the mountains of metal, the group swarmed and scavenged among the detritus, inspecting and testing the resonant sonic qualities of the waste products of a declining industrial era.

A valuable cargo was hauled a mile down the road to a collapsing, damp and dark cellar in a New Cross squat, replete with exposed lathe plaster, and rotting floor boards. Here, lit only by the odd candle,

TD on an early scrapping foray in the South London Docklands, while Brett Turnbull captures the scene on film



TEST DEPT.



Toby Burdon
sitting on the
Dock of the
Quay down
by the River
Thames

the new equipment was relentlessly pummelled with sledgehammers, club hammers and metal pipes; day after day, increasing in discipline and intensity over the year, reaching a crescendo that bloomed from a cacophonous row into a thunderous hypnotic pulse:

The Perfect Machine.

Use your surroundings!

Use your environment!

Brett Turnbull, witnessed this process and, inspired by the revolutionary Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov, set out to transform the obsessive and compulsive behaviour into revolutionary gesture. This glorification of toil and sweat, an ironic rendering of the unemployed artist into the Stakhanovite myth of the heroic Soviet worker bravely forging a new future, was caught first on film and then on the new celluloid of video.

Test Dept are the parasites that create noise on the pure line of communication from sender to receiver. They are the static that seeks to disturb the governmental 'truth machine', manufacturing jingoism, xenophobia and a distorted caustic reality. The 'purity' of the message is usurped, the static distorts the message; the original message is exposed as a self-referential hoax. It reveals a trickster dealing in militarised neo-conservatism and the vulgar, disingenuous 'harmony, truth, faith and hope' of Thatcherism.³

Industrial Revolution

Having vanquished the foe abroad, in 1984 it was time to turn on 'the enemy within', and the full force of the state was commandeered against the striking miners of Britain. Society is split and polarised in a virtual civil war. Sledgehammers pound, metal on metal, a cacophonous storm swirls and rages against the *Total State Machine* that deployed its full force in waiving the rules of law and attacking mining villages and communities across the Sceptred Isle. Test Dept embrace the challenge in a quest for justice. Reflecting the full force back upon the vampiric host, they display it in its fully exposed and putrefied state, the carcass of Empire laid bare.

Extreme Conditions

Demand

Extreme Responses

Just as Mayakovsky, Vertov, and other revolutionary artists had travelled around the Soviet Union via red 'agit trains', bringing new art and cultural education to the masses in the propagation of revolutionary aims, Test Dept now revamped this model and hit the road in the 'battle bus', embarking upon a voyage of self-discovery as their industrial hurricane swept through the mining towns of Britain.

Propaganda that stimulates thinking, in no matter what field, is useful to the cause of the oppressed. (Bertolt Brecht, 1935)

They engaged with mining communities, encouraging local people to find their own creative voices as another weapon in the fight to maintain their culture and livelihoods. These bonds lay the foundation for the formation of The South Wales Striking Miners

Choir and a challenging new alliance between the traditional and the avant-garde. Radicalised miners such as Alan Sutcliffe from the Kent coalfields took to the stage and voiced their disaffection in a collaborative voice of protest. As they travelled North through the coalfields of Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland and Scotland, Test Dept enlisted another renegade, Alistair Adams, adding the skirl of the bagpipes to their arsenal.

MOP

Test Dept had always sought out distinctive and unusual locations, refusing wherever possible to play in mainstream commercial venues. They built a long-standing relationship with British Rail and launched their prototype collaborative enterprise 'The Ministry of Power' at the Bishopsbridge maintenance

Melody Maker January 1984

We subordinate ourselves to the common good of our art...

Steve Sutherland

"The ego has been submerged into something far greater. Please don't attribute quotes to personalities because we don't want to portray ourselves as stars. The collective is bigger than the total sum of the individuals. We work together... it's all pointing to one force which goes forward. It's not each of us putting something in, it's only when we suddenly come together that it works. Each of us is useless on our own. Together we are a mighty force". (much laughter).

NME December 1982

The Collective Art of Today is Constructive Life,

Chris Bohn

Finding something heroic in their endeavour, they've moulded themselves into inspirational figures of Soviet poster art. Their filmed backdrop finds glamour in the grimed surfaces of sweaty faces, the camera, meanwhile focusing on their gaze - fixed firmly on a faraway, optimistic future. But the drugging drudgery of their toil has unsurprisingly alerted them to the essential lie of propaganda art, to the failures of five year plans and the disillusioning gap between the dream state and the reality, which seemingly makes a mockery of all that hard work and sacrifice.

depot at Paddington Station in London. The scripted performance of *The Unacceptable Face of Freedom*, marking the end of the GLC, features dancers, sculptors, film-makers, poets, political activists, designers and circus performers.

"This spectacle is breathtaking but uncanny. It is exactly like the collaborations of Meyerhold and Mayakovsky -- yet also completely British, as it translates a social moment into hyperbolic theatre."

The popular uprising now becomes an exportable 'commodity': aided internationally by willing agents provocateurs. Test Dept are invited to perform on Britain Day at the EXPO World Fair in Vancouver, alongside Margaret Thatcher, the National Ballet and royalty. In the days before departure an anonymous call is received at TD's London HQ. The planned interventions are mysteriously known in advance:

'I don't want to sound like the iron fist in a velvet glove'... the voice of the establishment is on the hot line with a rhetorical broadside, 'But you wouldn't want to torpedo the UK's chances, would you?' This receives a resounding affirmative response and so it comes to pass.

In the main plaza the temporarily commandeered LCD display reads 'The Ministry of Power welcomes the International Brotherhood of Corporations and Consumers to EXPO'. The Queen's own Royal Lancashire Regimental Guards band plays at the Ministry of Power flag-raising ceremony. Resplendent in their colonial attire of busbies, scarlet tunics and leopard skins, they are silhouetted against the vast backdrop of an arms' trading promotional film. 'Proven in Action' shows British fighter jets hitting their targets; the LCD display ironically comments 'British Democracy in Action' while the flags of all nations are taken down and replaced by the Ministry of Power's own. The military band fails to appear on the second night, withdrawn by decree from higher command. The short-lived disappointment is overcome by the recruitment of ribbon dancers from The Chinese State Circus.

End of Empire

Sonic tools that shaped a landscape within British post-industrial culture came from the flotsam and jetsam washed up as tattered vestiges of the Empire. The vocalisation of this veritable truth still echoes down from the football terraces of Millwall's notorious Lions Den. Home to the lost souls of concrete housing estates, and the ghosts of dockers' past; beer-bellied, middle-aged men, nihilistically chant, 'No one likes us, no one likes us, no one likes us, we don't care' while proudly stating their criminal indifference. With the guttural growl of 'We are Eeeeeevil', they epitomise this wasteland that time forgot.

Nearly a decade later these chants (detoured and re-processed) filter down and are juxtaposed within Test Dept's grandiose collaboration with The Scottish Chamber Orchestra, deconstructing the Pax Britannica. The basis of these recordings was expanded



Toby Burdon and Paul Jamroz in heroic pose

into what turned out to be the group's final large-scale collaborative work. *The Second Coming* was performed at St. Rollox Rail works in Springburn, Glasgow in 1990, the old rail sheds forming a stage the size of four football pitches. The event depicted the UK as a dead society, a living heritage museum, of worn-out empty gestures, while ironically celebrating Glasgow as the new cultural capital of Europe. This was to be the zenith of Test Dept's actions as part of the industrial zeitgeist and as monumental mythmakers.

New World Order and Repetitive Beats

Always eager to take on new challenges and push at perceived boundaries, Test Dept then re-align; the focus switches away from the massive as the digital revolution takes hold.

Fast Forward.

Now in the new age of social austerity, overshadowed by fresh waves of military adventurism, the challenge is still to create authentic work that inspires and stands outside the mediocrity of celebrity culture. The necessity remains to find new ways and means to continue a meaningful public communication, while usurping the machine that threatens to engulf all in a tidal wave of false choices.

Pick up the baton and run for your life ✕

TEST DEPT MANIFESTO ONE: BEATING THE RETREAT

■ THERE IS DEATH THROWN INTO LIFE. A DEADNESS FOR THOSE SHACKLED TO THE FAMILIAR. A WORLD LYING COLD AND INACTIVE, THE MOVEMENT OF NATURE BROKEN AND OVERWHELMED, DESTROYED BY BLIND FAITH IN EFFICIENCY. PEOPLE SUBMERGED BY THE COMMONPLACE, PROGRAMMED BY A TECHNOLOGY WHOSE LANGUAGE OF COMMAND, ANALYSIS AND CONTROL STRANGLES THE MIND WITH A COLD LOGIC. DISLOCATED, THE BODY GREEDS FOR THE NEW, A RELEASE OF POWER, THE CAPACITY FOR RISK. FROM THIS NEED A HUGE SOUND EMERGES DROWNING EVERYTHING; THE REDUNDANT, THE INFLEXIBLE, THE INEVITABLE COLLAPSE. THE OLD AND THE TRIVIAL ARE ANNIHILATED BY A SHEER AND DIABOLICAL INTENSITY. FEAR IS THE FORERUNNER OF FAILURE - THERE IS NO OPPORTUNITY TO STOP, TO TURN BACK, UNTIL THOSE WHO FANTISIZE DEAL WITH FACT!



INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Politicisation during the epic struggle of the 1984/5 Miners Strike and the *Fuel to Fight* tour leading to collaborations with mining communities, including Kent miner Alan Sutcliffe and the release of the *Shoulder to Shoulder* album with The South Wales Striking Miners Choir. New links were forged through further industrial clashes during the Printers dispute against Rupert Murdoch's media empire at Fortress Wapping and the imposition of the Poll Tax. Later shows support the anti-apartheid and anti-racism movements as well as performing with the Right Honourable Tony Benn in 'Voices Against Censorship'

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER (THE ENEMY WITHIN)

Memories from Alan Sutcliffe (Snowdown Colliery, Kent NUM), Kay Sutcliffe (Snowdown Women’s Support Group), Patrick Brown (London Labour Party activist), Jack Balchin (Test Dept sound engineer), Keith Bufton (leader South Wales Striking Miners’ Choir), Alex Bradley (Southampton Labour Party activist) and Test Dept

Test Dept: We grew up during the end of the Labour government when there were piles of rubbish in the streets, blackouts were commonplace and the fabric of society seemed to be breaking down. Under Thatcherism that disintegration continued, although this time driven from the top down and in a more systematic way, and opinions rapidly became polarised. As our understanding of politics grew, we felt the need to position ourselves collectively, to give ourselves stability against the chaos we saw around us. We came to realise that our way of living was positioned outside of the system and by the time of the Miners’ Strike we aligned ourselves with a more definite political line, although we refused to align ourselves inside a political camp or join affiliated groups, such as Red Wedge, for instance. We worked directly with those actively involved in struggle.

Fuel - Foundation of the Nation

Alan Sutcliffe: You got in the cage; you went down to the danger of working with these huge saws and chains. People say they know what a hard job mining is, but I don’t think people really got what it means to do that. For my dad and the previous generations, I feel for them. Whatever I say and do now, they were badly treated; it makes me cry. My dad, a small Yorkshire man, would go down the pit with a pick and shovel on a Monday morning and on a good stint he took up to eight yards. That meant he’d earned a really good wage that day and provided enough energy for 60 people to cook and heat their homes for a week. Just one man, but the same applied to 180,000 miners throughout the country. Who’s producing that now? There was a lot of pride in being a miner, in what you achieved, following on from your family. You saw a direct connection with what you were doing and with your community.

What is a miner, what is he worth?

*When he spends his life in the bowels
of the earth.
Where darkness surrounds him,
the air full of dust,
work is no pleasure,
hard feelings are just....
from ‘Miner’ by Kay Sutcliffe*

AS: For over 100 years every wage and every condition had to be fought for by the union to get us to the standard where we were at in 1984. Over that time this country built its international strength on coal, ‘Fuel - Foundation of the Nation’. Then we were told we were ‘The Enemy Within’, when we had contributed so much, generations of miners and their families, who had bought this country and its industry to its full potential.

*But who reaps the benefit,
when will he learn?
That where there’s incentive there also
comes greed,
And those that earn plenty forget
those in need
When his job is threatened
then he has the right,
to strike for his future and
urge ALL to unite.*

Kay Sutcliffe (poem)

Patrick Brown: The year of the Miners Strike, 1984, found me as chair of the local Labour Party in Deptford. We had decided to put on a benefit to raise money for the miners’ families, enlisting the help of our local arts centre, the Albany Empire. I was pondering how to go about this as I wandered down Deptford High Street when I suddenly received a tap on the shoulder, and was confronted by Jack Balchin and Brett Turnbull who represented a group called Test Dept. Word had gone out that we were organising a miners’ benefit and Test Dept said they would love to headline the event. I had no idea who they were, but was assured by Jack that they were

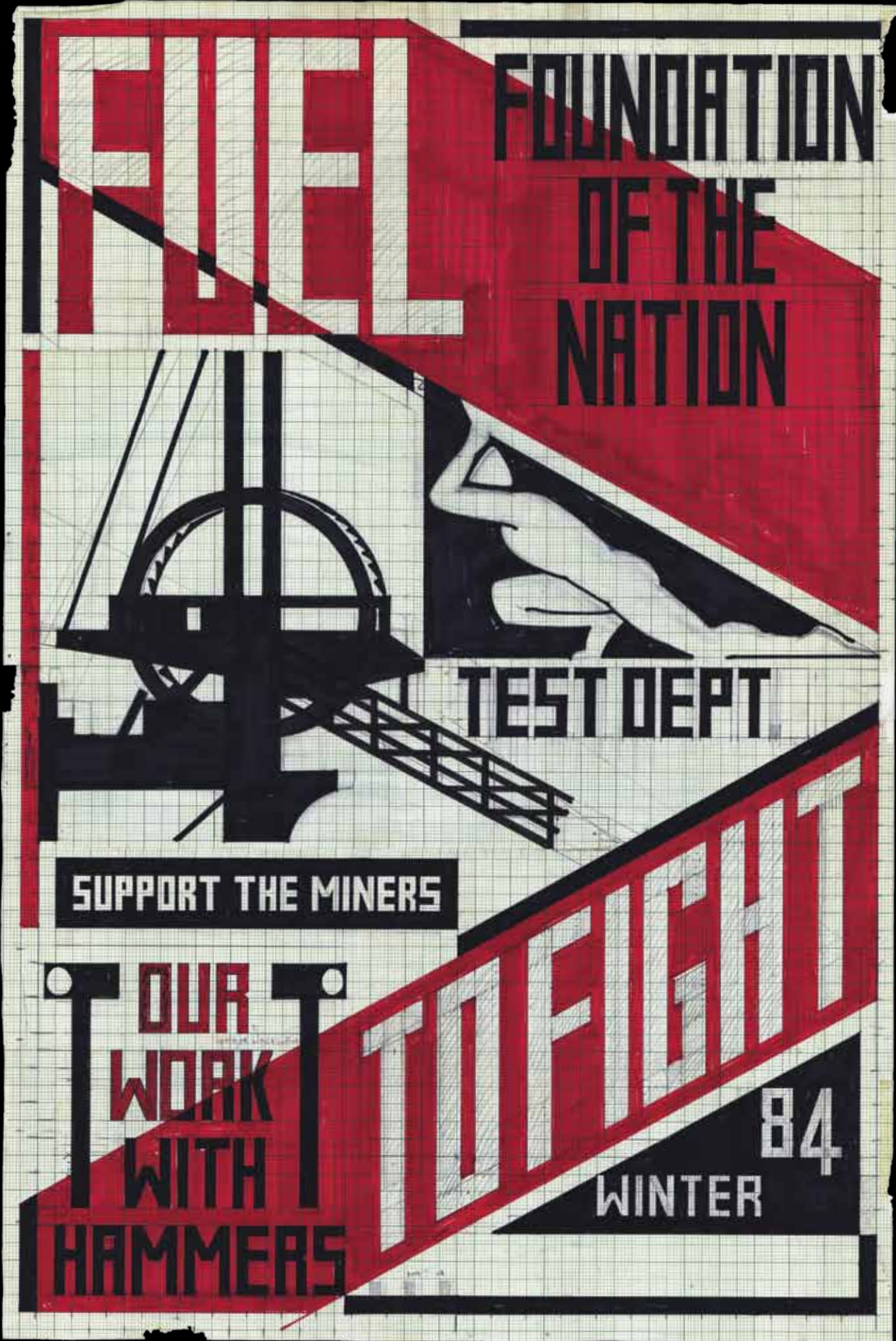
big on the underground scene and would cause people to flock to the Albany. I made enquiries with local musicians like Charles Hayward of This Heat, and was told not to hesitate. I was introduced to five shaven-headed youths, but after some initial trepidation quickly realised that we were fellow travellers. Test Dept told me that they would be happy to organise the entire event, from publicity posters, to support acts. However they requested that I arrange a Striking Miners’ Male Voice Choir, and some films of miners working at the coalface. They elucidated that by using film, sound and lighting, they would transform the inside of the Albany to create the impression for the audience that they were stepping into a coal mine.

Comrades in Arms

Jack Balchin: We helped to create the Welsh Striking Miners’ Choir from this event. I wanted participation from the mining community and the idea of a choir from Wales lit me up. I always loved the miners’ colliery bands and the Welsh choirs, used to see and hear them in my young days tripping about. To have a choir meant asking individual members of different choirs who were willing to get on a bus for a one-off show in London and to just get on with it. A big ask, as choirs at that point in time were not just miners, they were also butchers, bakers, candlestick makers and cops, judges, magistrates even, so it was likely that some choir members would be on the opposing side of the argument!

PB: I contacted all the local Labour parties in South Wales explaining what we hoped to achieve, that we would organise the transport and arrange for our local members to put the miners up overnight, if they could help put a miners’ choir together. Keith Bufton from Crynant Colliery Choir accepted the challenge, and so from

Fuel To Fight.
design for the
1984 Miners’
Support Tour
poster by Brett
Turnbull



the mining villages throughout the Welsh valleys the South Wales Striking Miners' Male Voice Choir arose. I was later to learn that most of them had only met for the first time on the coach up from Wales for the gig, and had spent most of the journey working out what to do together, as the various choirs all had different repertoires.

Brett had a list of 16mm films he wanted to obtain from the National Coal Board (the miners' employers) but asking them to loan us the films for a miners' benefit was unlikely to work, so together we created a fictitious film society, and wrote to the NCB with a request for some training films for our film evening about the history of mining in Britain. The NCB were very accommodating and agreed to lend us the films. Test Dept screen-printed posters and 'Fuel - Foundation of the Nation' t-shirts.

JB: The Albany had its official opening during the run up to the benefit for the miners. Princess Di was the royal puppet in attendance. Somehow we managed to have a picture of Sluggo (Paul Hines), who was screen-printing the posters for the event, having an intimate conversation with her while he held a scalpel two inches from her belly, which at that point of time was loaded with Prince Billy [it actually made the tabloids].

PB: The day of the benefit was a long one, organising all the volunteers who had offered to accommodate the miners. In the age before mobile phones, we had only a vague idea what time they would arrive. The Albany technical crew supplied an upright piano in the canteen so the choir could rehearse, while Test Dept were busy turning the main auditorium into a coalface.

Keith Bufton: I remember the day we arrived at the community centre at Deptford. We pulled up outside and one of the organisers asked if we were leaving the coach there overnight, and, if we were, not to expect the wheels to be on the coach in the morning. When we went inside, one of our members asked where would we put 500 chairs. He was told everyone would be standing. Test Dept were practising on stage at the time and the conductor said



The South Wales Striking Miners' Choir in the Crynant Rugby Club, South Wales

there was no room for us on that stage, the organiser then pointed to a small stage on the floor of the theatre.

PB: I still recollect the images, taking the miners into the theatre just as Test Dept were doing a sound check and I remember being totally taken aback; on the big stage was a huge collection of scrap metal, the centre piece a huge water tank suspended from the ceiling that must have weighed at least two and a half tons, all of it miked up, behind a huge bank of speakers. The sound was unbelievable. The miners, as I recall, were also taken aback watching Test Dept; one commented that they also did that for a living, and somebody said that maybe that was the idea.

KB: When we assembled on the stage we were surrounded by 500 people, an experience we had not had before. The welcome we had was magnificent.

PB: The evening was sold out minutes after the box office opened. The make-up of the audience was amazing. There were punks, skinheads, hippies, and new romantics; in fact it seemed that every alternative young person within a 10-mile radius was there. Then you had your Labour Party members, the men suited and booted, the women dressed to the nines. There cannot have been a crazier mix of people before or since. I remember that loads of people were unable to get tickets, and throughout the evening I was constantly made aware that dozens of people were bunking in, despite our best efforts; even before the show started the theatre was becoming seriously overcrowded.

JB: It was wonderful to behold the audience catching on to the creation of this choir, seeing the punks in the crowd fall for the beauty of their melodious

sound. The same thing happened to the older part of the crowd when Test Dept struck up... they were taken aback by the power and beauty of the deadly racket and violence of the show.

There is an untold power in mixing together two musics of such seemingly diverse backgrounds. An alchemy of possibilities, of confusion and truth that leads to new patterns and a widening of horizons. Those who listen to the choir cannot do so without further appreciating the roots of their struggle. A historical background becomes present with unchanged relevance. Test Dept should not be relegated to the fringes of the avant-garde, neither to the cheap battlefield of the pop/rock arena. Genuine achievement comes from presenting what is happening in front of people's eyes, in a way that abandons the formulas of easy assimilation. Here is a truth shown in a brutal and harsh light - a reverse interrogation.

Angus Farquhar - Diary

PB: I still remember the emotion and the tears when the choir sang 'Land of Our Fathers', the amazing feeling of solidarity for the miners and their families and communities.

JB: After the show we went back to the café that we'd secured as the choir's dressing room. There was a bar and the ale was flowing freely. For a couple of hours, the choir had a good night out and sang their hearts out. Got a tear out of me...

KB: Brian Lloyd (choir tenor) told me he was intimidated by the size of the audience and that he was desperate to go to the toilet, but would not go on his own, and waited for company.

PB: At the beginning I noticed three old ladies aged in their 70s, being trapped right in front of the stage, next to the bank of speakers, as Test Dept took to the stage. Having witnessed the Test Dept sound check, it had taken me at least an hour to get my hearing back, so I knew what was coming. I was very concerned that those three OAPs were going to have heart attacks. I felt responsible and was



Comrades in arms: Stills from the film of the choir in full voice with tenor Bryan Lloyd to the right during his solo on Myfanwy

APPENDIX A

PRESS STATEMENT 11/2/85

'SHOULDER TO SHOULDER'

TEST DEPT & THE SOUTH WALES STRIKING MINERS CHOIR

The aim of this record is to draw attention to the 'Revolution in Communications' which has been taking place in this country over the past eleven months. It is a revolution which has seen a broad section of the community united in an open rejection of Tory dogma. It has motivated many politically disaffected young people to become actively involved in the Miners fight. In fact, it has brought about an exchange of information and opinions on a scale unprecedented in British history, against the will of the government and despite the media's refusal to recognise it.

Test Dept has come together with the South Wales Striking Miners Choir as one example of this revolution and to pay tribute to the thousands of people whose hard work & has helped sustain this strike against a tide of opposition and prejudice. The strike, although originally a dispute between the National Union Of Mineworkers and the National Coal Board, has become a fight for jobs and a fight for communities.

This L.P. record stands as a tribute to the resourcefulness & determination of both working & unemployed people of this country to unite & organise in the face of a common enemy. The tide has turned.



The long march to Snowdown. Above: loading the bus in Deptford, South London at the start of the miner's support tour 1984
Below: the band walk up a hill to alleviate weight as the Black Bus struggles to make it. The front window has already gone missing in action at this point



seriously worried all evening. But reality is stranger than fiction; at the end of the night I was confronted by the big beaming smiles of the women who were still very much alive. They came to me and said that it had been the most fun that they had had in years; in fact that was the first thing that they had actually heard in years, as all three of them were almost totally deaf.

KB: After the concert was over, we were introduced to the Lord Mayor who was dressed in jeans and had a pint in his hand. We found this amazing. Howell Jones remembered that Julie Christie (actress and pop icon of the 1960s) came to listen to the concert and introduced herself to us and he kissed her on the hand.

Later, after a good few drinks, we were picked up and taken to our accommodation, which was kindly provided by the miners' support group. As we started off, I said to the women driving the car that it was cold, and she said 'I don't have a windscreen', a Yorkshire miner had gone through it the day before.

Edwin Stevens told us that the flat he stayed at was full of animals and the bedding was dirty, so he removed the curtains from the window and wrapped them around him and slept on the floor. Meredith Griffiths remembers that when he came home from the concert he got into the bath and poured Dettol into it. Please don't take offence of at the stories: remember it was our first concert in London, and a real culture shock to many of us...

I remember your visit to Crynant, when two of you stayed with us, the others slept in the van. What a night that was! I don't know if you remember it, but people in Crynant did for a long time. Shortly after Phil Bowen and I organised the recording of the choir for the record, which was sent to you for mixing. As a result of the record I was having correspondence from all over the world, some of it not very nice. The choir did another concert with Test Dept in Bristol and went on to perform all over the place.

TD: Following on from the Albany benefit we performed at miners' benefits around the country, often involving support from local speakers and musicians from the mining community such as colliery brass bands. At one such benefit in Bedford, we had a lone bagpipe player in support,

Alistair Adams, who subsequently joined the group.

The Enemy Within

'The Government have tried to bribe and starve the miners into giving up. They have put thousands of policemen on the picket lines who are trained in techniques perfected in Northern Ireland. The magistrates have abused bail conditions by taking away civil liberties without trial. The judges have sequestered funds that the miners donated with the very aim of defending their jobs if the union was under attack. The mass media gathered up there in the Press Gallery have been pouring out propaganda against the miners.'

The Valleys' Star'

Alex Bradley²: I saw the Test Dept Miners' Benefit at Kingsland Hall in St Mary's, Southampton [1984]... at the time I was becoming politically active... their truck had just offloaded tons of metal on the stage... when they started up it was the most enormous sound ever, it blew my socks off. The marriage of music and activism was from another world. The urgency was palpable for us, we couldn't avoid it. Seeing that changed our mind about so many things; musically - using tapes and cut ups, and politically - Test Dept embodied an anger and edge that encapsulated what we wanted to do...

*Your leadership was a myth
With leaders like you
We will spend more time
Drowning our sorrows
Rather than celebrating our victories
I would like to stick you in a field of roses
So you can wander aimlessly for ever*

Alan Sutcliffe

*Lyrics 'Generous Terms' -
A Good Night Out*

AB: It was so exciting, it turned the corner; activism, politics and the expression of music on the edge. I went to my local Labour Party ward and told them I had been to see Test Dept and they were collecting for the miners, we should be doing the same. It was like the bacon sandwich and the bar mitzvah, it was crazy, they just went mad. I was told pretty squarely that that's not what they did. I said I don't know what I'm doing here then. They wanted to kick me out, so I said 'don't worry about that I'm leaving'. I was



NME March 1985

'Shoulder to Shoulder', Mat Snow

'...Through this strike there's been a lot of poetry. This is my one and only poem: justice for the miners, down with the police state, victory to the miners, victory to all working people in struggle throughout the world. Now tonight it gives me great pleasure to introduce...' WOAAAAAAAAARHHH!!!!

That moment when Kent miner Alan Sutcliffe's impassioned speech explodes into Test Dept's 'Shockwork' is amongst the most thrilling I have heard. The drama of that split-second crystallises the epochal circumstances of this LP in a flash...

MELODY MAKER March 1985

Shoulder to Shoulder. Ted Mico

Shoulder to Shoulder is a remarkable example of the uncommon bonds that can be forged in the face of a common enemy. It is a souvenir of the only union between mineworkers and steelworkers on tour throughout last winter's discontent... The sympathy of emotion between the contributors compounds resolve, with a well-focused resolution as opposing fragments of the musical sphere follow one after the other and finally unite... *Shoulder to Shoulder* is a timely reminder that some people have not lost sight of their idealism.

SOUNDS *Shoulder to Shoulder* Review 1985 **Robin Gibson**

And this is important: a successful adventure for two unsuspecting cultures, traditions drawn together with inspiring invention, surging forward with spirit. A lasting, essential (new) solidarity. Made with understanding, effort and respect. (All profits from this record go to support the miners' strike).

so angry and disappointed. I understood then what it meant to be an activist and a socialist really.

There was an intense conviction and compassion with which the miners and their families fought their corner. It affected everyone who became involved in the struggle. So many diverse strands were brought together and the degree of resolve they shared was unbreakable.

Angus Farquhar - Diary

AS: I was in the ‘University of Political and Industrial Struggle’, which used to be called The New Club, built for bingo and strong bitter and was commonly known as our HQ in Snowdown during the strike. When one of our committee members asked if I could drive to Brighton to make a speech and bucket collection, little did I know I was about to meet a unique little crew called Test Dept. They were rehearsing when I went into the room; there were all these lumps of metal all overdue for a good thrashing. I had only gone there to do my business for the NUM and the next thing I know, I was totally absorbed with what was taking place on the stage. At the end of the evening one of the group came to me and said ‘Alan we are coming to your village to do a benefit concert for the Dover support group, we would like you to do your speech and to introduce us.’

When you came to Aylesham [Kent mining village] for the first time you were all made welcome. You and your followers all got off that battered old bus on the green and trooped into our house. There were all sorts, but nobody was judged.

When I introduced Test Dept at Aylesham it was a powerful speech but the big mistake was, I forgot the band’s name; that’s why on the record you came smashing in when you did. I had dropped the piece of paper with Test Dept written on it - and then it was talked about in the press as speech and music colliding with perfect synchronicity. The strike year had been very busy, and I did my duty that night. I hung a beautiful red silk banner given to us by French and Belgian miners above the stage. On the banner was the very thing that TD could use; highly-tuned instruments for the job in hand, the safety lamp and the two crossed hammers. The lamp is to test for gas, to detect danger, (and metaphorically) used



Miners Alan Sutcliffe and Kevin Petch getting arrested on the picket line of Richborough Power Station.

Opposite page: Alan mid-speech and Test Dept in action at the Aylesham Working Men’s Club

to detect the danger coming from the reactionary forces, to protect ourselves from the attacks of our own media and the government. It was difficult to do the speech in front of my own audience; it had been much easier in front of an anonymous crowd. I went all around the country doing these fiery speeches about what was going on, but when I thought about getting up with the band, I was really nervous. But it worked out all right. The speech was a list of things that needed to be done at that stage of the strike: It was never written down, I just had to swallow my fear, get up there and do it.

The first time I got up to speak publicly was to take the miners’ case to the teachers’ strike in Lewisham - I wanted them to get stuck in. As I went up to the microphone there were different elements arguing over whether I could speak or not. I began by saying ‘Do you know what? I’ve learnt more in a year of this strike than you lot could teach me in a lifetime!’ My speech on *Shoulder to Shoulder* comes across as one impassioned plea, capturing the essence of what was going on.³ I had such a commitment to the dispute that I lost all inhibition. I couldn’t wait for the moment, that opportunity to express what I felt.

TD: When we played ‘Fuel to Fight’ [at The Miners’ Welfare Club] in Aylesham, Brett showed the film of the Battle of Orgreave. We came on and were all hammering away and the sound synchronised with the police charging the miners on their horses and banging their riot shields and at that moment a great ripple of recognition ran through the hall; everybody got what it was about.

AS: You made a lot of friends, it definitely fired people up. There were middle-aged women jumping on the tables.

*A voice in the crowd -
why can’t he be heard?
Blue uniforms stifle every word.
He fights a just cause,
that’s why he is there,
But men pass him by without even a care.*
from ‘Picket’ by Kay Sutcliffe

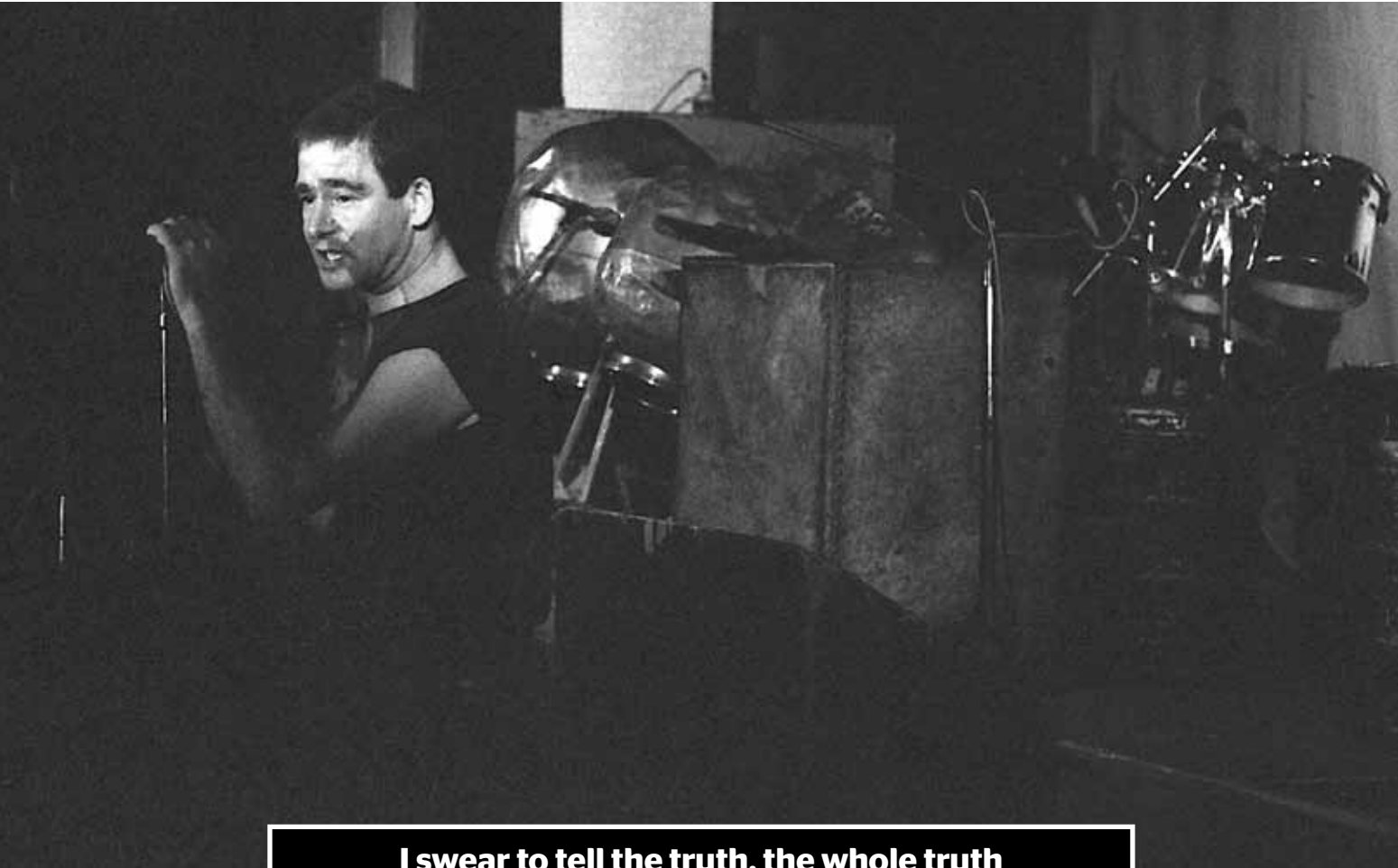
*Richborough Power Station early in the strike, 25 pickets, 150 policemen,
I want to talk to the captain and the crew, ‘you can’t, you can’t come past here’.
Something about the ship and the attitude of the police, I had to try. I jumped up onto this wall and tried to make my through the police lines, this policeman came running at me, I dived flat on the ground, I was dragged off to this van, a policeman showed up with a camera, they dragged me out the van, dropped my feet, I put my arms in the air and slid straight to the floor. They picked me up, this young officer pulled my hair, he couldn’t manage it, another one pushed my head back with the palm of his hands, another one had me in a headlock, this is how my photograph came out.*

Alan Sutcliffe - Lyrics to ‘Statement’
The Unacceptable Face of Freedom

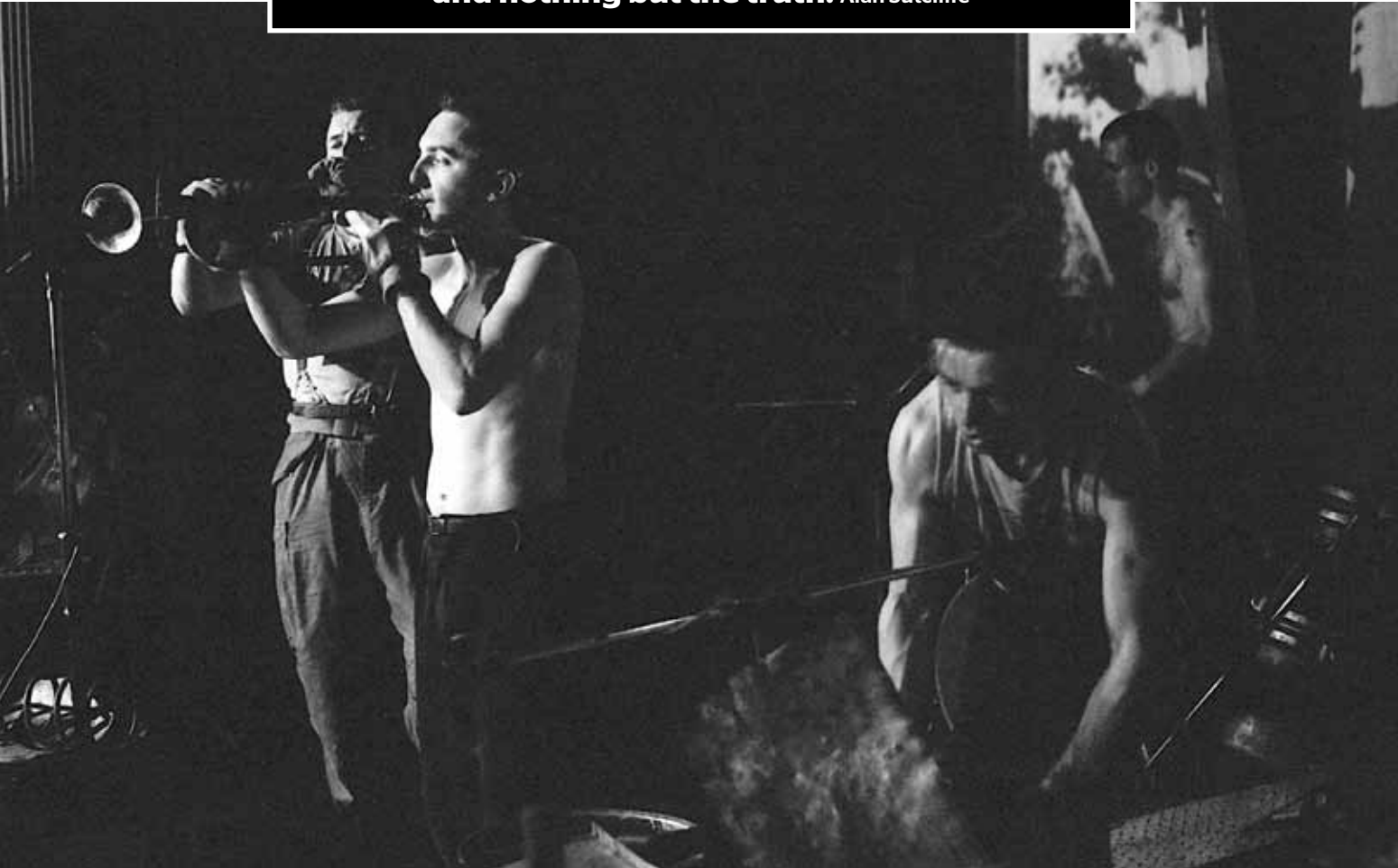
TD: It became normal after that for the police to use the noise of beating their shields as a weapon, but that was the first time that we saw it in England. If you look at the footage of the Miners Strike or Brixton riots in the 1980s, compared to marches or protests today, you now see a paramilitary force with helmets covering their faces, identification numbers removed and given the authority to use force without hesitation. The Miners Strike was the beginning of that escalation.

AS: During the recording of ‘Statement’, TD asked me how I felt about things now. I recalled George Orwell’s *1984* and the rats (the police) eating the hearts out of us, and so we added it over the monologue.

*They carried me down this dirt track and the first copper kept on threatening to rub my face in the puddles. I don’t care what you do to me, I’m not frightened anymore.
These bastards are out of control.
They put me in this other van, another*



I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth
and nothing but the truth. Alan Sutcliffe





I learned in the 1972-74 strike the only time working people have control over their own destiny is when they're in struggle.

Alan Sutcliffe

Clockwise from above: Paul and Alan in the Welfare; donated food supplies arriving in Aylesham; Paul Hines in conversation; Kay and Tricia Sutcliffe singing 'Women of the Working Class'; Children's Christmas party at the Welfare; Alan and Tricia dancing



copper tried to handcuff me to this wire rope, he can't work the handcuffs ... We landed at the police station, the door flies open, they dragged me out by my feet, carried me spread-eagled across the bonnets of cars..., forced me on the floor of the charge room, pulled off my boots and my belt... into the cell, out of the cell, photographed with a number above my head, extensive finger printing, they let me out after five hours, I stepped out into the street, I paused for a while outside...

Who's giving these bastards the right to do this to me?

Alan Sutcliffe - Lyrics to 'Statement' The Unacceptable Face of Freedom

AS: My bail conditions after being arrested were that I couldn't go picketing anymore, so that led to me speaking at rallies and bucket collecting and led me to Brighton and meeting TD and so full circle.

TD: We were working hard on stage, it was very physical and demanding and there was empathy from the audiences in mining communities, the first time you saw us play, you mentioned it was like your work in the pit (a bit tongue in cheek) as you did that on a daily basis).

AS: What was the connection with the political situation I was in and what was going on, on that stage? For all intents and purposes what was taking place on that stage was both the total destruction of one way of life and the building of a new way of life. I could relate to the imagery straight away and my first thoughts were 'What the hell are they doing, building a tunnel up there?' That's why I wore my mining gear, work vest and overalls on stage; I thought I'd better show them. I would have loved to have worked down the mines with these people, they seemed to be working a lot harder on the stage than I ever did down the pit.

AS: I was in Cork, Ireland, and I came across an inspiring book of poems by IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands. During the strike I started looking through this book of poems and one in particular made me feel that what we were going through with the government and the police, felt the same as what had happened to the Irish. 'I Fought A Monster Today.' I could never get my head around it, or believe that somebody could go to jail and starve themselves to death for something they believed in politically. 'I am

trapped and all I can do is resist.' It seemed during the year-long miners' strike that is all I could do. Resist. And many more like me, in defence of our great industry and our great communities. My bag went missing in Vancouver. I immediately thought it was the Irish connection (I was about to read Bobby Sands' poem 'I Fought A Monster Today' at the World Expo).

Time and time again I hear people praising Thatcher for the destruction of the trade union movement, which makes me sick to my stomach because we now witness the incredible spectre of the phone hacking. All this was definitely developed during the Miners Strike (can you see them paying out compensation to the miners?) Prominent leaders in our community were tapped; you could hear it on the line, the clicking. The security forces were giving out disinformation, you could take pickets down to a power station that wasn't even running and the police would be straight onto your case. It was rumoured that even Arthur Scargill's chauffeur was a spy paid by the agencies. **TD:** Angus had a recorded conversation of himself played back: the phone rang, he picked it up and the end of the previous conversation was played back to him. A piece of intimidation? Or a mistake? The technology wasn't so advanced then.

The police and the magistrates are here to protect the rich from the poor. Thousands of honourable working-class women and men Pass through this class persecution.

Kellingley Picket

We arrived late in Leeds for the following evenings Miners benefit gig at the University after a recording session in Bradford for the *Shoulder to Shoulder* album. We arose early the next day and drove down to join the picket at the nearby Kellingley Colliery. The frosty ground outside the pit gates was crunchy underfoot as the darkness awash with a floodlit glare highlighted the orange NCB logos on the donkey jackets of the gathering miners. In the cold early morning air the acrimony was pierced with witty Yorkshire banter, belying the tangible and rising vehemence as the pickets and police lines faced off. **Test Dept.**

Surveillance 1: Miner's Phone-taps

During the Miners' Strike we heard a click before putting the phone down after a conversation with some people who were helping to organise the tour, something switching-off on the line and changed the acoustics of the call. After another similar conversation there was a little ring and we picked it up and heard the ghost of the end of our conversation, that was confirmation that we were being tapped. Alan often talked about it, the miners and key supporters knew that all their phones were tapped in the village. It was very obvious, it wasn't sophisticated, it was quite easy to pick up. **Test Dept.**

Generous Terms, Generous Terms.

This was state bribery
We have had five years of
psychological warfare
We have had: The Incentive scheme,
The Overtime, The Strike, The Scabs
Voluntary redundancy, Voluntary
transfers. This was state bribery
This was psychological warfare

Alan Sutcliffe - Lyrics

'Generous Terms', A Good Night Out

Yet the divide within the unions becomes wider, many become gutless in fear of their own positions. In a climate of rising desperation few will take risks. As the government and its allies in the press are cracking open the champagne to toast the end of the strike, 30,000 miners defy management to call for an amnesty for sacked miners from their ranks. In doing so, they confound the mainstream conspiracy about the 'Scargill dictatorship' and show ordinary people willing to lay their own futures on the line.

Angus Farquhar - Diary

Masters and slaves, for you to be masters
you must have slaves
We shall never ever be your slaves
I will be your judge I will be your jury
I will be your executioner
I will not pass this responsibility
on to anybody else
I will never ever forget
I will never ever forgive
I will never go mad
I will never commit suicide

Shockwork

I feel tension in every muscle
I labour, I struggle
I work to build this nation
From the wreck of the past

I work, I toil
In blood and sweat
I toil

Stakhanovite!

Shockwork!

I stand alone
My task complete
As others watch
Follow blind

I stand alone
Scarred in stone
My dreams crush
Statues to dust

Stakhanovite!

Workshock!

Shockwork!

*I will always Fight Back
Fight Back Fight Back
Fight Back Fight Back*

Alan Sutcliffe – Lyrics
'Generous Terms', *A Good Night Out*

AS: They were definitely efficient when it came to sweeping history under the carpet fast. I worked as a miner, on and off, for 19 years: at Snowdown, Tilmanstone, and Betteshangar. The management were never as thorough at running the pit as they were at finishing it all. You never saw such organisation all the time it was running. They were giving men carte blanche to salvage all the metal; everything was coming out and people were living in the pit to salvage it. It would all go elsewhere to be used. 'Desperate times call for desperate measures'. At Snowdown (Colliery), my mate had been at the top of the headgear doing maintenance and had taken a camera up there. If you had seen the pictures, the design of the pit wheel... The demolition company had just laid it flat on the ground, but the photos of it standing upright were far superior. Would you rather see it lying down like that or standing up good and proud?

'The British people will never, never, never allow the Tory party to destroy the miners, their families and their communities, because, given the choice of the ballot box, they prefer the quality, decency, dedication and loyalty of the miners to the get-rich quick people who support the Tory party and have contributed to the creation of this strike.'

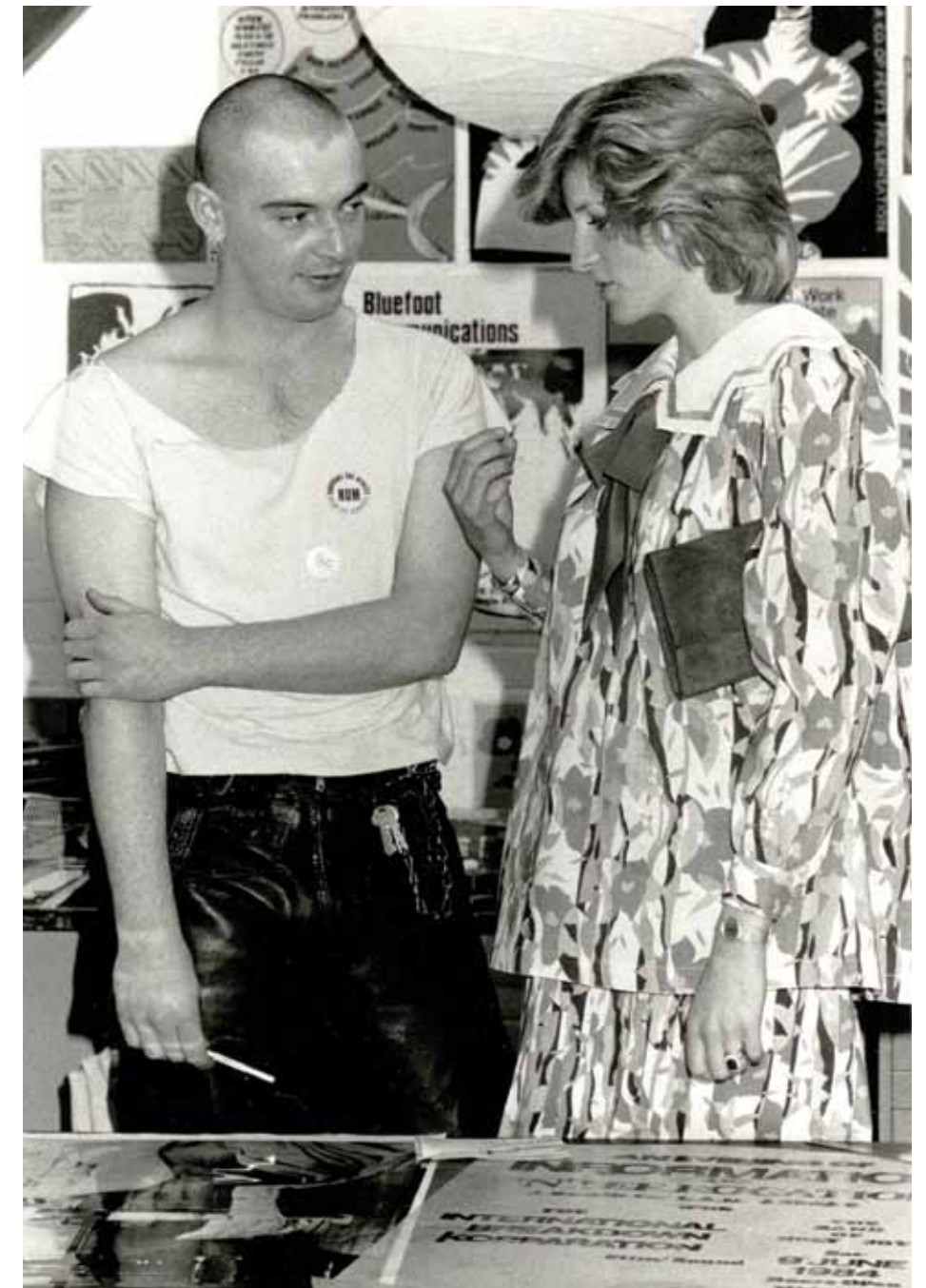
The Valleys' Star

*It stands so proud, the wheels so still
A ghost-like figure on the hill
It seems so strange there is no sound
Now there are no men underground.*

*What will become of this pit yard
Where men once trampled faces hard
So tired and weary, their shift done
Never having seen the sun.*

*Will it become a sacred ground
Foreign tourists gazing round
Asking if men once worked here
Way beneath this pit head gear
from 'Coal Not Dole' by Kay Sutcliffe*

AS: They tore the heart out of the community. We've now got the Kent



Paul Hines in conversation with Princess Diana at the Albany Empire, Deptford

Miners' Gala back again, but there is still a feeling of guilt from some; feeling guilty for celebrating something that's gone and for not supporting it like they should have done at the time. It's a sad thing but it had to be voted on for the colliery to be shut. People voted to shut it. At the Gala you could still see the ones that were committed. They were all talking and the memories were flowing, but there were others who were just sitting there. Even to this day to listen to 'Take Me Home' from *Shoulder to Shoulder*, gives me incredible fond memories of my own father and his generation that provided fuel for the foundation of this nation.

Kay Sutcliffe: We've got a very close community down here. Women have responded who were not only the wives of miners... It was so important to me to show people that women supported the strike and the union. It was my anger that moved me to action. Previously I had always taken a back seat and let others speak for me... If someone had told me I'd be getting up and motivating other women I'd never have believed them.

*We don't need bullets,
We don't need bombs
When we as working people
get together in unity*

*We will blow them all away,
Like autumn leaves on a river
It is so simple, Enough is Enough!*
Alan Sutcliffe – Lyrics
'Generous Terms', *A Good Night Out*

AS: [In the aftermath of the strike] we put on a community play, I was the narrator, and it was a lovely thing to be involved in. It was called *Over and Under the Earth*. We also performed in Devon and there were a load of Tories there, we upset them; they said 'we haven't paid ten quid to be shouted at'.
The beautiful thing of life is to express

ourselves; we are put on this earth to evolve (awareness) I want to say how important it was for me to be with the band expressing myself. TD gave me this facility by saying 'Alan, there is your stage, there is your microphone, please be yourself, tell us what you know. Speak,' It was my opportunity to resist. A voice to counter that media crush, resilience, resistance. Looking back it was fucking fantastic, describing my life and going back to the real roots of Test Dept. My life during the strike year, I was living in a test department, and it had reached an incredible peak with what I was doing with

you. I had the materials and you gave me the facilities.
Even the simplest word has a vibration; it goes through people and affects them. **PB:** Little did I know at the time that the tap on the shoulder would change my life.
JB: It was a very interesting passage of time and, in context, we led the way and opened up yet another fissure in the social fabric. Someone has to do it. There will always be the next generation wishing to kick the shit out of the establishment. We had our moment.
KB: Don't forget. We all made history. ✕

**Reinstate the sacked miners, release the jailed miners,
the fight goes on** Alan Sutcliffe



Top: banner for the Aylesham Women's Support Group by Lesley Hanney.
Bottom: poster for the Albany Empire benefit.



Opposite page: Northern England, Miner's support tour '84



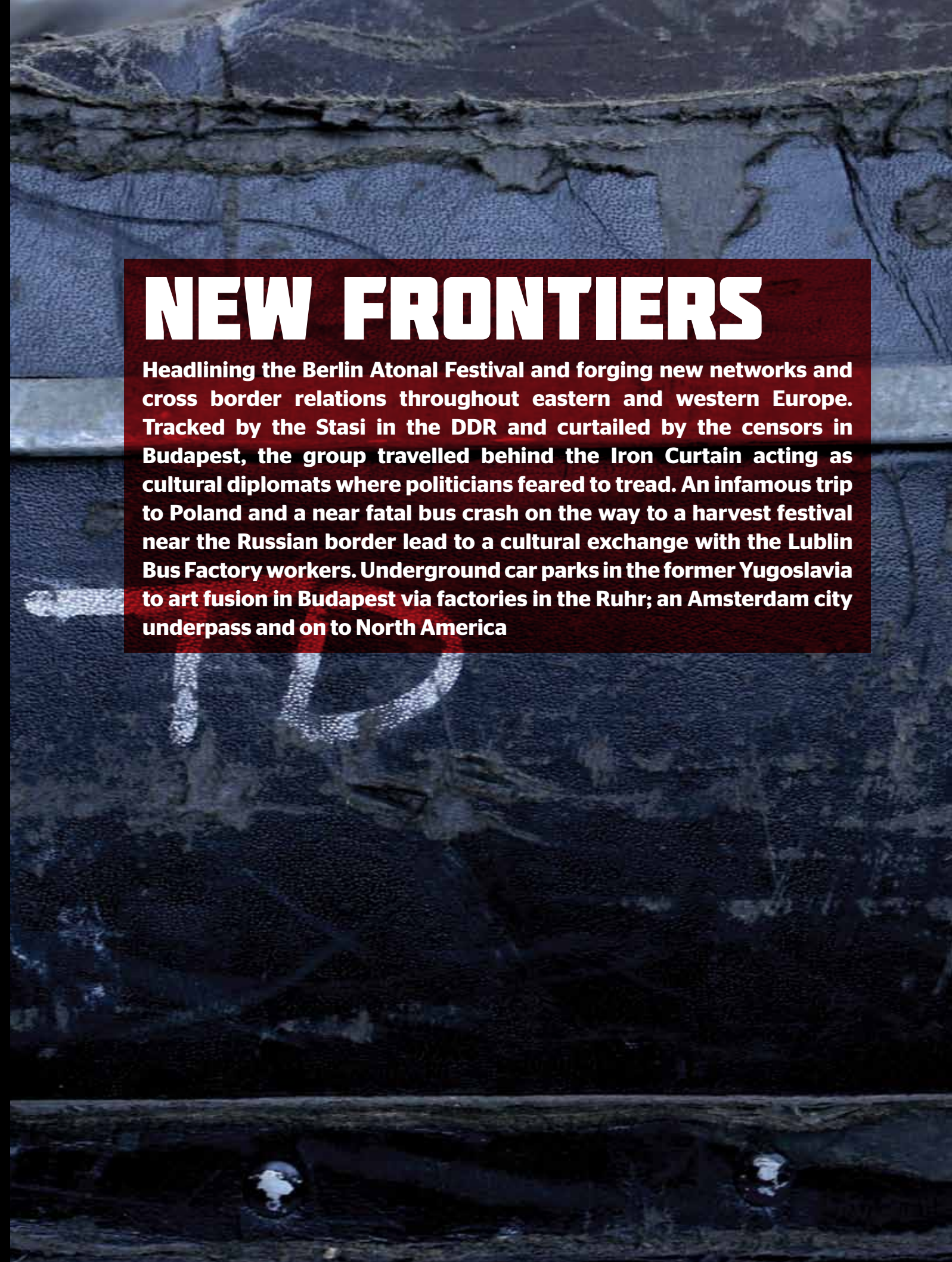
Above: TD in Aylesham '84 and '86
Below: Strike committee





NEW FRONTIERS

Headlining the Berlin Atonal Festival and forging new networks and cross border relations throughout eastern and western Europe. Tracked by the Stasi in the DDR and curtailed by the censors in Budapest, the group travelled behind the Iron Curtain acting as cultural diplomats where politicians feared to tread. An infamous trip to Poland and a near fatal bus crash on the way to a harvest festival near the Russian border lead to a cultural exchange with the Lublin Bus Factory workers. Underground car parks in the former Yugoslavia to art fusion in Budapest via factories in the Ruhr; an Amsterdam city underpass and on to North America



I'll meet you in Poland, Baby

After that night we needed some days of recovery and to prepare for the trip to the East, to socialist Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. We took the last chance of western communication by using telex and ‘free’ telephone.¹

Gary started the engine and the adventure began late afternoon. My driver’s licence for trucks made me the number two driver of the tour bus. After we passed the West Berlin/DDR border I got the chance to get a feeling for that right-hand driven bus on the DDR motorway by driving 50 km towards the Polish border; just 50 km, not enough. The DDR border control had been very tricky, the East German guards didn’t have a clue what was standing at their gate. A bit of left-wing sing song and explanations on Western art in bureaucratic German eventually bored them and they waved us on over the bridge across the river Oder. On the other side, the Polish guards wouldn’t make any problems for us after they checked the official invitations, and Eastern Europe was open for us. It was about midnight.

Arriving in Warsaw in the early light, those who had slept awoke to a sun-filled morning in that large pained city. We made our way through the streets filled with late-socialist buildings into a little park, where the office of Alma-Art was located. Alma-Art was a student organisation, the only one allowed to organise concerts with Western European bands. The September sun was still shining as we waited for the organiser of the Poland tour, Peter Mcketer (I still haven’t forgotten his name). A bit of a commotion took place up in that little office and commotion turned into chaos. Mister Poland-concert-organiser appeared and, after a smart ‘Dzień Dobry’ (hello), he explained that Test Dept were in Poland one month too early and everything was arranged for the next month, October. From one second to the next Poland became a white sheet, twelve days off, no concerts.

The sun was still shining.

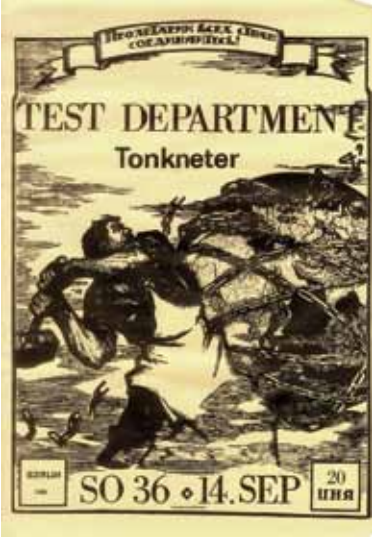
After a while another guy appeared, Mister Marek Z., and he promised to try everything to organise the concerts sooner. A man like a bear, with a face filled with humour and a real Polish character. Poland, the country famous for improvisation.

Alma-Art booked us into Hotel Victoria at the river Wisła and asked for two days of patience.

We got Polish artists’ per diems – 250 Zloty, worth DM1.50 on the black market. We promised to feed ourselves with that money, except drink and cigarettes. Anyway, a packet of Polish proletarian cigarettes, Popularne, cost 18 Zloty. The sun was still shining.

We spent our days on the streets and squares of Warsaw and we spent the nights in Riviera, the official club of Alma-Art. We had the blues and a bit of Pet Shop Boys in our ears, vodka in our brains.

I felt the weight of history lying on my shoulders walking around the streets of Warsaw. The generations of my father, uncles, grandfather, had come here 40



Left: Atonal Berlin 1985 poster
Right: SO36 Club Kreuzburg Berlin 1985 poster

years earlier like the beasts of hell, murdering 50 per cent of all inhabitants and destroying the city three times over. What guilt. What pain would I have inflicted, what would I have done if life had put me as a German in this situation at the wrong time, wrong place, wrong everything?

On the third day, a Thursday, Marek appeared with the new tour list. On Saturday Test Dept would play in Warszawa National Stadium, on Sunday Zamość, Łódź and then again Warszawa. Respect, to you, Polish bear.

Warsawa National Stadium

On Saturday we had to be in the stadium at midday to get the gear in. Test Dept were due to play at 3pm. It was the biggest spectacle this stadium had ever witnessed, it was the first time, five years after the first strikes, that the Polish government had allowed 65,000 people to meet in one place. Many bands played and other performances took place. The main act, OMD, flew in from West Berlin at night. The only problem was that there were no active microphones. ‘You have to do playback.’ So it happened like it happened, Test Dept did a wonderful playback. We stayed the whole day in the stadium, signed about 400 autographs, watched the shows; it became pretty late and a bit boring. At 1am we were able to get the gear out from the centre of the stadium, after OMD had been escorted back into the free West. Later we had some *bigos* (cabbage soup with sausages) in a club and at 2am started towards the next gig in Zamość, 20 kilometres from the Soviet border, where 10,000 farmers wanted to present their kids to an English pop band as part of their Dozynki (Harvest Festival).

Zamość or Lublin

After the bus left Warszawa, everybody tried to get some sleep except Gary, who was driving, Marek Z. navigating and Jack B. watching them both and everything around him.

The doze was interrupted when we felt a big bang,



Test Dept in action at Tiergarten for the Atonal Festival

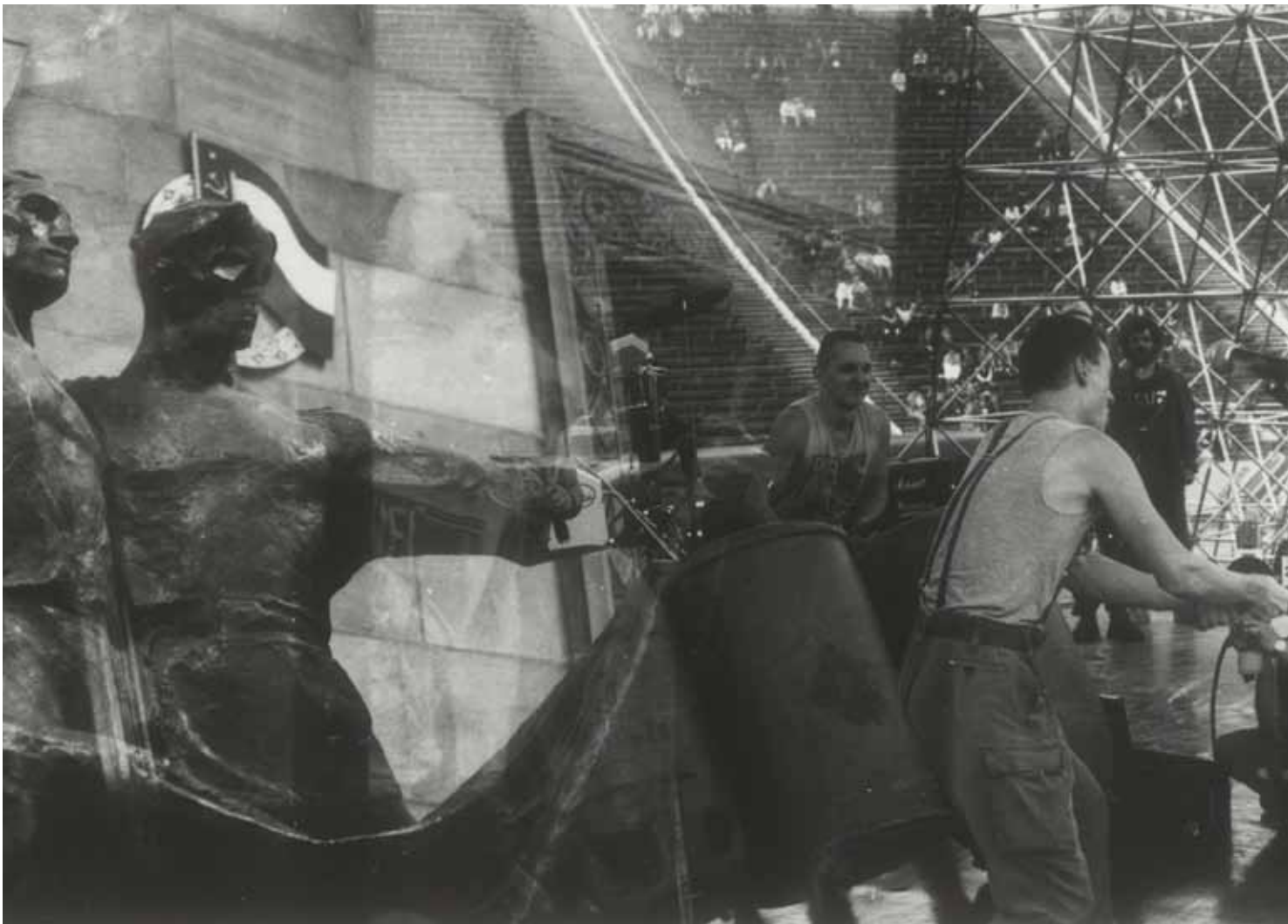
heard crushing metal and glass shattering. An accident, which shook the bus heavily! In shock we went out and saw what had happened. Gary had missed a soft left bend and crashed into a solid traffic sign. It was a real big socialist traffic sign, 1.8m x 1.8m and weighing 120 kilograms. We were lucky as behind that sign was a low wall, which belonged to a cemetery. If the Polish traffic department had decided to put that sign in another place the bus would have gone over that wall, probably overturned and crashed into the graves of the cemetery. What would have happened to the 1.5 tons of scrap metal in the back of the bus, separated from the rest of the cabin only by a thin wooden plate I leave to the imagination of the reader! Nevertheless, the whole front of the bus was smashed, no front window, no lights and a screw holding the steering mechanism was fucked. The sun came up at dawn, and luckily, after one hour, a polish master-craftsman-arrived on his moped. After guiding us to his farm, he took off the screw and cut a new imperial inch screw as if he performed this feat of engineering every day. We were on the road again.

We had to have some breakfast, so we crawled ahead and after eating some *bigos* again in a dodgy hut down the road... ‘OK Jochen, it’s now your turn to drive us to Zamość . No front window, no lights and we have 10,000 farmers waiting for us, so hurry up!’ Toby B. pulled the leather flight hat of a spitfire pilot over my

head, put a blanket over my legs, and off we went. There was a bit of late September rain. Well-dressed Sunday afternoon Polish people were walking along the road; there weren’t so many private cars in the mid-1980s. People stopped walking, wiped their eyes and waved to a miracle starship called Test Dept tour bus driving along at 75 km per hour.

The city of Lublin appeared with another 90 km to go to Zamość . We drove into the city, people watching the miracle starship, and then there was that tricky triangle crossing. Nothing tricky, but I had never seen a triangle crossing in my life. ‘Right! Right!’ good old Jack B. shouted. ‘Of course old bean, towards Zamość, it’s the right way.’ ‘Jochen! Right! Right!’ and the real meaning of that directional word became brutally clear. A public socialist tram, built for eternity, had stopped in front of us. I hit it on the left; of course I didn’t manage the right swerve. Only 10cm short, but we hit it. The polish tram changed into a rock and the Test Dept tour bus was torn open like a tuna tin, 4 metres on the left side. FINISHED. Here the tour would end. Finished. I drove the tour into disaster. Just 10 cm, but that was enough.

I was brought to hospital, to be checked for alcohol and shock; the bus and Test Dept were brought to another Hotel Victoria. I couldn’t smile for ages, but Marek Z. threw out his net to keep everybody together and in a good mood and started to do his masterly work



of improvisation. A journalist appeared at the accident, a lot of talking. 'Pechowe tournee Angielski' was written in a corner of a page of *Trybune Ludu*. That journalist was a strange person, he liked to speak German, so I had to translate from English into German. Marek Z. tenderised him with an 18-hour vodka session and persuaded him to print in that government newspaper, *Trybune Ludu*, that the Lublin Bus Factory, the only bus factory in an area of 400 km², would repair the bus for nothing if Test Dept would do a solidarity concert for the victims of the cruel earthquake in Mexico City...

All the time it was grey and raining a bit.

In Lublin we encountered history with a visit to the Majdanek concentration camp memorial followed by a radio interview in the Lublin Bus factory. I had previously visited Dachau concentration camp and knew too much of German history through my antifascist self-education. This memorial takes your breath. A large 80 x 30m barracks complex, one barrack filled up with suitcases, one with mountains of glasses and another piled high with shoes; big shoes and very small shoes.²

It was time to go to the factory. On the way Marek Z. asked for politeness and gratefulness towards the chief of the factory, the mayor of the city and other local politicians who would be present as far as was possible. It was a bit too much for my young soul, first those barracks and now that interview. During the interview

I translated from English into German, and a Polish journalist who asked to be called Heinrich translated from German into Polish. Everyone was satisfied. We entered into the big factory hall. 'Tawarish, tawarish' It was a real socialist factory hall. We swapped cigarettes with the workers: 'Why you don't smoke Western cigarettes?' and the Testis [Test Dept] wanted to play there for the workers in that atmosphere. The workers of the land of improvisation fitted the glass from the back into the front frames, Polish lights and side glass and metal sheets underneath, even a colourfast coat of paint and the bus was repaired. We were on the road again.

The concert happened in the Town hall. The well-dressed Wednesday evening Polish people with their well-dressed kids, factory workers and dignitaries of the city filled the place, taking your cushioned seats. It was the first real concert in Poland, it appeared like a loud theatre show, nobody understood what was going on, but I was sure they felt the power.

Łódź

The next day we started towards the next normal gig. On everyone's lips some of the old country trucker songs like 'On the Road Again', happy that the bus was running. Marek Z. did a big sleep, after all the action and responsibilities, what a fantastic performance. Years later he told me that the factory tried to charge

Live scenes
from the
Warsaw
National
Stadium show



Alma-Art \$2000 for the repair work, but a deal was a deal. The venue was pretty small, there were not enough microphones, but even England is a country of improvisation and Jack Balchin did a fantastic job on the mixing desk. After the concert the audience couldn't believe that this kind of music and power had hit their town and everybody was really pleased.

Return to Warszawa

The next day we arrived in Warsaw, and everybody had a funny sentimental feeling of coming home. One week of advertising had been enough to fill up the venue. The 500-seat hall was packed. It was a metropolitan audience; the women were very beautiful, the men very arty. Test Dept gave a terrific performance and the after-show party was really Polish: food, drinks and a bit of satisfaction.

I told the boys that I wouldn't drive the bus anymore. I left the tour in Warsaw. Test Dept continued through southern Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia and I rejoined them later in Munich, where I acted as road manager. There they played at a festival held in a big music hall, then went on to Frankfurt, to an old factory hall in Oberhausen, then Hamburg, Den Bosch and Amsterdam. I was impressed that the boys didn't get weak after all that travel and all those shows.

Respect comrades. ✕

Lublin Hotel/Popularne/ No Money For Coffee/ European Network

We were staying in the Victoria Hotel, waiting for our bus to get fixed, and had almost no money, each of us had a budget of about \$1 a day. I shared the lift with the North Korean National Gymnastic team. When I emerged at the bottom I bought a pack of Popularne cigarettes from the cigarette booth, I think they were 18zlotys, less than a penny in UK cash. I went into the dining area and ordered a coffee at the counter. The lady gave me the coffee but then asked for payment and I couldn't understand what she was asking for so held out my hand with the change in it. It turned out I didn't have enough money and I turned away sheepishly leaving the coffee and saying sorry. Another woman in the room had watched the whole thing and came and paid for me. I said thank you profusely. Everyone in the room was amazed and expressed it; it was beyond comprehension to them that a Western man was staying in this hotel but couldn't even afford a cup of coffee. GC



The 'Black Pig' and The 'Battle Bus'

There were two buses: The 'Black Pig', a Leyland Leopard midi coach, which resembled a police bus after we had painted it matt-black, causing confusion and suspicion on the picket lines and road blocks of strike-torn Britain. The 'Battle Bus' was named so after the Polish crash; it was a larger bus - an early 1970s 60-seater blue and white Seddon Pennine IV coach. Both were converted with the main section containing seats and tables behind the driver and passenger seats and six bunks at the back with a bulkhead separating it from the section at the back for all the equipment. **Test Dept**



CONCRETE SOUNDS AND FOUND SPACES

Found sound and disused industrial locations. The TD sonic arsenal grew through the use of raw industrial materials blended with early electronics and proto-sampling technologies. The first release, a product of the cassette culture of the early 1980s, created from live recordings with backing tapes mixed on a Porta-studio. Recording work developed spatially in a Wapping warehouse and a meat cold storage plant in Brixton as well as state-of-the-art studios and a classical sound stage. Live, the harsh tonalities and intense physicality tested sound systems to their capacity, leaving trails of trashed microphones and wrecked PAs in their wake.

Ben Young

COLD STORAGE

A recollection of recording with Test Dept in the unique surroundings of Brixton’s Cold Storage studio

Cold Storage was a large Industrial fridge room, originally used for storing meat, in a disused pie factory in Brixton. The factory was taken over by Acme Housing, turned into a facility for artists, and the fridge room was used as a rehearsal space for London-based group This Heat. It was later transformed into a recording studio by Phil Legg, from Essential Logic, Steve Rickard and myself when first an eight-track and later a 24-track tape machine were installed. The fridge was lined with metal sheeting and had a unique sound. We used to tape contact mics to the metal walls and experiment with different ambient recording techniques.

The first time Test Dept booked the studio in 1983 I knew I was in for an intriguing experience when they arrived with a lorry load of scrap metal. They unloaded the metal and other objects, which made noises when hit, smashed or stroked, and started to experiment, trying out different ideas by recording in various parts of the factory with miles of cable running everywhere. We then embarked on recording some of their early demo work (including the early recording ‘Efficiency’ which went onto the Touch *Meridians 1* cassette) and later on we worked on the pre-production work for The *Unacceptable Face of Freedom* album.

We made loops of recordings – a few bars of Prokofiev for instance – mashed it up with effects and then played an oil drum in the car park over it; all possibilities were investigated. It was exciting having no constraints, but not always easy working without boundaries or confines, trying not to get lost in an infinity of ideas. The limited digital sampling and absence of sequencing gave those early recordings a raw, organic handmade quality.

In 1984 Test Dept sent me to South Wales to record the Striking Miners Choir for the album *Shoulder to Shoulder*. The miners made me a cup of tea on arrival and were all ready to go. We recorded it in a church hall and the sound gave me a lump in my throat. They had been on strike for months but had a quiet dignity about them, very moving. ✕

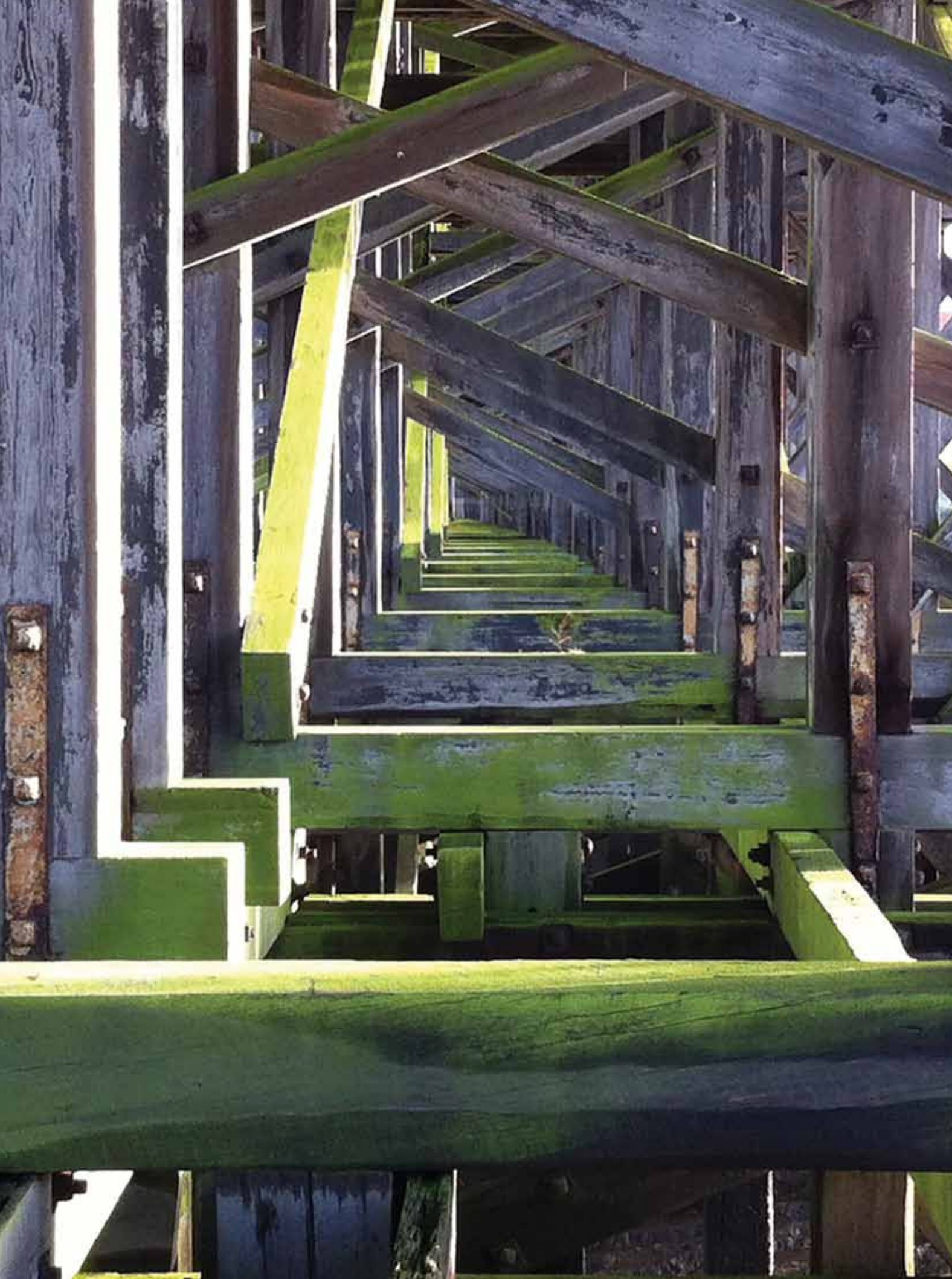
Opposite page: an early found instrument included the marking ‘Test Dept No 6’ from which the name for the group was taken. The No 6 was later dropped



Test Dept

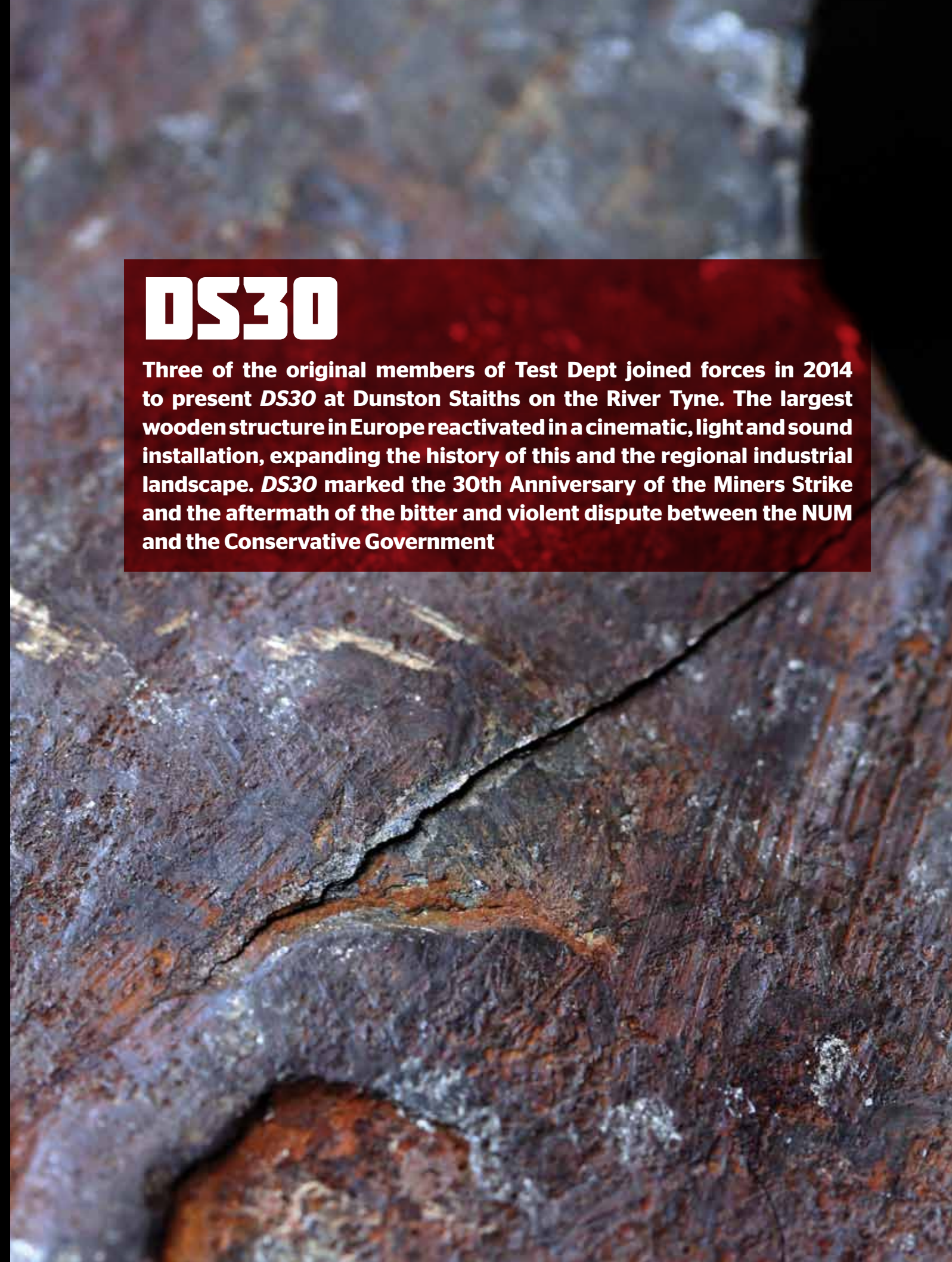
BECKTON COKE AND GAS WORKS

The vast Beckton Coke and Gas Works located on the banks of the River Thames at the edge of the East London docks was once the largest gas works in Europe. It was built to manufacture coal gas and other products from coal brought down by ship from the Durham coalfields. It had been closed in 1970 upon the discovery of North Sea Natural Gas and stood empty, disused and decaying when TD came to explore the creative possibilities hidden amongst the crumbling architecture and rubble strewn tracts.



DS30

Three of the original members of Test Dept joined forces in 2014 to present *DS30* at Dunston Staiths on the River Tyne. The largest wooden structure in Europe reactivated in a cinematic, light and sound installation, expanding the history of this and the regional industrial landscape. *DS30* marked the 30th Anniversary of the Miners Strike and the aftermath of the bitter and violent dispute between the NUM and the Conservative Government



Alexei Monroe

DS30: SAILING THE INDUSTRIAL STYX

An account of the impact and lasting impression of DS30

When writing up an event after it's happened, metaphors and associations often appear that weren't apparent at the time. These are the products of reflection, deduction and extrapolation, sometimes they are even embellishments – the event can be a catalyst compelling the writer to reach an association or conclusion quite distant from the event itself. Yet other events produce associations instantly and unarguably as they unfold. DS30 was one such and the associations were both unexpected and unshakeable. The first was cinematic and the second mythological/archetypal.

Throughout the book we have seen how successfully Test Dept worked at scale and used *militant monumentalism* as a weapon; staging performances on a scale and with a fervour that would previously have been the preserve of the British imperial state, of totalitarian spectacle, or of cinema (which was a key source and medium of Test Dept's original aesthetics). Yet as the boat rounded a corner in the Tyne and we caught our first glimpse of Dunston Staiths illuminated by searchlights, it was not Soviet avant-garde film or 1980s video work that came to mind. Instead, I was forcefully reminded of the dramatic scene in *Apocalypse Now* when the patrol boat rounds the bend in the Nung river and the crew are confronted by the surreal spectacle of the military entertainment complex – the floodlit Hua Phat base hosting a morale-raising semi-pornographic propaganda show for the cynical, war-weary troops.¹ The purpose of the event in the film is entirely (but unsuccessfully) escapist, whereas *DS30* was anti-escapist.

The installation was on the scale of a state intervention, but the video/film took spectators back to the scenes of old battles and the fury of combat (including reminders of the mass confrontations between miners and the para-militarised police that marked the civil war by other means that we think of as the strike). Massed ranks of riot police, fleeing women and children, ambulances, the graffiti: LIVING IN A POLICE STATE, the defiant figure of Arthur Scargill and his amply over-fulfilled prophecy about what would happen if the miners were defeated. Accompanying this were archive scenes of Test Dept's live assault and the

massive slogan FIGHT BACK.

Then the most striking section – one of erasure and de-construction: time lapse(d) black and white sequences of mine buildings and the empty or superficially landscaped sites that have replaced them. A reminder of the erasure of memories. Not just of the strike, but of the social forms of struggle that these sites of conflict gave rise to. The use of sound and electricity temporarily woke the sleeping industrial giant of Dunston Staiths, and symbolically woke the dead. The growing chill that descended after nearly an hour spent on the open deck added to its impact, leaving the crowd silent and stunned.

The second indelible association arose on the melancholic journey back along the empty, foggy Tyne, soundtracked this time by the soothing but tragic voices of the Striking Miners Choir from *Shoulder to Shoulder*. As people began again to speak and to converse in hushed tones, their 'Take Me Home' gained a new resonance, 30 years after it was first recorded.

Sailing away from the abandoned pier, soon to revert to lifelessness, the Tyne became the Styx: the corrosive river of death that transported souls between the worlds of the living and the dead.² Within the Stygian gloom and cold of the post-industrial Tyne on a March night, we seemed accompanied by the ghosts not just of those in the films, some long dead; but of much more: of industry and solidarity and an alternative to neo-liberal undeath.²

Yet besides haunting and mourning, there was respect for the old struggle and a renewed awareness of the value of resistance rather than a slow descent into apathy or despair. The fact that an event like this is possible and that it can still remind and inspire shows the continued potential of the tactics Test Dept have pursued. I was not at Titan Arch or Cannon Street. I didn't pass through the SPG lines at Paddington in 1986. I didn't witness, and thanks to a de facto media blackout I didn't even read about, Test Dept's performance at Expo 86. Yet I did witness *DS30*, an intervention as epic and uncompromising as those of three decades ago.

No-one can say they weren't warned – No-one has any excuse to forget. ✖





DS30 Manifesto

Fuel Foundation of the Nation
The heart of an island
Built on a bedrock of coal
An eternal grave

Industrial sabotage and wanton
destruction
The rich seam of corporate privilege
A doctrine designed to shock
Political Social Cleansing

From Deep Coal to Data Mining
Beneath the earth Behind the screen
Fear and Oppression
Inequality Insecurity
Submission

Industrial heartlands
Urban poundlands
Zero production
Zero hours contracts
Short termism profit and greed

Cumulative impact Assessment
No Pity No Shame No Future.
Homogenisation
Sterility and safety
Systematic deregulation

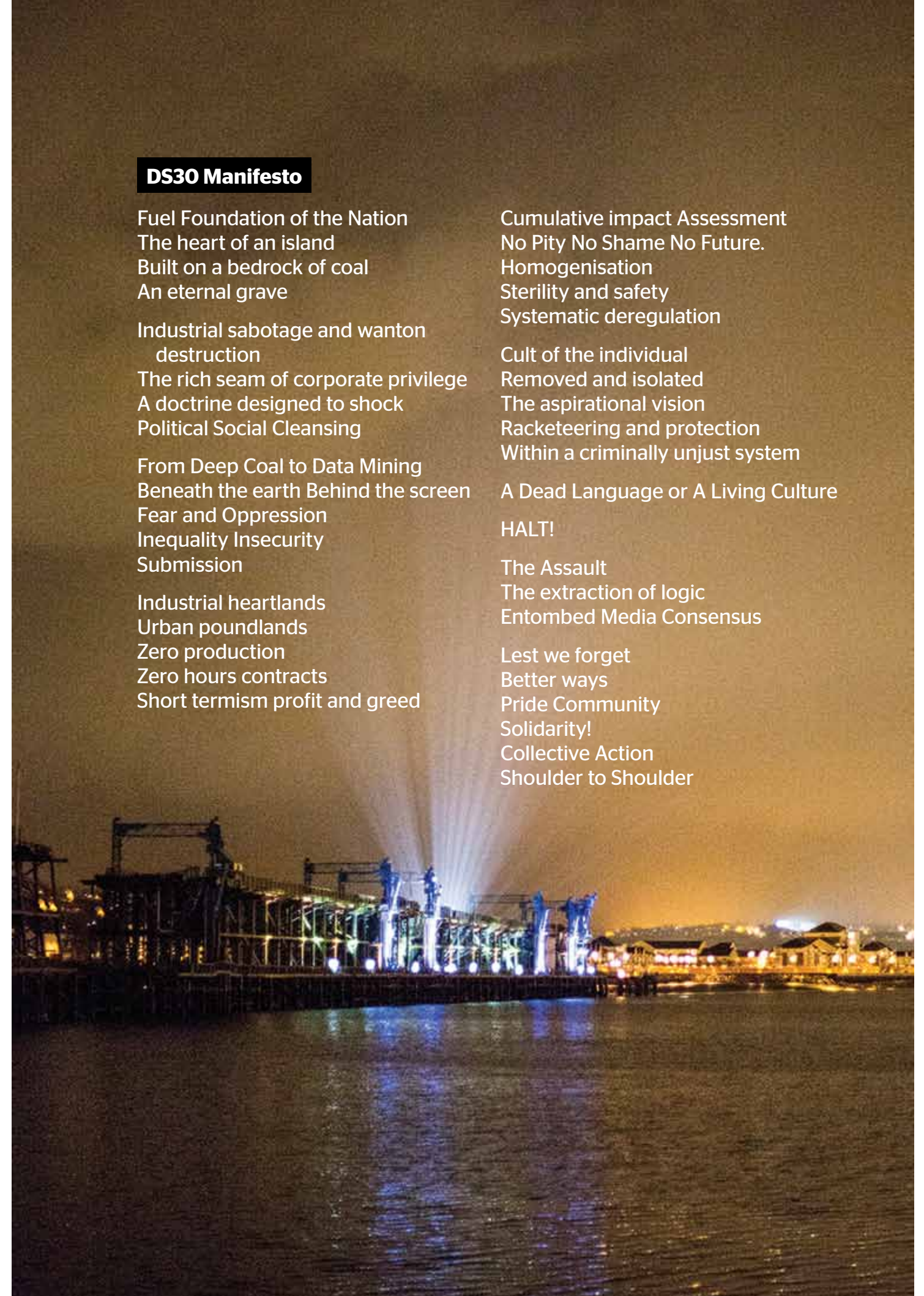
Cult of the individual
Removed and isolated
The aspirational vision
Racketeering and protection
Within a criminally unjust system

A Dead Language or A Living Culture

HALT!

The Assault
The extraction of logic
Entombed Media Consensus

Lest we forget
Better ways
Pride Community
Solidarity!
Collective Action
Shoulder to Shoulder





DISCOGRAPHY

1982

1982/3

1983

1984

1985



History (The Strength Of Metal In Motion)

MC 1982

Test One - The first TD self-released cassette.

Last Rites • Shockwork-Workshock • Prokofiev's Dream • Drum And Body • Death of God • Gdansk • Dawn of Humanity • Blood & Sweat (Stakhanovite) • WWBC • Kindergarten • Disneyland • Feeling It All • On Pain • Chain Gang



Ecstasy Under Duress

MC 1982/83

Originally released as a cassette in 1983 by Pleasantly Surprised. A collection of live material and a few early studio dabbings. Capturing the raw energy of the groups early performances it features recordings of some of the groups first underground events.

Hunger • Compulsion • In Uniform • Slow Hunger • Spring Into Action • Gdansk • Shockwork • Efficiency • On Pain • Beating Retreat



Compulsion

Vinyl 12" Single 1983
TEST 112 Some Bizzare.

The first TD vinyl release, recorded in mobile studio under Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping, London.

Compulsion (Machine Run) • Pulsations 1 & 2 (Human Run)



Beating The Retreat

Vinyl LP/CD 1984
TEST 2 & 3 Phonogram/Some Bizzare.

TD's debut LP originally released as a double vinyl box set through Phonogram.

The Fall From Light • Kick To Kill • Total State Machine • Plastic • Inheritance • Cold Witness • Sweet Sedation • Spring Into Action



Shoulder To Shoulder -

Vinyl LP 1984
MOP 1 Some Bizzare/MOP.

Recorded with the South Wales Striking Miners Choir and featuring a speech by Alan Sutcliffe (Kent NUM). All profits went to support the Miners' Strike.

Comrades In Arms • Myfanwy • Fuel To Fight (Live) • On Barriers And Bridges • Take Me Home • Shockwork (Live) • Stouthearted Men • Comrades • Roman War Song • Gdansk



'Atonal' Berlin & Hamburg 'Live'

CD 1985
Dossier DCD 9038.

These recordings were made at the Berlin - 'Atonal' Festival and the Kampnagel, Hamburg In 1985

'Atonal', Berlin: Fall From Light • Total State Machine • Shockwork • Gdansk • Kampnagel, Hamburg: Kick To Kill • Fist • 53rd State Of America

1985

1986

1987

1988



European Network

Live MC 1985

Live East-West European tour released by The V2 Organisation, 1985. MC in box with insert information.

Victory • Kick To Kill • Fist • Corridor Of Cells • Fuckhead • 51st State Of America • Exorcise • The Fall From Light • Total State Machine (Efficiency) • Shockwork • Lament



The Unacceptable Face Of Freedom

Vinyl LP/CD 1986
MOP 2 Some Bizzare/MOP.

A soundtrack of the times.

Fuckhead • 53rd State of America • Comrade Enver Hoxha • Fist • Statement • The Crusher • Victory • Corridor Of Cells



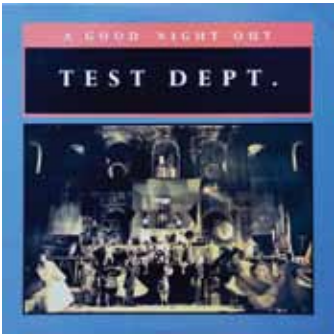
TDA - The Faces Of Freedom 1, 2 & 3

Vinyl 12" Single/CD 1986
MOP12.1 Some Bizzare/MOP.

Released under the pseudonym TDA (Taking and Driving Away).

12" dancefloor single: Faces of Freedom 1, 2 & 3.

Featuring Neutrament (Face 1); Rico (Face 2)



A Good Night Out

Vinyl LP/CD 1987
MOP 3 Some Bizzare/MOP.

From Demonomania and others.

A Good Night Out • Long Live British Democracy (Which Has Flourished And Is Constantly Perfected Under The Immaculate Guidance Of The Great, Honourable, Generous And Correct Margaret Hilda Thatcher. She Is The Blue Sky In The Hearts Of All Nations. Our People Pay Homage And Bow In Deep Respect And Gratitude To Her, The Milk Of Human Kindness) • Generous Terms • Victory • Cha Till Sinn Tuille (We Shall Return No More) • Demonomania • Voice Of Reason

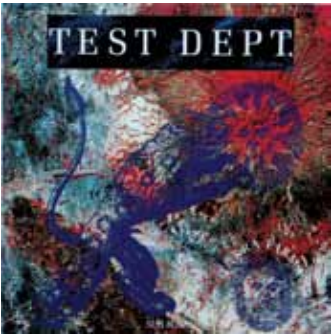


Victory/Cha Till Sinn Tuille

Vinyl 12"/7" Single/CD 1987
12 MOP 13 Some Bizzare/MOP.

Single from A Good Night Out LP

Victory • Cha Till Sinn Tuille • Demonomania (Remix)



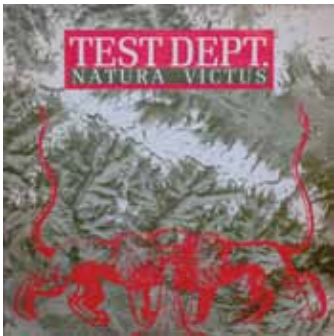
Terra Firma

Vinyl LP 1988
SUB 33009-12 Sub Rosa.

Album first released by Sub Rosa Records in Belgium marking a thematic transition to the investigation of man's relationship with the natural world.

Nadka • Siege • Current Affairs • Dark Eyes • Terra Firma: I. Terrae Motus - The Earth Moves • II. Surgit Ventus - The Wind Rises • III. Natura Victus - Nature Victorious

19881989199019911993



Natura Victus
Vinyl 12" Single/CD
SUB 12005-13 Sub Rosa.
1988
Single from the Terra Firma album with a remix by Mark Brydon and Fon Force.
Human Mix - mixed by Rico Conning at Guerilla, London • *Mix Inhumana* - mixed by Mark Brydon, edited by Robert Gordon for Fon Force, Sheffield.



Materia Prima
Vinyl LP
DEPT 1 MOP.
1989
Soundtrack of the collaborative show with Dutch dance group Werk Centrum Dans.
Landrites • *Firedance* • *Pipe And Didgeridoo* • *More Of Everything* • *Apocalypse* • *Funeral*



Gododdin (Test Dept / Brith Gof) -
Vinyl LP/CD
MOP 4 MOP.
1989
Soundtrack to *Gododdin* with Welsh theatre company Brith Gof.
*Sarff (Entry of the Warriors)** • *Gwyr A Aeth Gatraeth (Prologue)* • *Arddyledog Ganu (Heroic Society)* • *Glasfedd Eu Hancwyn (Beserking) +* • *Trichant Eurdorchhog (Journey)* • *Yn Nydd Cadiawr (Battle)* • *Truan Yw Gennyf Fi (Lament) **



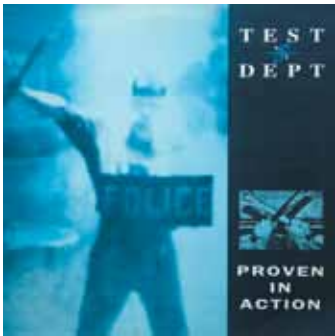
Pax Americana
Vinyl 12" Single/CD
MOP 5 Jungle/MOP.
1990
Single with three mixes In protest at the start of the first Gulf war of the 1990s
Pax Americana (Jihad mix) • *Pax Americana (Desert mix)* • *Pax Americana (Oil mix)*



Pax Britannica
Vinyl LP/CD
MOP 6 Jungle/MOP.
1990
Part soundtrack to the epic 'Second Coming' show.
Movement I: Pledge • *Jerusalem* • *Heavens Command* • *Characters of Light* • *Agincourt* • *Accusation*
Movement II: Territory (The Epic of the Race) • *Movement III: From the Land (As An Fhearann)* • *Movement IV: God, King and Law* • *The Cracked Facade* • *Farewell the Trumpets* • *Movement V: The Legacy (A Lasting Presence)*



New World Order
Vinyl 12" Single/CD
MOP 7 Jungle/MOP.
1991
Single recorded against George Bush Senior's New World Order.
New World Order • *N.W.O. (Crusader mix)* • *N.W.O. (Chemical re-mix)*



Proven in Action
Vinyl Live LP/CD
DEPT 2 Jungle/MOP.
1991
Recorded live at New Music America, Montréal Musiques Actuelles, November 1990.
Jerusalem • *Siege (of Quebec)* • *Agincourt* • *Empire* • *Territory* • *Wojna (War)* • *The Emigrant* • *Vastness*

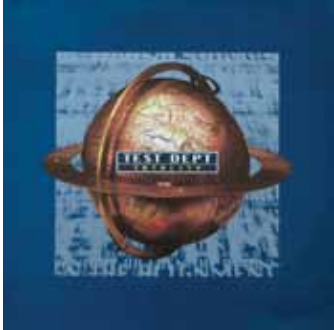


Bang On It!
Vinyl 12" Single/CD
MOP 8 Jungle/MOP.
1993
Fuel to fight for the alternative party scene.
*Bang On It! (T*A*O Systems Mix)* / *Bang On It! (T.C. Ruff House Remix)*

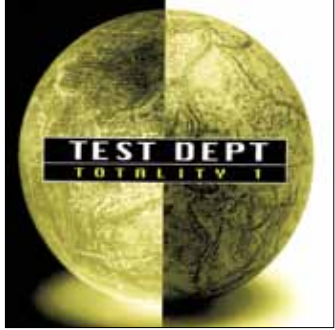
1994199519961998



Legacy
Vinyl LP/CD
FREUD 047 Jungle/MOP
1994
A compilation of TD singles and remixes from the period 1990-1993 released by Jungle Records.
A Bird or a Bullet • *New World Order** • *Pax Americana (Jihad dub edit)** • *The Legacy (a lasting presence)* • *Critical Frame of Mind (lyrical mix)* • *Bang On It! (metal edit)* • *High Resolution Retina**** • *Critical dub* • *Interchange (Berlin mix)* • *Bang On It! (TC ruff house remix)*



Totality
Vinyl 2xLP/CD
KK 140 KK Records.
1995
The first major release from TD for five years, Featuring KatieJane Garside on vocals.
Once The Red Dust Passes...(Pt 1) • *Chillo (Sunrise)* • *Hole* • *Gripper (A Lifetime Of Knowledge)* • *Genius* • *Timebomb* • *Woza Moya Woza (Come Spirit Come)* • *The Point* • *Gamma Ray* • *Rolihlahla (Stirring Up Trouble)* • *Chillo (Sunset)* • *Al'Rabih (The Spring)* • *Zazen* • *Once The Red Dust Passes...(Pt 2)*



Totality 1
Vinyl 12" Single/CD
KK 135 KK Records.
1995
First single for the Belgium label. Feat. KatieJane Garside on vocals.
Yellow Lotus Side: Zenergy • *Zen Essence* • *Green Lotus Side: Tabla Rasa* • *Tabla Razor*



Totality 2
Vinyl 12" Single/CD
KK 139 KK Records.
1995
Second single for KK Records.
Genius No. 7 (Magic Number) (Subgenius Remix) • *Tortured Genius (Sympathy Nervous Remix)* • *Ingenuous (Juttajaw Remix)* • *Il Est Un Sac De Merde (O.T.P. & Scream Team Remix)*



Totality 1 & 2
EP/CD Comp.
KK135 & KK139 KK Records
1995
EP of First two singles for Belgium's KK Records.
Yellow Lotus Side: Zenergy • *Zen Essence* • *Green Lotus Side: Tabla Rasa* • *Tabla Razor* • *Genius No. 7 (Magic Number) (Subgenius Remix)* • *Tortured Genius (Sympathy Nervous Remix)* • *Ingenuous (Juttajaw Remix)* • *Il Est Un Sac De Merde (O.T.P. & Scream Team Remix)*

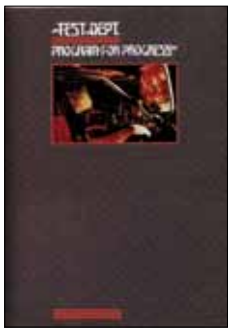


The Enigma of Doctor Dee / Vena Cava
Vinyl 12" Single/CD
KK 173 KK Records.
1996
Single with taken from the album Tactis for Evolution looking at Elizabeth 1's 007, Dr Dee.
The Enigma of Doctor Dee • *Vena Cava (Lifeblood)*



Tactics for Evolution
Vinyl LP/CD
1997
Final studio album from this incarnation of the group.
The Enigma of Doctor Dee • *Unforgiven* • *Voyager* • *Atlantis* • *2 Ghettoes* • *Dark Light* • *Motivation* • *Miotica* • *Vena Cava (Life Blood)* • *Rat*



DVD





Programme For Progress
Video/DVD
Phonogram/SomeBizzare.
1984
First major release by TD. In a statement of wider intent, the group released this video/DVD before their first album (*Beating The Retreat*) to highlight the equal importance of the visual aspect to their work.
Cold Witness • *Shockwork* • *Compulsion* • *The Fall From Light* • *Total State Machine* • *Mirbach* • *Inheritance* • *V.F.M.*

TIME LINE OF EVENTS Who, what and when...

TEST DEPT		
Graham Cunningham • Paul Jamrozy • Angus Farquhar • Paul Hines • Toby Burdon • Brett Turnbull • Jack Balchin Tony Cudlip • Gus Ferguson • Martin King • Russ MacDonald • Simon Hyde		
Ancillary Members Gary Wignall • Driving/ Maintenance Alistair Adams • Bagpipes John Eacott • Trumpet/ Orchestration Andy Cowton • Percussion/ Programming David Coulter • Multi-Instrument Neil Starr • Percussion Eddie Real • Percussion ADDITIONAL VOCALS Alan Sutcliffe Sarah Jane Morris KatieJane Garside Arianne Schreiber Other Performers / Musicians CHOREOGRAPHY & MOVEMENT Liz Ranken Jacob Marley Company of Cracks Lindsay John Sarah Sankey Phil Griffin Alex Rigg Teresa Barker Ra Ra Zoo • Arial work OTHER VOCALS Liz Hughes-Jones Paul Jones The Schola Cantorum, Edinburgh Catherine Jauniaux Lucie Russell Martine Thoquenne Annie Villanueva-Brandt Tony Benn MP Daniella Nardini Valerie Edmond Liz Ranken OTHER MUSICIANS Gene 'Scotty' Muir • Bugle John E. R. Hardy • Multi-Instrument Audrey Riley • Cello Fiona Thompson • Harp The Scottish Chamber Orchestra	James MacMillan • Conductor Terry Edwards • Trumpet/Saxophone Dini Presman • Horn Ashley Slater • Bass Trombone John Harborne • Trombone Paul Taylor • Trombone Ian Watson • Trumpet Ben Mason • Tuba John Bell • Brass Jeremy Upton • Brass Jill • Trumpet Max Davies • Organ Claudine Steenackers • Cello Paul Mardikian • Double Bass Bill McGee • Double Bass John Parry • Piano Rico Conning • Piano Brian King • Piano PRODUCERS Ken Thomas Ben Young Ian 'Trigger' Tregoning Flood Lu Edmonds Joe Hornof Rico Conning Caberet Voltaire Genesis P Orridge F. M. Einheit (Mufti)™ DIRECTORS Teddy Kiendl Andy Wilson Tech Crew SOUND Jack Balchin Mat Aerts Russ MacDonald Ken Thomas Lu Edmonds Joe Hornof Kate Tierney Tim Foster Levi Tecofsky FILM / PROJECTION Brett Turnbull Simon Hyde Jed Town George Saxon Stefan Zivanovic Martine Thoquenne	DRIVING & GENERAL ASSISTANCE Gary Wignall Yann Devereaux Roy Hanney Jochen Leidke Enrico David Phil Pearlman Ross Williams LIGHTING Yann Devereaux Sputnik Lighting Melvin Benn David 'Loobie' Sherry Tom Donnellan Phil Supple STAGE DESIGN Tom Dixon Sylvie Starshine Jochen Leidke Cliff McLucas COSTUME / BANNERS Slags (Andy & Adie) Lindsay John Lesley Hanney Simon Costin Edwina William-Jones TOUR / MANAGEMENT Jane Rolink Sue Yates Hay Schoolmeesters Pat Brown Cameron Eccles Giles Parbery Marek Zbrzezny Jolly Rodger Phillip Woods ADMIN Cameron Eccles Simon Farr Rick Cole Other Assistance Vince Kosa György Soos Miljenko Rajakovic Myra Davies Alessandro Ceccarelli Giovani Versari Benedetta Cucci Mauro Minella BK Bostik Lavinia D'Elia Gonzalo Pastor Tesso Stuart Lacey Randy & Malon

1981		1982			1983	1984			1985		
Event	<i>October Revolution</i> Formation New Cross South London	<i>Stakhanovite Sound</i> The Lee Centre Lewisham South London	Albany Empire and shows around London and UK		Arch 69 / November Reprisal 'Titan' Arch / Heaven / WOMAD, ICA / Batcave / UK Performances	<i>Program For Progress</i> Cannon Street Mainline Railway Station, London	Cool Jazz Festival, New York / <i>Beating The Retreat</i> USA Tour	<i>Fuel To Fight</i> Tour of Britain in Support of the Miner's Strike	Atonal Festival - with Laibach; Art Deco; and others, Tiergarten, West Berlin	Ljubliana / Zagreb Performance in underground car park	<i>Convention of Hysteria</i> Collaboration with Diamanda Galas, Albany Empire, Deptford, London
Band members	Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Toby Burdon, Paul Hines				Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Toby Burdon, Brett Turnbull, Jack Balchin	Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Toby Burdon, Paul Hines, Brett Turnbull, Jack Balchin		Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Toby Burdon, Paul Hines, Brett Turnbull, Jack Balchin, Gary Wignall			
Other people		Chin (Vic Reeves) & Lucie Russell	Brett Turnbull Jack Balchin Lucie Russell		Yann Devreaux Roy Hanney	Yann Devreaux Roy Hanney	Jane Rolink Randy & Malon	Pat Brown Alan Sutcliffe Alistair Adams Gary Wignall	Sue Yates Jochen Leidke	Laibach Miljenko Rajakovic	Diamanda Galas

Event				1988					1989					1990			
	<i>Demonomania</i> Ministry of Power event for the Internationale Festival Del Teatro, Monasterio Del San Benedito, Vallodolid, Spain	<i>Terra Firma</i> European & UK Tours	<i>ConradStraat</i> Amsterdam, Netherlands	<i>Beltane Fire Re-Initiation</i> , Calton Hill, Edinburgh, Scotland	<i>Materia Prima</i> , Collaboration with Werk Centrum Dans, Rotterdam, Netherlands	<i>Natura Victus</i> . Tour including: Kristiania, Copenhagen; Denmark; Helsinki International Festival, Finland	<i>Natura Victus</i> , Polverigi International Theatre Festival, Italy			<i>Gododdin</i> Collaboration with Brith Gof, Rover Car Factory, Cardiff , Wales	<i>Shout! Voices Against Censorship</i> , ICA, London	Buber's Elijah International theatre workshop collaboration with Drugie Studio, Wroclaw, Poland	<i>Regeneration</i> soundtrack for Jonathan Moore's play	<i>Gododdin</i> in Polverigi, Italy / Hamburg, Germany / Leeurwarden, Friesland / Glasgow, Scotland	<i>Doultton Fountain</i> Project, Glasgow Green, Scotland	<i>Empire</i> European Tour / Anti Poll Tax events	
Band members	Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Tony Cudlip, Alistair Adams, Brett Turnbull, Jack Balchin	Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Tony Cudlip, Alistair Adams, Neil Starr, Brett Turnbull, Jack Balchin Paul Jamrozy	Graham Cunningham Angus Farquhar Tony Cudlip Alistair Adams Brett Turnbull		Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Tony Cudlip, Gus Ferguson	Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Tony Cudlip, Gus Ferguson, Alistair Adams, Brett Turnbull			Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Tony Cudlip, Gus Ferguson, Alistair Adams			Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar Tony Cudlip, Gus Ferguson			Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar, Tony Cudlip, Gus Ferguson, Alistair Adams		
	Other people	Andy Wilson John Eacott Jacob Marley Liz Rankin Tom Dixon Slags Students from the Dramatic School of Valladolid Gonzalo Pastor Tesso	Joe Hornof Paul Jones Stefan Zivanovic Hay Schoolmeesters Giovani Versari Bennedetta Cucci	Matt Aerts Stefan Zivanovic Hay Schoolmeesters	Liz Ranken Lindsay John Gus Ferguson Hamish Henderson Martyn Bennett Margaret Bennett Ken Davidson Alex Rigg	Werk Centrum Dans Simon Costin Matt Aerts Phil Wood	Liz Ranken Lindsay John Phil Griffin Matt Aerts Kate Tierney	Liz Ranken Lindsay John Phil Griffin Matt Aerts George Saxon Enrico David		Mike Pearson Liz Hughes-Jones John Hardy Cliff McLucas Margaret Ames Alun Elidyr Marc Rees Nic Ros Séra Williams Matt Aerts	Tony Benn MP Sarah Jane Morris Kate Tierney Tim Foster Giles Parbury Edwina William- Jones Cameron Eccles		Mirek Kocur Lindsay John Dariusz Domarecki Grzegorz Sikora Alexander Shmal Poppi Varakousi Dimitrios Kantiotis Nicos Anastasopoulos	Jonathan Moore Katrin Cartlidge Daniela Pancioni Brigitte van de Witt Maria Kierskowska Dagmara Kocur	Matt Aerts Kate Tierney Tim Foster Giles Parbery Hay Schoolmeesters Mike Pearson Liz Hughes-Jones John Hardy Cliff McLucas	Margaret Ames Alun Elidyr Marc Rees Nic Ros Séra Williams	Jules Dorey Richmond David Richmond Lindsay John Alex Rigg Emma Davie Chris Bowman Paul Fox Tom Murray

Event														2014													
Test Dept Productions formation, based in Glasgow, Scotland		The Second Coming event for European City of Culture, St. Rollox BR Engineering Works, Glasgow, Scotland		Empire UK Tour		Empire Montreal Musiques Actuelles, New Music America Festival, Montreal, Canada		WOMAD, UK & Germany / Pax Americana UK & European Tours / 1st Cool Tan event, Brixton, London		New World Order UK & European Tours including 'Castille' Coimbra, Portugal		You Can't Kill The Spirit Urban Free Festival, Deptford, London				Mutonia Tour with the Mutoid Waste Company / Sound Systems / DJs / Festivals / UK & Europe Tours		1994-1995		1995-1996		1997-1998		DS30 for AV Festival, Newcastle			
		Paul Jamrozy Graham Cunningham Tony Cudlip Gus Ferguson Andy Cowton Alistair Adams								Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Tony Cudlip, Gus Ferguson, Martin King, Alistair Adams		Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Tony Cudlip, Gus Ferguson, Martin King, Alistair Adams, Russ Macdonald, Simon Hyde						Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Gus Ferguson, Martin King, Alistair Adams, Katiejane Garside, Russ Macdonald, Simon Hyde		Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Gus Ferguson, Martin King, Alistair Adams, Arianne Schreiber, Russ Macdonald, Simon Hyde		Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Gus Ferguson, Martin King, Russ Macdonald, Simon Hyde				Paul Jamrozy, Graham Cunningham, Angus Farquhar	
Angus Farquhar Wendy Shillinglaw		Angus Farquhar Wendy Shillinglaw Tom Donnellan Kate Tierney Matt Aerts Alex Rigg		Matt Aerts David 'Loobie' Sherry Giles Parbury		Matt Aerts David 'Loobie' Sherry		Matt Aerts Stefan Ivanovic David 'Loobie' Sherry Giles Parbury Hay Schoolmeesters		Matt Aerts Jed Town Giles Parbury Phil Pearlman Hay Schoolmeesters Stuart Lacey		Russ MacDonald Simon Hyde		Mutoid Waste Company Paddy Hubba Rob Brown Marco Arnaldi		KatieJane Garside Alessandro Ceccarelli		Alessandro Ceccarelli BK Bostik Lavinia D'Elia Mauro Minella		Jolly Rodger		Marco Arnaldi				Rebecca Shatwell Martin Hulse Phil Supple Dan Adams Nick Hillel Paul Smith	



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