

Writing Our Own History 9

Jam Everyday

Jam Today, though not the very first, was probably the longest-lived and best-known feminist band in Britain. Original member Terry Hunt talks to Lynn Alderson about how her feminism grew with the music.

Lynn: *How did Jam Today come together?*

Terry: From my perspective, I'd been involved in various attempts at women's bands after I'd become disillusioned with being the 'girl' associated with generally a male band. I'd been working with my then last boyfriend as a lyricist, because I really wasn't allowed to do anything else. Not that my playing — I played guitar — was any good, but there was no opportunity for it to get any better in that set-up. Then I went to America and when I came back I'd sort of discovered feminism and I wanted to meet women musicians to work with. Although at the same time I wanted to have a 'real band'.

There was an advert in the London Women's Liberation Newsletter, from Frankie Green, saying "Woman drummer wants to meet other women". We finally managed to get together in February 1976. I was there, Alison Rayner was there, Frankie Green and another couple of women, Sally Beautista and a woman called Jackie, who was with Sally. Sally and Jackie never came again. It was something that amazed me at the time, that there were a lot of women, women with no feminist leanings, who were wanting to work with other women. And it wasn't just because this was a good gimmick, it was because it was infinitely preferable to playing with men.

At that first meeting we sort of jammed, I suppose. I played many wa-wa versions of Doobey Brothers numbers and I think rather intimidated everybody! Frankie and I were the only ones who'd had previous

working band experience. Frankie had been in the Women's Liberation Rock Band and she'd also been in something called The Chickadees, in New Zealand.

Anyway, we decided to meet again. Frankie had some equipment that the Women's Liberation Rock Band had passed on to the Stepney Sisters when they broke up. They weren't using it then because they'd broken up and Frankie said we were wanting to get this band together and could we rehearse where they'd got the stuff stored? They said yes and Frankie, myself, Ali and Angele Veltmeyer, who used to be with the London Women's Rock Band, got together. We talked about getting a bass player, which was very difficult. Luckily part of the equipment was a Mustang bass and at that second meeting Ali said, "Well, why don't I try it." She and I were both playing guitar and she wasn't very advanced and, I think, felt redundant, so here was a chance for her to do something that was needed.

So we learnt 'Long Train Running' with Angele playing sax. She'd only just learnt to play the sax. She could already play the flute rather well, but could only play the sax in very few keys — B flat predominantly. I remember! We decided to meet again and just carried on meeting, the four of us.

L: *I get the impression that though one or two of you were really quite confident about your playing, you were actually all learning, very much beginners as well. That was okay, was it? You weren't expecting everybody to be totally accomplished?*

T: No, not at all. That wasn't relevant at that point, though it did become increasingly relevant and, in fact, eventually led to the break-up of that particular generation of the band. But at that stage no, it was fun. We weren't playing original numbers. Everybody chose a number they liked, that they and, hopefully, everybody else could play and we slowly developed a repertoire.

L: How was it different, working with other women musicians?

T: Well, it wasn't that conscious. When I met Frankie and that lot there was definitely an idea that something different was going to happen, but we didn't talk about it and we weren't sure what it would be.

L: It was a women's band you had in mind, rather than a feminist band?

T: Yes, because I didn't know what feminism was. I know that Ali and Frankie were feminist but although I'd heard the word, it was something that I was very much still discovering. My feminism grew

T: Well, yes! It was terribly exciting. It wasn't that we thought we were all brilliantly musical - I don't know - it was just very exciting and we were becoming close. Once we four had got together it seemed like suddenly, every week, there was a new woman joining the band. Women had already heard about us and were saying, "There's a women's band getting together and isn't it exciting and soon they'll be able to do a gig!". These were feminists in the Women's Movement and it seemed very exciting to me, that there were other women interested and that it wasn't simply that we were rehearsing in isolation.

L: It was part of a whole community?

T: It seemed that way. Plus - I think this is relevant - it was a beautiful summer. I know it sounds corny but it was a really good summer and Frankie lived in Peckham and had this shed at the end of a really nice walled garden, very secluded. We would rehearse in the shed and then sit on the grass and talk and get to know each other.

1976: Costume, Terry, Joane, Ali, Angela, Deirdre, Frankie



Deirdre Cartright

with the band. We knew very quickly we were all lesbians when we arrived at that first meeting but, although I called myself feminist I didn't really know what I meant. I felt the others were like me but I wasn't really sure in what way.

L: You got on as a group? You liked each other?

We were becoming a collective, if you like, a cohesive group. We would do things like decide to have a meal together and take collective responsibility for the fact that we were using up Frankie's resources, like her toilet paper! We started to contribute towards the cost of our being there. Those were, I think, new ideas for a lot of us.

L: *People tend to think of bands as this group of individuals, terrific players, and you just bring them together. What you're talking about is the evolution of a group, where you were all learning together and helping each other to learn.*

T: Yes, that's right. Though I think it went up and down. To begin with all we were interested in was just playing together. The pressure for us to become a band, to do a gig, seemed to come from outside.

L: *Who else was in the band at that time?*

T: Deirdre Cartright, another guitarist. I'd contacted her when we were still trying to find a bass player and I was trying to get in touch with her sister, Bernice, who played bass. Deirdre was 18 then and I said to the others, "Look there's this woman guitarist, she's very good, why don't we ask her along?". They were all a bit worried about it because she was good and it was rock and they weren't sure about rock.

After Deirdre we got Josie Mitten. At that time there was a place where feminist lesbians used to meet called "The Upstairs Room" and a woman there said, "My lover is a piano player. I hear you're forming a band, can she come along?". And we said fine. We were saying "Great" to anybody at that stage. And there was a woman who'd also heard about the band, had played violin — this was Corinne Liensol — she started playing trumpet with us.

L: *So you were all at very different levels of experience and you were thinking of it mainly as fun. Were you still thinking that at some point you'd like to form a 'proper' band?*

T: A proper band as well, not either/or. I mean, for me, I knew it wasn't musically what I'd been used to playing with and Deirdre was already in another band, a mixed band, and she and I were still talking about how we were going to get this 'real' band together, with 'good' musicians, but we talked about it less and less and it became less and less important. Jam Today became very important to us. We were playing together nearly every day. It was a very intense period, not just playing but being with each other, talking to each other. The conversations often went on longer than the playing.

With the playing, I think sometimes we helped each other to learn and sometimes we held each other back. My problem with the band was that the songs I wrote, we couldn't play, with the level of musicality we collectively had. I was suppressing myself at that point as a writer because they couldn't play what I wrote and I played best what I wrote. These things got to be a source of conflict at a later stage.

L: *What were you all talking about? Were you talking politics?*

T: We were talking about everything. Everything. It was just such a discovery. Particularly for some of us who'd never come across feminism and lesbianism. At that stage most of us in the band were lesbian but that wasn't a conscious decision. It just happened that way. We talked about things we'd perhaps consider basic now; you know, what it's like to be a woman in the world and things like that.

L: *So you started to play gigs?*

T: That was what precipitated us into becoming a band. We were offered a gig at



the North London Poly. That was in the summer, 1976. So it then became something to work towards. It was a women-only gig. We didn't have a name either. They just called us 'The women's rock band'. It wasn't till our second gig, at the first National Women's Festival in Holland, that Frankie came up with Jam Today, from *Alice through the Looking Glass*, so we could give the organisers something to put on the posters.

L: *Had you discussed this, the politics of doing mixed gigs?*

T: Yes. Frankie and Alison didn't want to do mixed gigs. I'd never thought about it. We talked about it in the early days and we felt, on balance — all except Frankie at this point — that since the aim of the band was to reach women with the fact that we were women playing, that we were women with something to say that other women might want to hear, that we didn't just want to play to the converted and we would play to mixed audiences. Yes, we needed that women-only space to feel revived in, especially if playing to a mixed audience was going to be difficult. I think some of us felt it was more difficult playing in front of a mixed audience, less fun for us.

L: *What sort of audiences did you play to? How did they react?*

T: We weren't playing just to 'lefty' audiences. We played colleges, for example. They were some of the most hostile, the usual "Get your knickers off" things. At the beginning of the evening you'd get this row of hostile men standing with their arms folded, "Go on then, entertain us and we'll see how badly you can do", "Where are the bums and tits, that's what we've come to see." But mid-way through the gig they would have been replaced by a row of women, quite spontaneously. We had this extraordinary effect on the women in our audiences, women who weren't feminist! Funnily enough, we didn't get any adverse reaction to being a group of lesbians, even though we didn't keep it a secret.

But our songs were about women being strong and I think the men found that a lot more threatening. I hope we were making the women stronger in their own context, by saying, "You don't have to do this". We weren't saying, "You must all become les-

bians", which would have seemed more unlikely. We encouraged women to enjoy the music and to think "I can take some space for myself, I don't have to be in any pigeon-hole, I can stand up here and flail my



1977: the van

arms around and it's not embarrassing and I can see other women and they're not all giving to the men." That's what got to the men. We were giving nothing to them and they couldn't bear it. If they could have pigeon-holed us all as weird lesbians then that would have been less threatening. But the women linked with us in a way that the men found exclusive. In fact at one gig, a heterosexual couple, the man slapped his girlfriend because he felt so threatened by her enjoying our music. They'd never had that kind of thing in their relationship before. It was the first time he'd had to confront her separate needs.

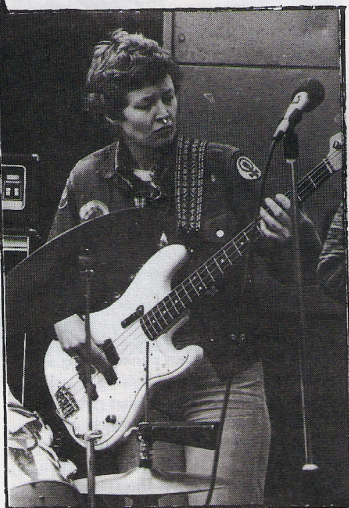
L: *You got a reputation for taking direct action against men, didn't you? I remember a couple of incidents, something about Ali leaping off the back of a lorry.*

T: That was at a National Abortion Campaign demonstration. We were in the middle of doing a song, something fairly rousing, and this male photographer leapt on to the lorry and wanted us to stop playing and move so he could photograph us. He was from some top newspaper and he couldn't believe that we just weren't interested in him, that we weren't wanting publicity. We were all furious with him for having the audacity to get on the lorry. We were all going "Get off, get off!" and we essentially pushed him off. He was furious



and lashed out and Ali retaliated. There was a policewoman walking by and she just sort of smiled and ignored the incident. Tacit approval for what we were doing because he was so ghastly.

And another time, at another mixed gig



at the North London Poly, the women and children in the audience had formed a semicircle and were dancing to the music, kicking their legs in time to it, and some drunk men had formed a row behind them and were imitating them, mocking them and kicking them. The only person who saw it was Ali and she leapt off the stage and thrust her bass into the belly of one of the men who were doing it. After this incident we made a collective decision that if any one of us said "Stop" we would instantly stop playing, focus on the man or men causing the trouble and not start playing again until the trouble was over and the man or men responsible removed.

L: *Had you thought at all about how you wanted to relate to the audiences, different from the usual band/audience set-up?*

T: We knew that there wasn't any difference between us and other women in the Women's Movement. So when we did a

gig we didn't want to be elevated to a false status. Other women did other things; we just happened to play music and there shouldn't be some phoney discrepancy between us. We said we weren't going to have the room in darkness with the lights just on us. There was going to be blanket lighting so we could see them and they could see us. We weren't going to be on a stage. In retrospect I think these were rather silly decisions, but I know why we made them. I mean, I'm rather short and I found that when I was playing a gig and not on a stage I couldn't see a thing. But we wanted to, you know, really 'eyeball' the audience!

And even if the gig wasn't to the women's community, we used to say if any women wanted to talk to us about being musicians, they should come and talk to us. We stayed on in the room, had a drink. We didn't just zip off to a dressing room, get whizzed onto the stage and whizzed off. Even when we became marginally famous, or whatever; wherever we played it was like women felt they owned us in some way, we were "our band". We never alienated ourselves. It was a very conscious decision that none of us wanted that star status. We wanted women to say, "That was good, we enjoyed that, you did that well", but not because we did it. We didn't want to be famous for being us, but because we were doing something women appreciated.

L: *It must have helped you, getting that kind of positive response. It must have been very encouraging, made you feel good.*

T: Yes it did. Though I can truthfully say it never made us feel "We can do anything." It never made us feel that whatever we played would do. And we did get some adverse reaction from feminists, women in the Movement. In the early days when we were rehearsing there were some women who said it was patriarchal to own instruments and we should make our instruments available for other women to play. We all owned our own instruments, except for Josie who couldn't afford a piano. We were all very serious about what we were doing, we all wanted to be musicians and we'd saved to buy our instruments and put a lot of time and thought into it. It wasn't a question of just letting anybody play your instrument. You set the instrument up for

your own particular need and it's a bit like what they say about fountain pens, you shouldn't use other people's fountain pens.

Yes, there should be a pool of instruments for anybody to come and play as they please, I agree, but I certainly wasn't prepared to just leave my guitar somewhere for anyone who fancied a twang! And then we heard that women were saying that as a punishment we should have all our instruments stolen because we were being so insisterly! Another criticism was that we were oppressing other women because we were now too good. We had become threatening. A community can be so supportive and then so destructive.

As a consequence of all that, Angele and I rewrote the words of 'Heard it through the Grape Vine', because none of these women criticising us had ever talked to us about it. It was all gossip. So we sang in that song that if women wanted to know what we thought about something, they should come and talk to us about it. We'd already started to rewrite lyrics that were blatantly sexist, changing 'boy' to 'woman' and so on, but that was the first time we really put thought into changing the lyrics to give a political message.

Another thing we did was get rid of that business of support bands when we were playing gigs. There wouldn't be a feature band and a support band, we'd just play in rotation.

Then we did workshops. Ali did bass workshops, Deirdre did guitar workshops, I've done it, every woman who's been in Jam Today has been instrumental in getting other women to play. In fact, that was how Sisterhood of Spit came about. Angele was running a brass wind workshop, saxophones, trumpets and trombones, and all these women came along and after a while she decided, to give them some encouragement and confidence, to arrange a gig for them. And the idea was, to give them more confidence, that the rhythm section, the drummer, bass player, piano player and guitarist, would be women who'd had quite a bit of experience. And then there was the London Women's Monthly Event.

L: *What was that, exactly?*

T: When we first had the discussions about whether to play to mixed audiences

or not, Frankie said "Okay, we've made the decision to play to mixed audiences because that's how we're going to reach women, but we have to make sure that there's a women-only gig at least once a month in London, at least, and hopefully it'll spread to other places. And I want us to be partly responsible for getting that going." So she put an advert in the London Women's Newsletter and got the Monthly Event collective going. The idea was for a women-only cultural event, not just a disco, but poetry readings, films, slides, theatre, anything, any kind of aspect of women's culture. It degenerated (in my opinion) into just a disco after a while because women weren't prepared to put energy into it and a younger group of women came along and all they were interested in was a kind of cruisey event where they could all meet each other and get drunk. It was like the early days of the newsletter. There wasn't a collective, it was just women in the Women's Movement that kept it going and then a consumerist element crept into it, like it crept into the movement. "Provide this for us." I suppose it was a measure of our success, in a way.

L: *Going back to what you said about women criticising you for being too good, can we talk a bit about professionalism and standards?*

T: The first time we really had to discuss standards was when we were offered

NO!



1977: Josie, Terry, Frankie, Diana, Deirdre, Jo

that first gig and realised we didn't have a singer. We realised we wanted a good singer, someone who really could sing. And we had a lot of discussions because that was a criterion we hadn't applied to ourselves. And we realised they'd have to have a certain level of politics as well. We put in adverts and there was a long process of phone calls from women saying "I'm not a women's libber and I'm not going to burn my bra . . ." — literally, that sort of response to our advert when we said we were a feminist band. This was another set of criteria we hadn't applied to ourselves, but we'd got to a level where we felt we didn't want to go through ground we'd already been through together. We'd had a problem with the first singer we got, a woman called Joey. We were doing a gig for the National Abortion Campaign and Joey was a Catholic and that was something we'd just not discussed. Because we were getting on so well we assumed we all agreed about everything and that wasn't right. We didn't and that was first apparent with Joey, who left the band over that.

The thing about standards for me, personally, was that I was still writing songs to cater for the band's abilities and there were other songs I was writing that the band still couldn't play. I found that frustrating, though not enough to make me want to leave. I know Deidre wanted to play more rock, wanted to do more solos. We got to the stage where everybody who wanted to be a soloist wanted to do a solo so the songs, in my opinion, got rather boring because

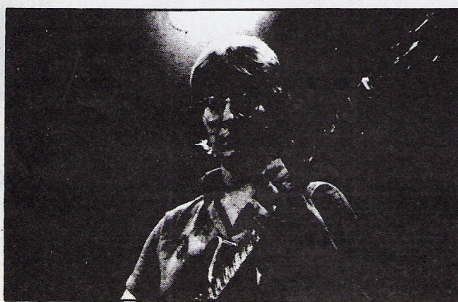
we'd just have a guitar solo and then a piano solo and then a sax solo and a trumpet solo and it was very tedious. It was as if nobody was prepared to stop and let there be space.

L: *What about the band's standards of playing? I mean, I would rather have seen you then, playing songs I could identify with, women I felt I shared something with, than go to see a top male band. Whether or not you were as good musicians was neither here nor there really.*

T: I think there's a real danger in that, though; a danger of being 'the best women's band' and not being as good as you could be. For the woman musician herself, there's a danger of applying different standards to yourself. I mean, some women have, I think, got away with a lot in terms of music and standards. Things are tolerated in the Women's Movement that just wouldn't be put up with anywhere else. If you went to a woman carpenter, for example, and she made you a dreadful chair because she was still learning, practising, you wouldn't pay for it, you wouldn't accept it. I think women should have the space to learn but we shouldn't have to pay money to see them doing it. I think it is self-indulgent to feel that just because you want to make a noise on an instrument, people haven't a right to complain about how well you do it.

People think anybody can jam. Now, I don't think that's true. Jamming is basically improvising, but you have to be a really good musician to play with five people, or even

SATURDAY *What's On*



Jam Today's guitarist Terry Hunt

CURRENT JAM...

JAM TODAY were formed in 1976 out of a group of women who 'just wanted to play together.' And although they have played in Manchester before, this is the first time with the current line-up, which came together in July 1980. Three original members — Alison Rayner (bass), Terry Hunt (guitar) and Fran Rayner (sound) — have now been joined by drummer Jackie Crew from Tour de Force, ex-Spoilsports' vocalist Barbara Stretch and

Julia Dawkins on saxophones and flutes.

Together, Jam Today have recorded a four-track EP, *Stereotyping*, on their own Stropsey Cow label, which is available at Grassroots and deceptively mixes soft jazz and latin-influenced rock with hard, perceptive lyrics. — *Stephen Hewitt*

• JAM TODAY at Rusholme's Birch Community Centre, tonight.

one other person you've never met before. That isn't to say people shouldn't jam, but if you're making a noise other people aren't going to enjoy, I don't think you should be doing it in front of them. You should be doing it on your own.

L: *I perfectly understand that. But one of the things about women's bands is that they encouraged a lot of other women to play because you weren't presenting them with brilliantly accomplished music. They could see the learning process and this made them feel maybe they could do it too. Don't you think that's important?*

T: I certainly think that's part of it, but I don't think it's just that. I've got a letter from a woman in Manchester, one of the letters we got from when we did a gig there, and she said she'd been very resistant about coming to see us because she didn't want to come and see a load of women making a dreadful row. And how thrilled she was that we were good, that she could feel proud of us. Both of these things are important.

L: *Did any of you want to make records?*

T: We all wanted to make a record. We had a lot of discussion about whether we wanted to try and get a label out, the business about whether to get a deal with a straight record company. In the end we came to the conclusion that it would conflict with our politics, that we would end up compromising ourselves, although it was a source of argument. Deidre particularly and probably Angele and certainly Diana wanted to do it and didn't see it as conflicting with their politics. But I never felt they wanted to make records because they wanted to be 'rich and famous'. It was because they genuinely felt that we would reach a wider audience that way.

L: *What was your relationship with the mainstream music scene?*

T: Well, we did have some offers, but we were never interested in Jam Today doing that.

L: *It would have meant you would have had to change?*

T: Yes. There's too much emphasis on the record these days and not on the musicians. The record is what makes money for the middle man and that's why the Musi-

cian's Union, and I agree with it, has this thing about "Keep Music Live". I think records are important, but they should be something you take home after a gig, because you've seen the band and you think you'd like to go home and listen to it some more.

L: *I'd like to know a bit more about what it was like being part of Jam Today. What were the good things and what were the bad things?*

T: The good things about it were the togetherness. When it was working it was wonderful. Like, for example, organising a tour together; the hardship shared, if you like — very corny stuff! We'd all pile into the van with our lunch boxes and we'd organise outings to the local sights. And think of the number of women! At the high spot of the band there were ten of us; Frankie, Ali, Angele, myself, Deidre, Josie, Corinne, Diana the singer, Ali's sister Fran, who joined the band when she was 17 or 18 as one of our technicians — she didn't know how to technish anything at the time and now she's a computer engineer and that's a direct result of being in the band, it awoke her interest and gave her opportunity — and Sarah Greaves, the sound engineer, who we met when we were doing the music for this film for the British Film Institute, 'Rapunzel, let down your hair'. For example, when we all went on tour to Holland together, sharing the driving, everything like that.

That's actually quite traumatic, being on tour, away from your home and spending an intense period of time with what was then quite a large number of women, all in one van. Often we'd all be staying in the same place, but in fact we preferred that because we found we needed to be together if we were in some strange town, in a stressful situation, perhaps we'd arrived late or the van had broken down.

I remember one incident, we were in two vehicles, Deidre's Morris Traveller and we'd borrowed her father's van — this was before we bought our own van — and we had a flat tyre and no jack. So — it was amazing — we bodily, all these women bodily lifted this car so one of us could change the tyre!

L: *It must have been difficult, travelling around and not having much money and*



TERESA HUNT (Jam Today)

STEREOTIPARE

*Lei è priva di facoltà mentali, è fragile e piccola
Non ha assolutamente un cervello, è una stupida gallina
Guida in maniera maldestra, è trispiccia e malvestita*

*E' una cagna, è carne da macellare.
Stereotipare
Sono ammata fino a morire per tutto questo
Stereotipare
Essere una signora soddisfatta o una ragazza frustrata*

*Stereotipare
Sarai colpita da ostracismo
Devi essere come tua madre, ma lei cos'era veramente?*

*Lei è una vecchia megera, una pettegola, una strega
Applaudirà tutto ciò che farai, sveglierà le tue voglie, è un buon acquisto*

*E' una moglie soddisfatta, una megera, una seccatura
E' sparbata, una maledetta puttana, tu dici...
Ma io dico...*

(Teresa Hunt - Jam Today)

Photo from the sleeve of *Stereotyping*. Lyrics from an Italian magazine *Rockerrilla*, when the record made no.7 in its chart.



not being given very good accommodation.

T: It was very variable. It got better as we got more organised and we knew what to ask for. And also as our reputation grew we could ask for proper payment for our gigs. We got better at realising what our needs were, that we weren't prepared to sleep in a pile on the floor, and at making demands. I remember once in Holland we had an argument about being paid and the woman we were arguing with said, "I'm sitting here licking envelopes and I do it for nothing. Are you trying to say that what you do is more important than that?" And we said, "No, but you have another job and this is our job". And then they wanted us to play for nothing at a party in the evening. There's this idea that if you're a musician you roll up to a party with your instrument under one arm and you're all going to spontaneously jump up and play.

Pay was an important issue, in fact. Once there were quite a few women's bands going you'd get women ringing up and asking how much we charged for a gig and then ringing other bands and going for the cheapest one. So we insisted that we were paid per person and as close as possible to the Musicians' Union rate and we said we didn't want to be always doing benefits because this was our living and if we were always doing benefits we were always giving away our services for nothing. It really got up my nose, in fact; some people would come from their jobs — okay, not necessarily well-paid jobs but they had a living wage from them — and the women organising the gig would expect to pay us hardly anything and then whip out large amounts of money to pay for booze. Supporting male monopoly breweries rather than understand that we wanted to make a living too.

One of the worst moments in our time together was again in Holland — this is just a coincidence, we toured a lot in Holland! — at a gig in Rotterdam. We'd arrived late from another town; by now we had our own van, which had a governor on it, which is a thing which controls the engine speed so we could only go anywhere at 45 miles an hour, downhill with a good wind behind us, so it took us ages to get from anywhere to anywhere. So we were late arriving and we'd

had no chance to eat, which doesn't put you in the best of humour anyway, and we were playing the gig and really looking forward to eating, having the communal meal we always tried to have together either before or after a gig. So we asked the woman organiser if she could suggest somewhere where we could have a meal, a restaurant. It was as if it was a strange request. She kept saying, "You want to eat?" as if it was the most extraordinary thing in the world. And we said, "Yes, yes, we really want to eat." So we got in the van and we went through this lovely picturesque town and we were thinking, "Great, she's going to take us to a wonderful restaurant somewhere," and she stopped at a van, one of those greasy chip vans. That was the first depressing thing. So we all got some chips and got back into the van to be taken to our accommodation.

And we drove and drove through all these beautiful little streets and came across what must have been the only slum in Rotterdam. It was *the* street of squats then, mangy dogs roaming and broken glass and no street lights, the works. And the house we stayed in had no hot water, no facilities for making a hot drink, so we all had to go to bed. Bed was up in the attic, up an ordinary ladder and through a trap door. There was no bedding and there were five pieces of foam. So there were eight of us (Angele and Deirdre had gone off to see Angele's parents) and five pieces of foam to fight over. Fortunately we'd brought sleeping bags but even so it was bitterly cold and the place was full of kitty litter so it stank of cat shit, there was a broken skylight and poor old Sarah, the sound engineer, was pregnant and had had a show of blood and was completely freaked. We literally all cried ourselves to sleep that night.

L: *Perhaps we should go on to why the band broke up now. Why did women leave? Was it over conflicts or did they just want to go and do different things?*

T: It wasn't ever about wanting to be more professional. If women said they were going to leave the band to play with someone else, it was like they were being unfaithful to a lover. It really hurt!

Corinne and Josie were the first to leave and that was about standards. Not just the music, but other jobs associated with the

band: looking after the van, making sure the mikes got repaired, organising rehearsals. We had all the kind of arguments that women who've been in collectives know; who hasn't done what and who isn't taking their share of the dirty work. There were some of us, myself included, who perhaps felt more 'capable'. If other women didn't do things as fast or as well in *our* terms, this would cause arguments about our attitude. So there was this feeling on one side of, 'You're just lazy', which was partly true, and on the other side, 'You're over-bearing and don't give me a chance', which was also partly true. We'd had a good phase when we'd managed to get quite a lot done and good decisions, decisions that worked for everyone, got made. But there were differences, definitely, and after Josie and Corinne left we got very depressed. Also some of us had become rather good and felt frustrated at the inability – for whatever reason – of some of the others to progress. It's hard to say these things about women for whom I still fundamentally care a lot, and it must be clear that these are my perceptions of the events.

It wasn't ever properly talked about and I think that's sad. If you know someone's

beating their head against a wall trying to be something they're not, you should be able to say something to them without destroying them. I mean, for years and years I thought I had to be a 'lead' guitarist because it was the male thing to do, and I was never trying to explore different ways of playing. I trapped myself into feeling that was the only 'good' sort of playing. And I used to find Deirdre incredibly threatening because she reminded me of a lot of the boyfriends I'd been involved with, with that kind of single-minded determination, playing scales, etc. I used to do it faithfully but it never made *me* any better at *improvising* because it just wasn't me. I was fundamentally a writer. I could play what I wrote, and I still can play what I write, better than I can play anything else. But then I was still having to tone down what I wrote so the band could play it.

Perhaps we didn't give each other enough space. When we finally made the decision to break up it was a tremendous relief and we got on better again. We did our farewell gigs in December '77 and it was wonderful. I don't think any of us felt remorse about the band splitting. It was a natural conclusion. In the end the only women who were



1980-83: Julia, Ali, Fran, Jackie, Terry, Barbara

left were myself, Ali and Fran, the technician, and we felt lost. I remember that. Even though it wasn't appropriate to continue, we wanted women to know that there would still be a Jam Today, that Jam Today wasn't dead and gone, it was going to evolve.

L: *You stayed on with Jam Today through its second and third generation before you left and I know you're not playing with a band at the moment. How do you feel about music personally and about the women's music scene today?*

T: When the third band ended it took me a long time to accept because it had been part of my life for so long and I felt like it should continue if it could and there should always be a Jam Today. For me it had become a symbol of something, whether or not I or any of the other original women were in it, I felt it should be something organic, that continued to grow.

But I don't miss the music scene at the moment and that's sad for me because I always used to play music. As soon as I could speak I used to say I wanted a guitar and I wanted to play. I'm half Greek and my mother has always sung in the home; we used to sing in harmony together, first, second and third voice with my aunts. So music was very much something we *did*, it wasn't something we were just consumers of.

When I did get a guitar it was like my form of diary. When I was upset I used to sit and write a song about it, to play for myself, and that was how my song-writing started. And I lost that and I was angry about that. I felt that every time I picked up a guitar I must practice to get better and I must write a good song for the band. I felt it took music away from *me* and I didn't play it for myself any more.

That was the first point. And secondly, since I had grown into feeling that, no matter what else I did, I was a feminist, I didn't feel I could separate it off from my music. I didn't feel that we were achieving what I wanted to achieve in terms of politics quickly enough. Though, in retrospect I do recognise that we did, in our own small way, achieve quite a lot.

We're all women, but we're all different kinds of women, different classes, ages, races;

we're not all going to like the same kind of music; did that mean we'd have to write a sort of mish-mash of music so we'd appeal to every possible combination of women? Where were we going to play our music and what were we saying, what were we offering women in the end? Say we wanted to play in a factory (and that was one of our aims in Jam Today — to take music to all kinds of places, factories, prisons, etc) what could we say to this woman who's going home to her husband who she loves even though he's ghastly, and if she leaves him, where would she go? Got no economics. All these things. I didn't want it to be just a wank, for me to come away feeling I'd done something when I hadn't.

And some of the bands these days — I find it almost embarrassing. They do their song about rape, their song about Ireland, their song about South Africa. But there's that conflict between entertainment and political statement. Actually I don't think Jam Today was all that guilty of this, but we were all doing it — being too diverse. It needs to be more specialised. And if you take too many issues and bombard the audience with them — it's got to be more subtle than that and you've also got to confront that issue, "Am I here for them to have a good time or am I here for them to hear something really painful?" I don't feel I can stand up and sing "This woman was raped when she was four," and have women clap and enjoy it.

I haven't resolved any of these issues, these things that really racked me, yet. It's important to be seen to be a woman playing music. It's important to be seen to be a woman knowing how instruments work, to be seen not to be sexist, to be seen not having male-approval desire. All those things are important, but I feel I've done them. They must continue to be done — we've not even scratched the tip of the iceberg — but I felt I needed some recharging for myself, time to find out for myself what I wanted to do with music. Am I going to express myself as a feminist — and by that I mean radically change the world — via this medium, or am I going to take my music back for me, as it was, and do something else that expresses my feminism? I don't know what the answer is, I really don't. □

