

Doctor of Creative Industries

Project 1:

# *Blind Collaboration*

Music album (*'Once in a While'*) & Commentary

The creation, development and implementation of 'Blind Collaboration' as an artistic process in the recording of a contemporary music album

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Blind Collaboration, Music Collaboration, Collaborative Creativity, Contemporary Music, Recording

## Project 1: '*Blind Collaboration*'

The creation, development and implementation of  
'Blind Collaboration' as an artistic process in the recording  
of a contemporary music album.

This paper was first presented at USQ Australia on 20 June 2007, included in a regular seminar series. The paper was subsequently presented at the *World Dance Alliance Global Summit*, in Brisbane Australia on 14 July 2008, and also at the *Engendering Leadership* Conference in Perth Western Australia, on 23 July 2008.

## ABSTRACT:

*This paper examines the creation, development and implementation of an artistic process termed by the author 'Blind Collaboration'. The process involves musicians collaborating on an album of contemporary music where they, the collaborators, do not see or hear each other nor record in the same studio at the same time as their fellow musicians.*

*The notion of musicians recording separately or indeed remotely is not new, however what is new is the 'blind' aspect of the process. Each musician is completely unaware of any others' contributions, and is therefore uninfluenced by what the others might play. None of the musicians hears the overall result until the final mix.*

*The purpose of the study is not to examine the technical aspects of recording, other than in contextual terms. The principal focus and intention of this case study lies in the analysis of specific aspects and outcomes of the creative/artistic process - how it evolved, how it was managed, how it was influenced by the particular artists involved and how the Blind Collaboration process ultimately shaped the final musical work.*



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## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP:

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet the requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

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## Introduction: the Journey, the Focus:

This six-month Project represents the first in a trilogy of Doctoral projects.

Both individually and collectively these three projects, in conjunction with their respective written commentaries, are intended to:

- create new professional works
- illuminate and extend professional practice
- examine relevant professional contexts
- expand those contexts by establishing the works within and beyond their own individual contexts by:
- drawing together, through multi/inter-disciplinarity, disparate fields of practice into credible, cohesive works.

In so doing, contribute to the creation of new knowledge, both within and across those disparate fields.

Whilst my *Doctoral* focus on multi/inter-disciplinarity is comparatively recent, this journey actually began professionally more than 30 years ago (in the early 1970's) with my initial entry into the world of the professional artist through Music. Music eventually led me into the Theatre, which in turn led me comprehensively into and through the fields of Mime and Television to where I stand professionally today - as an educator in the tertiary, creative, and corporate sectors.

As that educator, all of my diverse and disparate professional knowledge, specialist expertise and experience, have coalesced into this, the *Doctor of Creative Industries*, which provides the opportunity, focus and framework within which to explore how creativity works, both individually and collaboratively, and how it can be adapted and applied to a variety of professional contexts.

## **The Projects:**

This practice-led project, '*Blind Collaboration*', is the *first* in a trilogy of Doctoral projects. 'Blind Collaboration' is a process where individual musicians collaborate on the recording of an album of contemporary music, unheard, uncontacted, and therefore completely uninfluenced by each other. Both the resulting album, '*Once in a While*', and this associated written commentary, make manifest the specific outcomes of the creative/artistic/research process - how it evolved, how it was managed, how it was influenced by the particular artists involved, and how the Blind Collaboration process ultimately shaped the final musical work (this is also discussed further in Project 2 VODcasts – refer below).

The *second* project, consisting of a series of VODcasts, as well as written commentary, both follows logically on from and builds upon Blind Collaboration by examining the non-musical aspects of musical performance, particularly in relation to taking the album's multi-instrumental works and situating those in the live, solo, music performance context. In exploring this, my view and approach is focussed through the lens of Mime, utilising its techniques of physical clarity, conciseness, and choreographed performance in which I am - with a 25 year career as a professional mime artist - highly experienced. This Mime background and focus provides a rich source of technique and stylisation with which to experiment creatively, aesthetically and practically.

The *third* of these projects explores this notion still further in terms of both content and context by applying the techniques of mime to corporate communication, with the resulting Workbook and associated short series of VODcasts, providing analysis of specific techniques applied to, and illustrative examples of, the body-language (or *physicality*) aspects of inter-professional communication.

## **Research Outcomes:**

Taken together these three, six-month Projects, which are based in and informed by more than three decades of professional practice across: music; stage performance; television; corporate communication; design; and tertiary education sectors, together with the underpinning research into each of those professional contexts,

comprehensively investigate, demonstrate and incorporate, the notion of multi/inter-disciplinarity. In doing so they produce specific, workable, measurable and potentially commercial outcomes, manifest in different media - music; written word; audio/visual and digital - which clearly demonstrate both the potential and the effectiveness of reconciling disparate fields of practice by applying creativity and innovation to, within, and across those fields of practice.

The processes of these projects explore, expose and exploit areas where disparate and apparently conflicting fields of practice successfully and effectively intersect, interact and inform each other rather than conflict with each other, thereby adding value to each, both individually and collectively.

This approach is consistent with and makes manifest the most fundamental tenet of 'Creative Industries': the bringing together of disparate fields of practice. Its exploration in this Doctoral context situates and applies the research equally across both professional and academic spheres, thereby effectively reconciling the often irreconcilable 'professional/practice' and 'academic/theorist' points of view.

*it turned out not to be the same experiment for any one of the six of us...that's actually where the great collision comes from - the creative collision of everybody pushing as hard as they can, in a slightly different direction - creates this stretched envelope...this slightly defocused and quite rich and densely interconnected thing...called a record.*

(Brian Eno 1999)

## ‘Blind Collaboration’ - the Concept:

*Collaboration is a committed, engaged process.*

(Banfield - interviewed by Collins 2005)

The concept of ‘blind collaboration’ occurred to me some time prior to my embarking on a Doctorate. Although I had not named the process at that early stage the concept was fundamentally there - crystallising into a workable process the more I thought about it and the more I thought about it as the first of my three Doctoral Projects.

In basic terms the process was that I, as originating artist, would collaborate with other musical artists by way of providing the base material – i.e. songs recorded in basic form - and then send those songs to a variety of musicians representing a variety of musical styles. Each of the musicians was to choose, from the 14 tracks provided, two pieces which appealed to them. These musicians were then to add their own musical ideas and input to those recordings. No interference or influence would be exerted upon them by myself as originating artist – they would be entirely free to interpret each work in their own way and contribute in their own unique and individual style.

One of the most fundamental, interesting and artistically risky aspects of the process was that the collaborating musicians would contribute and collaborate without hearing any of the other musicians’ contributions – hence the term ‘Blind Collaboration’. They would literally be flying blind (or perhaps flying ‘deaf’ would be more appropriate). The term ‘blind’ is used here in the typically scientific sense of a ‘double blind’ experiment – where researchers are testing or experimenting under circumstances where they do not have any information which might bring bias or influence (and therefore inaccuracy) to the experiment due to prior knowledge of materials or concepts being tested. A less dramatic example might be a Wine Show – where wine judges are required to make a determination of the quality of unmarked (blind) wines based purely on the flavour, colour, aroma etc., independently of each other and without prior knowledge of the wine’s geographic origin or vintage etc.

In the artistic context this is quite unusual as most collaboration, almost by definition, suggests that the collaborators communicate with each other directly - and generally in an ongoing fashion over a specified period of time:

Music performance is an interdependent art form. Musicians' real-time gestures are constantly influenced by the music they hear, which is reciprocally influenced by their own actions. This interdependency is true not only in group playing but for soloists as well, for example, a violinist who is listening to the music she is playing and constantly modifying her actions with correlation to the auditory feedback stream.

(Weinberg 2002)

In one sense the concept of 'remote' collaboration is not that new. I recall reading some decades ago about a song co-written/recorded by Paul McCartney and Michael Jackson who collaborated across the Atlantic by sending tapes back and forth and recording in turn. Since then, given the advent of the internet, there are currently examples of collaboration over geographic distances for particular musical projects. For instance Weinberg (2002) in his paper on *Interconnected Music Networks*, describes using the internet to facilitate collaboration between musicians through 'live performance systems that allow players to influence, share, and shape each other's music in real time...allow(ing) a group of performers to interdependently collaborate in creating dynamic and evolving musical compositions'.

One of Weinberg's main points is based in the notion, to restate, of 'Music performance (as) an interdependent artform. Musicians' real-time gestures are constantly influenced by the music they hear, which is reciprocally influenced by their own actions', and by utilising the internet it is possible for remote collaboration to take place in real-time - unlike the McCartney/Jackson instance.

The operative word here is *interdependent*.

Whilst I in no way disagree with Weinberg's suggestions, what he describes does not reflect the process which I have instigated, developed and utilised for this project. Neither is it reflected by that of Jones (2005) who describes his 'cyber' collaborative process for video games music where his collaborator 'would stay online and listen to what I was coming up with and add comments like, "more accents on the rhythm parts", "less whole chords and more power chords" and so on'.

My process in fact takes entirely the opposite approach – it is an *independent* process rather than an *interdependent* one. It is a process where the musicians cannot

influence each other because they neither see nor hear the other musicians – their collaborators – so they cannot be influenced by what their collaborators play. Therefore, their respective musical contributions, their ‘collaborations’, are indeed ‘blind’ – neither influenced by, nor influencing, their fellow collaborators, nor influenced by myself as producer, composer and collaborator. However, this independent, blind, remote process has produced a remarkably cohesive, musically consistent, yet stylistically varied work. All of which suggests that whilst one would assume that yes, ideally, collaborators would need to be in each other’s presence (even cyber-presence), it is not an essential requirement. In fact, I have through this project, arrived at the view that there may be distinct advantages to actually avoiding physical (and/or cyber) proximity.

What I am referring to here is the artistic ‘magic’, the unpredictable, the serendipitous – which makes one forget that these musicians are indeed not in the same studio, at the same time, playing the same song. Yet they have still, collaboratively, produced a work of significant artistic merit:

Such mutual benefit requires the *relinquishing of individual control of the creative process* and different, but complementary, roles appear to be best suited to achieving that end (emphasis added).

(Mamykina, Candy, Edmonds 2002)

### ‘Rules-of-Engagement’:

To apply and test the concept of ‘blind collaboration’. This means Chris Willems, as originating artist, will collaborate with other musical artists by way of providing material, recorded in basic form, which is then sent to a variety of musicians representing a variety of musical styles. Each of whom chooses one or perhaps two pieces which appeal to them musically. These musicians then add their own musical ideas and input to those recordings. *No interference or influence will be exerted upon them by the originating artist (CW) – they are entirely free to interpret each work in their own way and contribute in their own unique and individual style.* (emphasis added)

The above description extracted from my DCI Project Plan (2006) describes accurately the nature of the process I was proposing to undertake - a process which was, in the event, followed quite closely - both in spirit and actuality.

Whilst the ‘Rules-of-Engagement’ outlined above were indeed adhered to throughout the project, I had anticipated the very real potential problem of having *all* of the musicians choosing the same two tracks - instrumentally overloading those tracks -

and no musicians playing on any of the other tracks, leaving them instrumentally incomplete or lacking. Whilst I had devised a 'Plan B' to cover that eventuality, it caused me some initial anxiety. However in the event the problem only manifested itself to a very limited extent, and its solution is discussed elsewhere in this paper.

So, in the spirit of, and consistent with, the best creative/artistic processes - which this project both reflects and reports upon - there were evolutionary (and the odd revolutionary) changes as the project progressed, none of which took the project so far away from its initial concept as to significantly alter the Blind Collaboration principle. These changes were determined by one or more; logistical, practical, opportunistic, creative, financial, time, curiosity and exploratory factors. Most importantly, because I myself had arbitrarily devised the project's Rules-of-Engagement, when I needed to break (or at least amend) those rules to serve the project and/or the art, I had no qualms or hesitation in doing precisely that - certain in the knowledge that I was remaining faithful in principle to the overall process.

### **Breaking the Rules?**

The *first* of the rules to be, shall we say, expanded, was the number of songs allocated to each musician. Having to start the process somewhere, and not knowing how many musicians I would eventually access and/or invite, I had arbitrarily allocated two (2) tracks per musician as a guideline. This changed almost immediately by virtue of some musicians choosing to play on only one (1) track whilst others chose to play on as many as five (5) tracks.

The *second* amendment came when I found myself in the recording studio with two world-class, virtuosic musicians - and two hours of spare studio time. There was no way that that opportunity was going to be lost to me for the sake of an arbitrary rule which I had myself devised, so I nominated a particular track which I considered would suit the respective styles and instruments of musicians available to me at the time. As both musicians happily agreed I did not feel in any way that I was undermining the legitimacy of the Blind Collaboration process - in fact with literally five minutes notice it could be readily argued that it brought another, even more spontaneous improvisational element of collaboration to the work.

The *third* amendment was that I had (as discussed elsewhere) for chronological reasons, to discourage one particular musician from adding an instrument to a track

which already had three other musicians playing on it. The song would simply not accommodate a fourth guest instrument, and I suggested that it might be in the interests of the song, the album as a whole, his time and mine, to select another track, which he did - adding something particularly special to it (refer Songs – ‘*Satisfied*’ below).

The *final* amendment (as discussed elsewhere) was the nomination by myself of eight (8) tracks to which Bass would be added at the very end of the process. This decision evolved out of the instrumentation already recorded on the album and where the songs needed more bottom-end support which the Cello had provided (or was not required) for the remaining tracks. The actual recording of the Bass still complied with the Blind Collaboration aspects of the process as Bassist, Mark Hilton, in common with all the other musicians, did not hear the other guest contributions until the Listening Forum Preliminary Mix.

Whilst frameworks, plans and guidelines are crucial to good planning, there is nothing more stifling for the creative process than unbending rules and slavish dedication to a plan which has been, even in part, outgrown. Art has to be allowed to develop, evolve and ultimately find its own path and rhythm.

## The Challenges:

### 1. Getting the right Musicians:

It's always difficult to give your songs to somebody and know that they're going to take it to places where you can't take it, because they...play guitar and piano, and arrange music. If they do a good job then it's great...if they don't, then it's not great - then you wish you hadn't given it up, or you wish you'd been more involved or you wish you'd been there more...or something goes wrong...

(Nicks 1997)

My plan was to invite as wide a cross-section of musicians as I could in terms of musical backgrounds, styles and instruments. Even though I was writing music for a contemporary album, I wanted to cover the range of musical possibilities from classical to jazz to rock. This could only happen if I invited the broadest possible range of musicians to which I had access.

Working in a theatre department in a university which also has a music department, appeared on the face of it to provide a perfect source of potential collaborators across the musical styles. It had occurred to me to put together an orchestra – however modest – for one particular track (13), ‘As Long’, and whilst there were indeed orchestral players in the music department at my university, for reasons more to do with logistics and availability than any reasons of musical incompatibility, I found myself without any music department colleagues – orchestral or otherwise - in a position to join my collaborative process and contribute to the album (although some eventually did participate in the Listening Forum – refer below).

Wherever I sourced them and whatever individual styles they might represent, I knew that I had - like Donald Fagen (1999) for Steely Dan’s 1977 album ‘Aja’ - to select ‘musicians who had a larger palette of things they could do...because they were coming in cold’. Not only were these musicians coming in cold but because of the nature of the process they would also have to be very confident in themselves and their musical skills/styles, given the process and that they would be playing in a collaborative vacuum.

A crucial prerequisite was that I had to have musicians who could improvise (refer below - The Process). Unlike Steely Dan, who sought out musicians ‘who were also good readers’ (Fagen 1999), I did not provide charts for two very good reasons; a) I do not read music so could not prepare charts myself, but more importantly, b) I did not want to dictate what my guest musicians played – there was no point. Rather, I wanted to invite them into the process and simply make the offer, not unlike Phil Collins (1999) that, ‘I’d like you to do something - can you find a hole for yourself’. It would have been artistically arrogant and musically stupid of me to dictate to them what to play when they were all better musicians than I, and doing so would inevitably have closed off, rather than opened up, new artistic opportunities:

I’ve made a habit throughout my career of hiring musicians that are way better than me  
(Sting 2003)

What I wanted was a group of musicians who would, in the words of Fleetwood Mac’s Stevie Nicks (1997), be able to, ‘take my songs and make them wonderful’. I believe that ultimately, that is precisely what I got. The musicians chosen were as follows (in chronological response/recording order):

<b>Musician:</b>	<b>Instrument(s):</b>	<b>Background:</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
<b>Ceri McCoy</b>	Saxophone	Jazz, World Music	My only experience with Ceri was when I directed him as an actor/musician in several productions of Linsey Pollack's ' <i>Out of the Frying Pan</i> '. He impressed me with his breadth of musical influences and his improvisational skill.
<b>Jeff Usher</b>	Piano	Jazz	Contact via Ceri McCoy. Jeff is a highly regarded jazz pianist, who happens to be totally blind. I had seen Jeff play at the Brisbane Jazz Club some years before. Exceptionally talented and skilful.
<b>Steve Reinthal</b>	Guitars	Various	A virtuosic guitarist known to me through Samford Valley Performers Café (which I helped establish). Exceptionally talented and skilful.
<b>Briony Luttrell</b>	Cello	Classical & various	Contacted at the recommendation of Brad Millard from QUT Music Dept. Young classical/contemporary player with good recording knowledge and technical skill. Able to improvise.
<b>Stuart Day</b>	Violin	Rock, Theatre, Television	A theatre/music multi-instrumentalist colleague from my years in Adelaide (1984-94). Stuart had composed music for my stage and television (mime) shows and has a particular talent for composing music for visuals.

<b>Rob Phelan</b>	Electric Guitars	Blues, Rock	A blues-influenced guitarist with whom I'd played in a duo for a year or so. Sensitive and tasteful player with a good ear for improvised melody and the playing skill to match.
<b>Mark Hilton</b>	Bass	Rock, Jazz	Producer of my previous album and exceptionally talented songwriter & performer in Melbourne. Mark and I were musical colleagues in the seminal Brisbane band 'Silas Farm' from 1972 – 1974. There is a history.

## 2. Getting the right Engineer:

In negotiating some studio time through QUT it transpired that Head of Music, Professor Andy Arthurs, suggested a couple of names for potential recording engineers whom I would require to actually run the studio. There was always going to be the need for someone who technically knew substantially more than I in terms of not only ProTools recording, but also specialised microphone placement – particularly for instruments such as Cello and Grand Piano. Yanto Browning was one of the names put forward and I eventually contacted him to discuss the nature of the project and whether he would be interested. Yanto agreed to engineer the QUT component of the recording and dates and times were set.

In the event this professional relationship developed well beyond just someone who knew the QUT Studio setup to push the buttons. Yanto, consciously or otherwise, became one of my collaborators – involving himself increasingly in the creative and Blind Collaboration process, not as a musician yet bringing to it his (youthful) musical sense, sensitivity and sensibility. This, together with his extraordinary speed and skill in driving the recording technology, meant that I increasingly treated (and trusted) Yanto as one of my collaborators and would very happily and deliberately encourage him to bring his own musical perspective and suggestions to the recording and mixing process.

There developed such an ease of artistic communication between us that, whilst we did not always agree fully on certain details, we gave each other creative room to explore different approaches to solving particular ‘moments’ in the mix, invariably coming to a more than satisfactory, creative, joint solution. It is particularly interesting to me that someone as young as Yanto could work with someone twice his age and that we could maintain such ease of communication in a contemporary music context. One might have expected that different generations would bring conflicting approaches to the music but the opposite proved to be the case. Our respective approaches complemented each other completely.

As noted elsewhere, it was Yanto who suggested, after my first two QUT recording sessions, that I should consider taking advantage of my access to the QUT Studio and book in a couple of additional sessions to re-record some lead vocals etc, using the higher quality microphones/acoustics available. This suggestion ultimately led to a discernible enhancement of certain performance, harmonic and textural aspects of the recording. A fact confirmed by Cellist, Briony Luttrell (2007), in her Listening Forum comments, ‘vocals sound heaps better (mic things) since they were redone’. These technical improvements subtly enhancing the consumer’s unconscious sense of quality embedded in the work. Yanto Browning’s collaborative contribution to the final outcome of the project cannot be overstated.

Ultimately though, whoever places the microphones, pushes the recording buttons, does the singing or the playing, the most fundamental aspect of this project is the base material – the songs themselves.

### 3. Getting the right Songs:

Over my three decades of professional artistic experience I have developed the view that bad art cannot be made good art through technical means alone. There has to be a fundamental quality to the art – in this case the songs - because, a) they need to appeal sufficiently the guest musicians to want to contribute to them – and enjoy the process, and, b) they need to touch the listener, who is bombarded with music from myriad sources at virtually every moment of the day.

The songs chosen were a mix of newly composed (9 of 14) and previously recorded (5 of 14) in a band context (*Night & Day*) over two albums in 2000 and 2002/03. The re-recording of a minority of previously recorded songs was something of an experiment in different treatments, approaches and instrumentation applied to the same songs in order to discover just how differently (or not) they might turn out. As Sting (2003) suggests, 'if they're good songs they will transmute their meaning into different situations'. It was also for reasons of applying my increased vocal confidence, technique and resonance - developed over the intervening years (after 25 years as a mime artist, virtually never using my voice in performance) - which would serve the songs significantly better now than previously. And, quite apart from any technical reasons, there were particular of my songs chosen simply because they are personal favourites, for a variety of reasons - musical, emotional, historical - which justified their inclusion. I wanted to sing, play and ultimately hear those personal favourites in the best light possible.

## The Songs:

I had initially recorded and settled on 13 tracks. Late in the process (end September 2006) I wrote another song, '*Hold Everything*', (Track 14) which instantly appealed to me and which I immediately decided to include on the album.

The rationale behind recording the basic Draft tracks as just Voice, Acoustic Guitar and Percussion – 'the lowest common denominator of arrangement' (Miller 2003) - was, on the one hand, that they were the instruments I happen to play. On the other hand, the recordings of the songs had, in arrangement terms, to be complete enough to stand on their own in the event that none of the collaborating musicians chose a particular track or tracks to contribute to - at that stage, an entirely unknown quantity.

Whilst I was keen to keep the process open, and curious to see if others disagreed, there were indeed at least one or two tracks which I had already decided would not require any guest instrumentation at all. As it turned out this proved to be the case and there are various tracks which attracted no guest musicians, so I happily decided to leave them with more space, and nominated eight (8) to which I wanted to add just Bass:

The acid test for whether a song is a good song or not is whether you can break it down into just a simple rendition. If it still works like that it's a good song as far as I'm concerned

(Sting 2003)

## 1. **ONCE IN A WHILE**

Written just after the completion of my previous solo album, '*Trust No-One*' (2005), this song has become the title track of the current album. As Cullen (2007) suggests, it is 'a good song to establish a theme for the collection'. It is simple, fairly repetitive but with a strong driving rhythm. Described as 'good and punchy' by Harry Lloyd-Williams (2007), it is one which is good to perform live, so I had no hesitation in including it. This is one of the tracks which did not attract the interest of any of the guest musicians, other than Mark Hilton (Bass).

## 2. **INTOXICATING**

This song is the only one to present me with the anticipated problem of having a lot more musicians wanting to add to it than the song could musically accommodate (refer above).

At one point I had four (4) musicians proposing to record into this song and in the end I had to suggest to the chronologically most recent one – in contravention of my self-imposed rules (refer above) – that the song already had three musicians recorded into it and that it might be more useful, in the interests of not wasting his time or mine, to choose another track instead. It reached the stage where there was no point in trying to squeeze any more instrumentation into the song.

In analysing why this song in particular had been so attractive to the other musicians (and indeed several members of my Listening Forum – 'great track'; 'a beautiful song'; 'very nice track – it's intoxicating!'; 'ethereal'; 'atmospheric richness...my favourite' - refer Appendix 6) various theories came to mind – including the one that it might be the song with the most 'space' in it, hence providing opportunities for other instruments. Another theory to emerge was that it was simply an aesthetically appealing song and people just liked it. Whatever the actual reason or reasons, the dilemma I had to resolve was how best to serve the song at the same time as serving my guest musicians and respecting their musical input and efforts.

On 9 February 2007 I had a long and detailed telephone conversation with Stuart Day regarding his Violin part on this song. It had occurred to me a couple of days prior that the reason the violin did not quite sit is that all of the instruments (and voice to some extent) never really have any resolving melody – the Piano and Cello, and Acoustic Guitar chords, build up tension and anticipation that is not resolved until the guitar harmonics instrumental parts. The violin is the only instrument to deliver a resolving melody prior to the guitar harmonics so it actually undercuts the latent tension in the song. This is why the tremolo of the violin, by contrast, works well – it adds to the unresolved tension – until the violin melody comes in. I have since discussed this further with various of the guest musicians (and Stuart himself) and it seems a feasible theory.

To his great credit, Stuart had decided that, given the perceived ‘experimental’ nature of the album’s concept, he would take a deliberately different approach with his contribution. Having determined that the album as a whole had something of a ‘jazz feel about it’, he decided to work against the predictable style and introduce more of a ‘folky feel’. It is important to remember that, consistent with the spirit and process of *Blind Collaboration*, neither Stuart nor the other guest musicians ever heard the other (jazz) contributions until after all the recording had been completed, so he was not in a position to make a different (contextual) stylistic judgement.

In the end, partly for simple chronological reasons as the ‘jazz feel’ of the Piano/Cello combination had already been too strongly established in the minds of both myself and Yanto to accommodate the more ‘folky’ counter feel of Violin melodies, it was decided to retain the Violin’s tension-building tremolo whilst excluding its tension-reducing melodies.

This demonstrates precisely the point discussed in general terms by Tilburey (2007), correctly suggesting that because one particular instrument, ‘would be mixed earlier into the track’, it would, ‘therefore dictate the direction of the song’, exerting ‘greater influence on the mood of the piece’. The result in this case is, according to Jenkins (2007), a ‘good mix of instrumentation...the way the different tones bleed in and out of each other constructs a multi-faceted construction through space’. Bassist Mark Hilton (2007), who did not play on the track, regards this as an ‘excellent arrangement...good use of strings’, with Cullen (2007) describing, ‘the delightful layers and grace notes of cello and violin contrasted against a soulful bottom end...exquisite performances’.

### **3. JUST THE SAME**

A new song composed within the last 12 months. In my own view, basic and unchallenging, but in the view of Jones (2007) this is, 'a good strong, powerful song' – it has been enhanced by some featured 'percussion (which) is excellent', according to Jenkins (2007). This is another track which did not attract the interest of any of the guest musicians other than Mark Hilton (Bass), whose contribution provides the song with a good deal of the 'immediacy and punch', described by Cullen (2007).

### **4. BRAND NEW DAYS**

Originally recorded on the first (self-titled) *Night & Day* album in 2000, I had been wanting for some time to re-record this song. Whilst my original recording was acceptable I felt that the song lent itself to a different and perhaps more punchy treatment than that of the more gentle original arrangement. Listening Forum opinions (2007) of this recording range from, 'just didn't hang together for me with this instrument mix' (Holland), to, 'imaginative arrangement, but two songs in one really' (Hilton), to 'overall really good song/composition' (Jenkins). The song features an interesting time signature (11/8) which changes in the chorus to a more conventional 6/8 time signature – bringing with it a strong chorus feel. The song now features an interesting combination of Cello and Saxophone – both of which get into and enhance the spirit and groove of the 11/8 time signature, coming up with some excellent, contrasting and complementary combinations.

### **5. SIAM**

This song was another originally recorded on the first (self-titled) *Night & Day* album. That recording was made not long after the song was composed – a case of happy coincidence as the album was being planned at around about the same time. The song was written quite spontaneously, came to me easily and tells of the journey of my parents from their meeting in Indonesia prior to WWII, their incarceration as POW's under the Japanese, and their subsequent re-meeting, marriage (in Siam – now Thailand) and eventual emigration to Australia. There have been some comments (Cullen 2007) in Listening Forum feedback about the obscurity of the lyrics, 'the

wordplay is intriguing and the setting sinuous. A mood piece, the point of which is not immediately clear (and which causes the brain to wonder and wander)', but once one knows what the subject matter is, the lyrics lose their obscurity.

I had absolutely no thought or intention of writing about my parents when I originally sat down with a guitar, absentmindedly strumming an A minor chord, but as so often occurs with art, the creative process comes to one more often, and generally more successfully, than when one goes in search of it or attempts to impose creativity onto an artistic 'problem'.

The finished song (on this album) features a soulful and mournful electric guitar solo by Steve Reinthal which is, in my view, both unpredictable and brilliant. The use of a wah-pedal is entirely unexpected but (surprisingly) entirely appropriate in this context – giving the guitar an almost 'wailing vocal' quality described by bassist Mark Hilton (2007) as, 'inspired...sweetly majestic and lush'. This song holds a very significant place on the album (refer below, 'The Role of Serendipity' for further discussion).

## **6. TAKE THAT**

Renowned American jazz musician Ben Sidran (2006), has said, 'in jazz there are no mistakes, only opportunities'. This song grew out of one such opportunity – a musical error. I find it rather fascinating that this song, with arguably the most 'space' to accommodate another instrument(s) was not taken up by the guest musicians. My own interpretation is that, as expected, sparse as it is the song does not allow any other instrument in. As discussed earlier, I had always considered and sometimes stated, without mentioning specific song titles, that there was at least one if not two songs on this album that did not actually need anything else. I fully expected that this particular track would be unlikely to be added to. In the event it was not, and I was quite happy for that to be the case. Its sparseness of instrumentation highlights the lead vocal line - a view supported by Jenkins (2007) who describes the arrangement as, 'Excellent – really good balance of space and instrumentation', which provides an aesthetic contrast to some of the fuller and richer tracks on the album.

## **7. FOOLISH**

Originally recorded on the second *Night & Day* album (2002/03), this is a song of which I am particularly proud. It is a personal favourite, both lyrically and musically. The song begins slowly and understated and then features a tempo change part way through which takes the listener through an extended instrumental/background vocal section to the contrasting finish. A musical finish described tongue-in-cheek by bassist Mark Hilton (2007), as a 'Jethro Tull nuttiness and Satchmo/Donovan ending'. It has a structure and depth which strongly appeals to me and whilst that structure renders it essentially a 'band' song, I have and continue to perform it successfully in the solo acoustic context. The solo arrangement sits and fits surprisingly well with/underneath the fuller more complex instrumentation of this version. Its inclusion on this album is a very important part of my development as both a songwriter and live performer.

The collaborative treatment in this recording has allowed the song to develop along more improvisational lines, even though its structure is closely defined – eliciting from the Listening Forum a general consensus about its overall appeal, with Phil Cullen (2007) suggesting that, 'this song appears to have the best overall structure, leading to immediacy in popular appeal'.

## **8. STEPPIN' OUT**

This song was originally recorded on the first (2000) *Night & Day* album. Probably the most likely to be described as having a 'jazzy' feel (I indeed once informally approached Vince Jones with the view to his recording the song, but he ignored me), it is quite minimal, quirky and, to my surprise, has been described by Ashley Jones (2007) in Listening Forum comments as, 'a really strong song that uses vocal and instruments to great effect...captures attention...this is a standout track'. Whilst I certainly find the song appealing, I do not necessarily concur with Ashley's 'standout track' view - however his assessment is one which both surprised and delighted me. I always maintained an unstated assumption (hope?) that a jazz specialist such as Jeff Usher might select this one – an assumption which proved to be ill-founded as the song did not attract any guest participation. If I were to be completely honest I would probably confess to being a little disappointed that Jeff did not select it, but in the interests of remaining faithful to my Blind Collaboration principle I did not push it, nor

even vaguely suggest it to him. I did however get Mark Hilton to add Bass which he did very selectively and tastefully.

## **9. SATISFIED**

Further to my discussion with Electric Guitarist, Rob Phelan, during which I discouraged him from adding to '*Intoxicating*' (refer above), he ultimately chose this track as a substitute. In various discussions over the period of time that Rob and I performed as an informal, occasional and fairly short-lived duo, he had mentioned from time to time that his approach to his lead guitar phrasing was significantly influenced by the kind of phrasing generally favoured by Saxophone players. As such, this song represents another manifestation of serendipity (refer below 'The Role of Serendipity') – not only just because it features both Saxophone and Electric Guitar unwittingly playing together on the same track. The song features these two instruments moving well beyond just phrasing similarity to the point where they are, unintentionally and inadvertently, playing virtually identical phrases in unison and/or closely harmonising. To my own ears, some of the vocal harshness/edge is also reminiscent of the sound and phrasing of a Saxophone, which, according to Hansson (2007), in this case provides a 'Gentle feel – sax adds nuance to melodic appeal interweaving with vocal line and background guitar lines/chords – juicy sound'.

## **10. DO IT ALL**

In my own mind this was always going to be the 'take-it-or-leave-it' song of the album. Originally written with different lyrics for the occasion of a family member's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and then adapted for inclusion on this album with amended lyrics and different title to distinguish it from the original, it has a very basic three-chord structure which I always regarded as musically too simple and repetitive to be very interesting or sustain for the length of the song. As it turns out this, 'infectious tune' (Hilton 2007), has been nominated by various Listening Forum members as quite an appealing track, with a 'great lyric. Good potential for broad empathy and appeal' (Cullen 2007).

Given my own assessment of this song, one of the great surprises of this already unpredictable process was that jazz pianist Jeff Usher chose this as one of his tracks. From which moment on there was no way I was going to allow it to be a 'take-it-or-

leave-it' track. Further to my discussion above regarding 'Steppin' Out', this song has in my view not even the barest hint of jazz in terms of its style, structure or simplicity, but something about it obviously leapt out at Jeff Usher. Comments regarding the piano's role vary with pianist Clare Hansson (2007) asking, 'was the piano necessary on this track?', and, in contrast, Harry Lloyd-Williams (2007) suggesting that the, 'piano really makes the song - great!'

In the end, Jeff's playing on the recording enhances the driving feel of and adds interest and texture to the song – a point made by Martin Crook (2007) describing the song's 'driving pulse (and) good deal of melodic interest'. Jeff's playing also prompted one of the several instances across the album of my deleting some of my own playing (and indeed vocals) in order to feature/clarify a guest musician's work – something I always planned to do but, with the exception of my original Keyboard Bass (on this track) which was only ever an interim measure, was not certain precisely where I would need to retain my parts or delete them.

## 11. **PERHAPS**

Fairly simple and straightforward in structure - indeed too simple for some, 'get a strong melody (as opposed to regurgitating the pentatonic scale) then paint word pictures that will appeal to the world' (Kidman 2007). This song features another example of my deleting some of my own vocals in order to create space for, and made redundant by, Briony Luttrell's exquisite Cello solo, described by; Clare Hansson (2007) as, 'sensitive to the mood of this sweet song – most effective use of echo and range – rich dark tone pervades – complements voice', by Ashley Jones (2007) as 'haunting and gives some dimension to the song', and by Mark Hilton (2007) as 'well crafted melodically, great cello part...one of my favourites'.

Space is a feature in this track generally. The Cello is the only instrumental enhancement and then only as a discrete solo plus a short reappearance at the end – rather than playing all the way through as some of the other instruments do. I have always been attracted to the notion of featuring Bass-type instruments as lead instruments rather than just providing the underlying rhythm section with the percussion. This song provides one such opportunity.

## 12. **SLIDE**

Another song originally recorded on the second *Night & Day* album (2002/03). Described enthusiastically by Ashley Jones (2007) as having ‘fabulous energy...wonderful vocal performance and great instrumental...a fun, jamming sense...fresh, colourful and energetic...another stand out track’. Saxophone is an instrument which I have always wanted featured in some of my songs – this is one of them. I was delighted when Saxophonist Ceri McCoy chose this track. Others, including Hansson, Reinthal and Hilton (2007) are less enthusiastic about the Saxophone instrumentation. Whilst Martin Crook (2007) suggests that the sound evokes a, ‘nice West Coast feel’, Harry Lloyd-Williams similarly describes it as projecting a, ‘good feel – nice jazzy swinging drive’.

One of the tracks most challenging vocally - with long, sustained notes and harmonies providing a good contrast to the sometimes chaotic sense the Saxophone brings with its two takes selectively mixed together. Something about which Holland (2007) comments that he is ‘not sure the two sax lines work together’. My own view is possibly coloured by the previous recording of this song which was much ‘cleaner’ and more controlled. I personally love the chaos of this one.

## 13. **AS LONG**

Sharing Harry Lloyd-Williams’ (2007) view that, ‘I don’t really like message type lyrics’, I have generally been somewhat suspicious of ‘protest’ songs. But when this song emerged from my subconscious and became precisely that, the challenge was to make it work so well musically that the sentiments expressed in the lyrics would either be supported or could equally be ignored without diminishing the enjoyment of the song musically. Originally intended to be the song providing the big orchestral finish for the album, as the process evolved it proved to be neither orchestral in the traditional sense, nor the last track on the album (refer below). It does however have the ‘big finish’ and it is certainly orchestral in feel if not in actual instrumentation. Rob Phelan’s Electric Guitar provides a magnificently building orchestral feel. As I wrote upon hearing the preliminary mix, in my own feedback comments (refer Appendix 5), ‘I absolutely *adore* how this builds...the Slide Guitar makes it soar. It’s absolutely majestic. Who needs an Orchestra????!!!’ Other comments vary in detail but are generally positive, the most reassuring that my artistic process has worked came from

Ashley Jones (2007); 'I was captivated from the outset, I felt as if I was going on a journey...a reflective song without being morbid'.

#### **14. HOLD EVERYTHING**

A spontaneous late addition to the album.

Composed on 30 September 2006, the song came to me very quickly, unexpectedly, I liked it immediately, was comfortable singing it, and decided to add it to the album. I originally placed it in position 13 (of 14) on the track list in order to maintain 'As Long' as the final track, with the view to having a 'big finish' with a massive orchestral swell (refer above). In the event I decided to do the opposite – so often the case in artistic development – and finish the album on a softer note, with a quiet, minimalist sound. A decision supported by Bassist Mark Hilton (2007) in Listening Forum feedback, who describes it as a 'smart and suitable finishing track'. Any concerns I might have held about the similarity in feel, key and instrumentation between this track and the previous one were dispelled by Clare Hansson (2007) who writes that, 'the ending made me feel like walking through a painting'.

#### **The Process:**

The practical aspects of the process are perhaps best articulated via my response to some very specific, unexpected and useful questions which came in the form of an email (3 February 2007) from one of my Listening Forum participants (who shall remain anonymous), which I include below as an email string:

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Hi XXXXX,

Thanks for your detailed email/questions - which certainly don't pollute the process. Responses as below (within the body of your text in *Blue Italic*).

Any additional queries or clarification feel free to contact me again.

Regards,

Chris

-----Original Message-----

From: XXXXXXXXXXXX

Sent: Saturday, 3 February 2007 4:01 PM

To: Chris Willems

Subject: Just asking.....

Hi, Chris,

I listened through all tracks on the CD, and to comment I need to ask a few questions, if it doesn't "pollute" the aim of your project:

**Are all the compositions and lyrics your originals?**

*Yes they were/are. Some tracks I have recorded before, in different contexts*

**Was there any over-dubbing?**

*Some overdubbing of vocals (and some instruments) here & there - as well as vocal harmonies of course - but generally we have used one whole single take wherever possible (and done a bit of cutting & pasting across takes to fix the odd suspect note) - as it achieves more musical consistency/integrity. Track 3 ('Just The Same') is the only track on which we consciously decided to 'double' the lead vocals.*

**Did the participating musicians read from charts?**

*No - they all improvised (which is why I chose them - because I knew they could). The only 'charts' some (particularly bass) had were just a lyric sheet (as a guide) sometimes (but not always) with the basic chord structure noted at the 1st verse & chorus - so they could work out what key to play in. Most of the musicians had no*

*charts at all (not even lyric sheets) - and of course in the case of Jeff Usher\* it was; a) pointless, and b) he has perfect pitch - so knew more about what key it was in than I did(!). (\*N.B. **Jeff Usher**, jazz pianist, is totally blind – C.W.)*

*The idea was that they brought to the songs their own melodic ideas based on how the songs affected/appealed to them - I did not tell them what to play (or even what instrument to play) or which songs to select. It was entirely up to them individually.*

**Were the charts melody line and chords, or just chords? (I know most string players cannot improvise and need to read notes)**

*Refer above - I don't read/write music (as in dots) but I generally note down for myself what the basic chords are (otherwise I forget them!).*

*Occasionally I would clarify the structure/fingering of a chord which I had happened across but did not know the precise name of (I might just describe it as "...it's an E 'something or other'..." - or it's a "...C#m shape slid up to the 5th fret...") so mostly they just worked it out by ear with very little discussion. My cellist never referred to charts at all and took a different approach to each of her (5) tracks.*

**In the case of Jeff Usher, did he have a prior hearing of the piece before the recording?**

*Yes - all the musicians were sent a draft album (acoustic guitar/voice/percussion) from which to select the tracks they liked/wanted to play on.*

**Was there just one "take" for each piece?**

*It varied amongst musicians - some did their bit in one or two takes, some chose to develop their ideas over 8 or 9. It was entirely up to each musician individually (and fascinating to watch their different approaches in situations when I could).*

*It is important to remember (and I have to remind myself constantly) that the musicians, whilst they heard what I played on the basic drafts, at no stage were able to hear what any of the other 'guest' musicians had played on the same track - so they were totally in the dark other than for my basic instrumentation - hence my term 'blind collaboration'. The role of serendipity has, as it turns out, been quite crucial throughout the entire process.*

**Were any synthesized effects used?**

*Depends on what you mean by 'synthesized'. Certainly in the mix Yanto has utilised effects like reverb, chorus, delay etc, but in the fundamentals of the recording there have been no 'artificially generated' sounds. The closest I can think of at the moment, would be the 'wah-wah pedal' on the electric guitar in "Siam". However I would personally not classify that as a 'synthesized' sound as such.*

*There has been no 'sampling' etc if that's what you are referring to – I personally detest that kind of approach/sound and am much more comfortable with 'proper' instruments - hence the instrumentation on this album is pretty basic: guitars (acoustic & electric); bass; cello; piano; saxophone; percussion (all acoustic); vocals and backing harmonies.*

**In the event that you'd like my comments unadulterated by having the answers to these questions, I understand.**

*Not at all - I very much appreciate both your time and your detailed interest in the work and process. I trust I have answered your questions sufficiently.*

*Regards,*

*Chris*

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The process indeed ran very closely to how it was intended and produced the kind of outcomes one might expect, with the caveat that within the overall process there were certainly unexpected outcomes both artistically (refer below) and logistically. I remained true to my rules (mostly) and did not tell the musicians which tracks to choose, what to play or indeed what instrument to play. Instead, like Banfield (interviewed by Collins 2005), 'allow(ing) the poetry to dictate and suggest what the instrumentation was going to be'.

The one exception was right towards the end of the process where most of the guest recording had been completed and I then had the chance to step back, assess what we by then had, and what the work still needed in terms of necessarily filling musical gaps. The album overall needed some Bass in some of the tracks which the Cello had not played on, in order to give those songs the required bottom-end. My final

collaborator, Mark Hilton in Melbourne, was in some sense 'standing by' to fill those gaps.

Whilst the nomination of specific tracks that this required fell outside my rules-of-engagement, the actual process itself of recording Bass on those tracks still retained the 'blind' aspects of the process from the point of view of Mark not hearing the other musical contributions.

The fact that Bass was essentially left until last brings us to another interesting aspect of the process, the Chronology.

## Chronology:

In overall *Project* terms, the stages (refer Appendix 3) were planned, scheduled and then adjusted where required for logistical reasons. Various stages overlapped or 'cross-faded' into each other and some stages such as album cover artwork spanned the entire timeline of the project.

In specific *Recording* terms, the usual chronology of recording is to begin, based on a guide track, with Drums and Bass – the rhythm section – setting the foundations for the other instruments and voice to build upon; 'like building a building, the foundation, next (*indicates layers*), then you put in the furniture in the end' (Lanois 1999). In this case the chronology of the process was almost totally reversed - with Bass and some of the Drums/Percussion actually being the final ones, rather than the first, to be recorded. These final recordings of Bass and Drums also complied with my 'rules of engagement' and were done blind, simultaneously, some 2000 km apart (Brisbane and Melbourne).

My 'To Do' lists from 26 November (refer Appendix 4) illustrate the chronology up to that point. The Bass parts did not arrive until 8 January (or thereabouts) and were added later still. Strictly chronologically speaking, the very final part was the Electric Guitar of Rob Phelan on Track 13, '*As Long*', however, in reality, this was added within a very short time after the Bass and re-recorded Percussion were added in and does not form part of the Rhythm Section, so from the point of view of the fundamentals of the album, the Rhythm Section was essentially the last major component rather than the first.

Further to this, as can be seen in the case of *'Intoxicating'* (track 2), discussed elsewhere, the chronology of the recording of the respective instruments quite clearly and definitively (consciously or otherwise) determined and shaped the style – in that particular case as a quite distinctively jazz flavour - which virtually precluded a different stylistic treatment. In other cases neither of the guest instruments determined the style to the exclusion of another instrument or style, they merely complemented each other without actually imposing a definitive 'style' on the track. However it is worth noting that, despite whichever direction any or all of these songs could potentially have gone stylistically based on particular instruments/players, there has indeed developed an overall 'feel' or style of both the individual tracks themselves and the album as a whole, by virtue of, or perhaps despite, the process.

So, in terms of the establishment of the sound and/or style of each track, this 'reverse chronology' in one sense simultaneously both supports and conflicts with the notional proposition by Listening Forum participant David Tilburey (2007) in his Overall Comments:

Do some instruments collaborate better than others and do some have more influence on a piece? The experience here would suggest that a saxophone would be mixed earlier into a track than a cello and therefore dictate the direction of the song. However, even though the cello seemed to have a delayed introduction it is suggested the cello had a greater influence in the mood of a piece, whether the rest of the music was produced differently to allow for it or directly influenced it is unclear. *What is interesting though is you may never know.* (emphasis added)

The 'never knowing' has, by default, become a feature of this album and this process.

In the final analysis I would defy almost anyone who was not actually part of the process to determine, from a first (or indeed subsequent) listening, which instruments were recorded in which order and whether or not those instruments were indeed recorded at the same time in the same studio.

## The Recording Sessions:

Guest Recording Sessions were held in various places at various times, within the period 5 November 2006 to 8 January 2007, and I was physically present only for a small number of these.

### **5 November 2006:**

The first of these sessions, as indicated in the 'To Do' list (Appendix 4) was the Saxophone of Ceri McCoy on 5 November 2006. I had never recorded Saxophone before (at my home studio) and so was uncertain about the finer points of microphone placement etc., for that particular instrument. However, it seems to have worked out.

This session was crucial for me in many ways. It made demands on my by no means extensive ProTools recording experience/expertise; Saxophone was an instrument which I had not previously recorded in any context; this session would tell me how effectively, or otherwise, I could remain involved yet separate from the artistic process, in line with my Blind Collaboration 'rules-of-engagement'; it would also tell me something about how my guest musicians might feel about the process.

As noted in my Reflective Journal:

Ceri was the first of my guest musicians and the process proved, or at least supported the theory about blind collaboration. Even though I was 'pushing buttons' at my own studio computer, I had my back to him and was not influencing his playing in any way - by word, deed or body language. However at one stage after several stylistically different takes he asked, 'Is that the kind of thing you want?' To which I replied, *'I'm not telling you what to play or not play...but I'm smiling a lot'*

It was the next session, in the QUT Concert Studio on the evening of 22 November 2006, which, essentially, 'proved the pudding'.

### **22 November 2006:**

I include below the complete extract from my Reflective Journal:

22 November 2006 (Wednesday night 17:00 – 23:00)

Guest musician recording session at QUT (Concert) Studio  
 – with Jeff Usher & Steve Reinthal:

<i>What happened?</i>	<i>How Do I Feel About It?</i>
<p>Guest musician recording session at QUT (Concert) Studio – with Jeff Usher, (blind) Jazz Pianist &amp; Steve Reinthal (Guitar) + Yanto Browning to drive ProTools.</p> <p>With the QUT Studio comes not one but two Grand Pianos – a Steinway Grand and a Kawai Baby Grand. Jeff Usher initially tried the Steinway but it was in need of tuning, whereas the smaller Kawai, situated up on the Stage, was currently in better tune so that was the one we used.</p> <p>Jeff's recording process/technique was to listen/play through about 3 to 5 times, then start putting down takes (4 or 5) – without listening back to them. We have a wealth of material from all runs through as Yanto recorded all of them – including the rough run-throughs.</p> <p>As predicted, we had some time to spare after Jeff's recording, so I had asked that Steve Reinthal come to the studio ('just in case'), and we were able to record an additional track ('Foolish') with both Jeff's piano and Steve's guitar.</p>	<p>Truly excellent – fairly blown away at the sheer delight of both the process and the product. The kind of musical calibre and quality these musicians bring to the project takes it infinitely beyond the 'home recording' kind of approach. I am astounded (but not surprised) by their musical skill, talent and professionalism. These are truly world-class musicians and I take as a great compliment indeed their positive comments about my songs – and/or aspects of them – particularly about my 'very accurate' harmonies in 'Foolish' (Jeff), and the quality of 'Siam' as a song (Steve).</p> <p>In a follow-up phone call to Jeff Usher to thank him for his contribution I commented to the effect 'that someone of your standard was actually involved and wasn't vomiting listening to my songs I take as a great compliment'.</p> <p>During and since the session I have been 'smiling a lot'.</p>
<i>How Is It Relevant To My Research/Work?</i>	<i>Action – based upon it:</i>
<p>The kind of musical calibre and quality these musicians bring to the project takes it infinitely beyond the 'home recording' kind of approach. In doing so it raises the standard of not only the project generally, but my music specifically as well as the outside perception of quality.</p> <p>What this has already proven is that the concept of blind collaboration can, does, and is working to add all kinds of layers and levels to the art. With this calibre of Guest Musician I find that I am sticking well to my self-imposed 'Rules' for</p>	<p>Continue to record.</p>

the project, i.e. that they choose which tracks they find appealing, they play whatever they musically choose to and I do not interfere or impose my musical will in any way. As I commented to Steve Reinthal while we were watching/listening to Jeff Usher weaving exquisite jazz piano through '*Intoxicating*' – 'why would I presume to tell musicians such as Jeff (or indeed Steve himself) what to play, when their musical knowledge and skill far exceeds mine – it would be ridiculously arrogant and artistically stupid'.

It should be noted, and it is very easy to forget in watching and listening to Jeff Usher play, that he is totally blind, and has been from birth.

My rationale for getting Steve Reinthal into the studio on the same night as Jeff went beyond just maximising use of the studio time. This process is not just about me making an album, it is about 'making connections' and collaborating more broadly as well. The fact that Jeff Usher and Steve Reinthal did not know each other as musicians I regarded as close to 'criminal negligence'. These are precisely the kind of musicians who should know and indeed work with each other – if not immediately then at some point in the future. They now do and I am certain that at some point they will find an opportunity to work together – the results would be remarkable.

Another plus to emerge from this session was the realisation that in Yanto I had come across an exceptionally gifted young recording engineer. Once briefed on the 'blind collaboration' process, he immediately embraced the notion as a 'great idea'. In the studio his skill in microphone placement, combination and configuration brought yet another element, through the technical side of things, to the process.

### Comments on the above:

This session was really the one which 'proves the pudding'. The combination of musical excellence and recording skills meant that the process went brilliantly well. I was in the presence of consummate professionals in a studio which they loved the feel and sound of and allowed them to also very much enjoy the work – beyond just doing me a favour and playing on my album. The bringing together (even in separate sub-sessions) of two musical virtuosos such as Jeff Usher and Steve Reinthal is a bonus factor which gives me immense satisfaction.

In terms of this session, I felt not unlike *Steely Dan's* Walter Becker (1999) describing the *Aja* recording sessions where, 'I found myself in the room with these guys and I thought...wow, I'm really outclassed here'. In terms of musicianship I was certainly outclassed by Steve Reinthal and Jeff Usher, so, as noted in the above extract from my Reflective Journal, commenting to Steve Reinthal on the night (while we were watching/listening to Jeff Usher weaving exquisite jazz piano through '*Intoxicating*'), 'why would I presume to tell musicians such as Jeff (or indeed Steve himself) what to play, when their musical knowledge and skill far exceeds mine – it would be ridiculously arrogant and artistically stupid'.

It is like good management. A good manager does not surround themselves with incompetent people in order to feel superior. The best manager is the one who surrounds themselves with the best possible people so that the quality of their work speaks for itself – and by extension the quality of the manager.

### **23 November 2006:**

On the following night, Thursday 23 November 2006, I was back in the QUT Concert Studio with Yanto Browning and my Cellist, Briony Luttrell.

As noted in my Reflective Journal:

This session was an entirely different dynamic in terms of both the recording and the 'feel' of the studio from the previous night's recording session with Jeff Usher and Steve Reinthal. Briony is a much younger (and hence less experienced) musician and I sensed that there was, initially... perhaps a lack of confidence in the situation. This is no reflection on Briony's musical skill or talent – she provided me with many takes consisting of some truly beautiful work in terms of both her playing and her note selection. At one stage, sensing a bit of hesitation on her part, I said to her something along the lines of, 'I think you're playing what you think I want to hear - not what you want to play...I may be older but I like new and different ideas, so just play what *you* hear, not what you think I want to hear - that's what this process is all about'. With that 'licence' for her own original input she came up with some beautifully different approaches – including, 'how about some seagulls?' Absolutely.

Briony's Cello contribution has been singled out for very positive comment by the vast majority of Listening Forum participants.

All other guest musician sessions were conducted in different physical locations at different times in each respective musicians' own recording facilities, so I was not

physically present at any of these guest sessions. The only other sessions at which I was physically present were the newly scheduled ones on 14 & 17 December 2006 - again at the QUT Concert Studio.

#### **14 & 17 December 2006:**

These two sessions were initially unplanned, but it was in discussion with Recording Engineer Yanto Browning during the 23 November session that Yanto suggested taking advantage of the QUT Studio's superior acoustics, microphones and recording equipment and adding more sessions in order to re-record some of the lead vocals and percussion.

I initially hesitated, briefly, not savouring the prospect of re-recording all of my vocals over 14 tracks. Not only because 'it's more frightening to start again' (Eno 1999), but I had already expended a significant amount of recording time, energy and vocal/technical attention, over some months, getting the vocals as right as I could - particularly in view of the fact that there had been moments of vocal performance on my previous album with which I was not completely satisfied. The other reason was simply a logistical and financial one, with my self-imposed timeline (and budget) slipping by apace. However, the more I considered it, the less I could think of any good technical or artistic reason not to re-record at least some of the lead vocals.

In the event this is what occurred. Selected lead vocals were re-recorded with the better quality microphones and they generally turned out very well. However not all of these new vocal recordings were ultimately used in the final mix due to indefinable 'feel' reasons. Ultimately though, through Yanto's post-production skill, any differences in overall vocal sound between the originally recorded and re-recorded are not apparent in the final mix, yet there is (to our ears at least) a discernible enhancement of certain performance, harmonic and textural aspects. One of those detailed aspects of art that no-one other than the artist knows (or cares?) about but which subtly enhance the consumer's unconscious sense of quality embedded in the art.

The final of the two sessions also included re-recording of some of the percussion using a hired high quality Drum Kit. Again, these percussion re-recordings were largely for enhancement of the overall Percussion sound quality more than any need to replace poor performance.

In overall terms the sessions in which I participated were, without exception, enjoyable, constructive and instructive experiences.

## The Mixing Sessions:

Rough mixing began virtually as soon as my guest musicians began recording their contributions and sending them in. I initially began the preliminary mixing process, but gradually Yanto increasingly took over; partly for technical reasons, as the number of sessions, takes and instruments, eventually overtook my computer capacity; partly for aesthetic reasons as Yanto's mixing input began to shape the final sound; partly for logistical reasons, as I had, at some point in the process (23 November 2006) put it to Yanto that as he had been so much part of the recording engineering process that perhaps he should mix the album. As noted in my Reflective Journal at the time:

Yanto's involvement in the project and his suggestion of more recording at the QUT Studio has morphed into a situation where, given the amount of recording actually engineered by Yanto, that I began to consider using him instead of my original choice - Mark Hilton in Melbourne - to mix the album. This is by no means a reflection on Mark's ability. He successfully and skilfully mixed and mastered my previous solo album and I therefore had no hesitation in asking him to also mix and master this one. However the circumstances gradually changed to the point where in practical terms too much of the six days I had earmarked to be in Melbourne mixing with Mark might have been used up with Mark working out Yanto's recording techniques, processes and preferences.

Other aspects were the financial considerations in that the cost of travel to Melbourne and associated expenses could be more effectively utilised to pay Yanto, at a similar rate to Mark, to maximise time and limited resources. In the end I discussed this with Yanto, he indicated interest in doing the mixing. I explained that I would have to discuss this with Mark as there were also both musical and historical reasons why I had chosen Mark to mix – having been musical colleagues since the early 1970's

In the event I did indeed discuss this with Mark Hilton and whilst I felt uncomfortable and somewhat guilty about the change, Mark understood completely from a recording technology, logistical and financial point of view. He also agreed to still play Bass on whatever tracks I might need him to.

After choosing the preferred takes, discussing approaches and details, fixing up some moments, etc., over two sessions with Yanto on 14 & 17 January 2007, the final mixing process was completed in keeping with my blind collaboration rules. I left the album

with Yanto to do a Preliminary Mix – which I collected from him on 25 January 2007.

Journal entry notes:

This is a big leap in the process. We are getting to a truly critical phase where thoughts for both the detail and the overall feel become more fine-grained...This is also the Mix version which becomes the basis for my 'Listening Forum(s)' – a process where other critical (fresh) ears listen to the Mix, provided feedback and comments which will inform the final stage of the process – final Mixing, Mastering and ultimately Publishing/Distribution.

As noted in the same entry, I felt:

Excited, anxious, expectant. I played it in the car on the way home (I had driven down from Toowoomba to collect it on the way through) and I was 'smiling a lot'. It sounds fantastic on first hearing. Yanto had mentioned to me that he had added some 'tricky bits' into the mix – various effects on vocals here and there etc. All of it was tasteful, unexpected and therefore surprising – and therefore delightful...the mood and emotion of some pieces having been beautifully enhanced by Yanto's Mix.

## The Listening Forum:

The concept of a Listening Forum came as a result of a question from fellow DCI candidate Harry Lloyd-Williams, asking me who was going to mix this album. When I responded that Mark Hilton in Melbourne and myself were (as Mark had produced my previous album), Harry suggested that it might be useful to have some other input into the final mix – not dissimilar to the notion of having guest musicians. This struck me as a very useful thing to do so I immediately took the idea and proceeded to draw up a list of possible candidates. Ideally, as with the musicians themselves, what I wanted was representation of divergent musical backgrounds (and also a mix of age and gender) in order to harvest the broadest possible range of opinions and feedback.

In the event my Listening Forum actually became a composite of two, slightly different Listening Forums. The principal one consisting of those people who had not heard the Draft album, the second one consisting of the Guest Musicians themselves – who obviously had heard the Draft album, and of course their own contributions to it, but, significantly, had not heard the contributions of the other collaborators, even within the songs to which they themselves had contributed. This was indeed the first time that anyone, apart from myself and recording engineer Yanto Browning, had heard all the instruments come together within each of the tracks.

The people I approached were:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Background:</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
Robert Forster	Singer/Songwriter	From the band the 'Go-Betweens'
Leanne de Souza	Manager/Agent	
Dr. Clare Hansson	Jazz Pianist	Clare holds a PhD in Jazz
Greg Dodge	Musician/Promoter	
David Tilburey	Emerging contemporary musician and recording engineer	Technical background as well as contemporary musical
Kacey Patrick	Singer/Songwriter	From duo 'Stringmansassy'
Sid Kidman	Musician, Recording Engineer, & Reviewer	A musical colleague from the early 1970's band Silas Farm (as is Mark Hilton – Bassist)
Phil Cullen	Radio Producer and Announcer	30 years in radio – mostly ABC. Former Manager of ABC Coast FM
Ashley Jones	Former Radio & Television Producer and Announcer/Presenter.	30 years in a wide variety of radio and television broadcasting. Currently Doctoral candidate and Lecturer in Media (UQ/USQ).
Harry Lloyd-Williams	Musician & Audio equipment developer and manufacturer	Established <i>Acoustic Technologies</i> as a professional level audio equipment manufacturer & international exporter
USQ Music Dept. Paula Melville-Clark Martin Crook Arthur Johnson	Members of USQ Music Department	Representing a broad range of musical backgrounds – singing, winds, rhythm & percussion.
Paul Sinclair	Musician & Creative (Art) Director	Music enthusiast conversant with a broad range of styles
Kyle Jenkins	Music enthusiast & visual artist	Maintains an extensive and eclectic music collection
Paul Holland	Musician, Management Executive and Doctoral colleague	Also a fellow DCI Candidate with a long musical history stretching back to the 1970's
Rupert Pletzer	Recording Engineer & currently tour manager for the Ten Tenors	Unavailable due to international touring commitments

I also attempted to contact *Bernard Fanning, Deborah Conway and Paul Kelly* – all of whom were either not contactable or simply unavailable due to professional commitments.

The comments emanating from the Listening Forum process have been fascinating. As stated in my covering letter (Appendix 1) to the invitees, 'I fully expect (and welcome) a diversity of views and feedback'. This is precisely what I got.

The reason that I long ago ceased trying to predict audiences for my own, or any other, theatre performances is that there are no two audience perceptions precisely the same. This cannot be more clearly demonstrated than in the Listening Forum. Certainly there is generally a confluence of overall opinion as to the quality of a work, and one has a broad sense of which particular songs are likely to appeal more than others, however there is a delightful diversity in the opinions, perceptions and suggestions coming back from people listening to the (draft) work.

The reasons for this are perhaps best articulated by Jonathan Miller (1995) who suggests that:

the whole point about perception is that it is not...the experience that is delivered by the structure of the work that is in front of the eye...its a *negotiation* between the creative viewer and the object that is in front of the eye - and that hunches, guesses, prejudices, preoccupations, interests and so forth, alter the experience so that what you know, what you think, what you imagine, what you anticipate, have an irreversible effect on what you experience. And this isn't a sign of the fickle instability of the character, it's a sign of the structure of perception in general. That's what perception is like...it's a process of guessing as well as seeing what is out there. (emphasis added)

(Miller 1995)

Based on this view articulated by Miller, and as discussed further in my Masters thesis (Willems 1997), whatever the artistic context:

art exists partly in the mind and imagination of the artist and partly in the mind and imaginative skills of the beholder...each of us draws upon our own personal experience and from that experience we the beholder invest the art work with properties that the person next to us may not - or may invest a different experience or set of experiences, and which, for *each of us in a different way, allows the artist's emotion embedded within and emanating from the work to resonate within ourselves in our individual way.* (emphasis added)

It is abundantly clear from the diversity, confluence and conflict of opinion across the Listening Forum, that the above holds true.

The problem that every artist faces, in creating any kind of art, is that one can never get a 'first impression' of one's own work. Having created it, lived with it and developed it over time, the final manifestation of that art has inevitably been a process of gradual evolution. Whilst the Blind Collaboration process presented the artist with some sense of first impression at the addition of each guest instrument, there remains a familiarity with the material which precludes a true first impression. The great value of the Listening Forum therefore was, in casting the work to a wider audience who were themselves possessed of a significant level of musical knowledge, expertise and experience, and garnering their feedback, that I was able to achieve a kind of *vicarious* 'first impression'.

So the purpose of the Listening Forum was ostensibly to introduce, or reintroduce, a level of objectivity into the mixing process at a stage where reasonably significant changes could still be implemented prior to the final mix. In the event, all the comments harvested were referred to, discussed in detail, and either incorporated (to some degree or other) - or not - by Yanto and, ultimately, myself as the final arbiter of the artistic process. Several of the comments related to the levels in the mix etc. and we had, in the interim, already made many of those adjustments based upon our own re-listening to Preliminary Mix (refer CW Comments – Appendix 5). There were no instances where we got the instrumentation or the mix so wrong that we tossed it out and started again.

If one uses the analogy of a 'gravitational pull', where the centre path is the line that Yanto and I took in the Mixing process - based on our own hearing of the music - and either side of that line are 'dots' of other opinions and assessments. More often than not our straight centre line might deviate slightly, gravitationally pulled towards these dots at a particularly useful suggestion (e.g. Briony Luttrell's suggestion to progressively reduce the amount of Reverb applied to the Cello in *'Perhaps'*), but rarely, if ever, did we deviate totally or indeed significantly. Rather, just a case of incremental adjustment rather than amendment. This reflects neither arrogance nor any dismissal of others' suggestions or comments - on the contrary. We took notice of everything everyone said and then decided, based upon our respective, fundamental aesthetic, musical and/or technical sense, what was the most appropriate musical decision - for the sake of the album. For the sake of the Art.

There inevitably comes a time in the development of any solo artistic process when 'the artist becomes the Ensemble' (Willems 2004). Where, as an individual artist, one surrounds oneself, willingly or otherwise, with; collaborators, technical support, funding authorities, private investors, the media etc. – all of whom have an opinion about the artist's work. However, ultimately, the artist has to remain faithful to their own vision and make their own determination as to the final shape and detail of that work.

As guest musician Steve Reinthal (2007) affirms, 'don't be afraid to edit other people's contributions, it is your album'.

### The Role of Serendipity:

In listening to the album right from the Preliminary Mix through to the final Mastered Mix, I continue to be astounded at the role which Serendipity has played in this artistic process. It is almost like having another collaborator, a musical arranger - an invisible 'George Martin' – sitting off to the side and becoming involved when there is an opportunity to enhance the art. Indeed celebrated Australian author Jon Cleary speaks of the crucial role of serendipity in his own work, citing 'Serendipity (as) one of the things that keeps alive my interest in writing' (quoted by Bantick in the Weekend Australian Review 2007, p. 10). Whilst not being the sole ingredient to 'keep it alive', Serendipity has certainly added life to this project; unpredictably, un-intrusively and certainly not unwelcomed. Its contribution really has been quite extraordinary and cannot be overstated - and extends well beyond just the music itself.

Indeed, despite having myself devised the 'rules' for the process, in listening to the mix it is very easy to forget - and I have to constantly remind myself - that the guest musicians did not hear any of the other players' contributions while they were recording theirs.

They were, with the exception of course of hearing the basic tracks (Voice/Acoustic Guitar/Percussion), essentially playing in the dark, blissfully (or perhaps frustratingly) unaware of other parts – literally playing and collaborating 'blind'. Yet even a cursory listen to the Mix reveals; unintended harmonies, musical phrases unintentionally echoing, reflecting and complementing one another, and unintended unisons across instruments - which is quite extraordinary. One could argue (and it has been – Kidman

2006) that musicians playing in the same key in the same song would do that inevitably, however in my view, it goes well beyond that. There is a confluence of musical taste, of a musical aesthetic and stylistic approach from musicians broadly diverse in age, background and experience, which determines the notes and musical phrases which one selects (or not). Which is not to say that the results are predictable – quite the contrary - there are musical and stylistic surprises in this work which still catch me unawares and make me smile or laugh or bring a tear of immense satisfaction to the eye. But there is a consistency, a cohesion which fools the ear into believing that all these musicians were in the same studio, at the same time, listening to each other, and indeed playing together.

A particularly telling example (mentioned above – ‘Songs’) in this context is ‘*Satisfied*’ (Track 9) where the Saxophone (Ceri McCoy) and the Electric Guitar (Rob Phelan) are playing complementary melodies, leaving complementary spaces for each other, playing unintended harmonies and even unwittingly playing several phrases virtually in unison. And in doing so, they bring to the song a melodic and harmonic richness which may not necessarily have been improved by having these musicians in the same studio together at the same time, as distinct from the actual reality of them recording their respective contributions, ‘blindly’, some 75 km and three months apart.

It is worth considering that each musician had a blank canvas to work on yet, consciously or otherwise, did not fall into the trap of assuming themselves to be the only guest instrumentalist in the track, even though it may have ultimately transpired that they were. It is this leaving of room, of ‘breathing space’ within the songs that seems to have allowed other musicians to come in and inadvertently utilise those spaces – even though they could not hear them – and they themselves choosing to leave different spaces:

both Phil (Collins) and I had this feeling of loving to listen to music that had space in it...we tried very hard to not put too many instruments onto the record.  
(Padgham 1999)

This sense of complementary space and complementary playing is very much a feature of the collection of songs on this album.

It is not possible at this stage to say with any certainty whether it is just the songs themselves which evoke a particular aesthetic response in the players. No doubt the sound and feel of a particular song would play some role (otherwise why would so

many musicians have chosen *'Intoxicating'* to play on) but that does not explain it fully – certainly not in my analysis, having been both an observer of and participant in the process.

But, quite apart from the purely instrumental manifestations of Serendipity, its role could not be more clearly, convincingly, or more personally illustrated than in the case of Track 5, *'Siam'*. A song which, as outlined elsewhere, traces my parents' journey through their WWII experience; from pre-war, through the war years, their post-war marriage, and subsequent arrival as immigrants in Australia in the early 1950's.

Steve Reinthal took this track away and returned it some weeks later with a beautifully melodic, mournfully evocative electric guitar 'voice' – described by collaborative colleague, Mark Hilton (2007) as, 'inspired...sweetly majestic and lush', and Listening Forum member Ashley Jones (2007) as, 'excellent...electric guitar work (which) captured a haunting feel appropriate for the song'.

Clearly, musically, Reinthal's guitar weaving exquisitely through it is an appropriate addition to the song, but the extent of its serendipitous role was not made clear until Saturday 3 March 2007 when, having invited my 84 year-old mother to lunch, I mentioned to her that I had re-recorded the song. I hesitatingly put the track on the CD player, almost apologising for the contemporary treatment - updating the previous recording of the song which featured a violin solo instead of the 'wah-pedal' electric guitar. I had assumed my mother would dislike it intensely for generational as well as simply musical reasons, and I was genuinely surprised – perhaps flabbergasted would be more accurate - when she responded, that, no, she 'liked it a lot'.

It was the ensuing conversation which reminded me that the reason she had always liked what she describes as 'Hawaiian Guitar' (a guitar style which I personally detest) was that as a POW under the Japanese in Batavia for some four years, when the Allied forces finally arrived to liberate the British, Dutch and other POW's, they brought with them a Navy band. My mother has a very clear recollection of this band playing songs which featured Hawaiian Guitar – the very particular sound of which induced uncontrollable floods of tears of relief and release in POW's who had not allowed themselves to cry in four years of living in unspeakably cruel and harsh conditions with their lives constantly under threat.

Steve Reinthal had no idea about this connection (indeed I had virtually forgotten it myself). Whilst he had quite correctly assumed that the lyrics, 'the (intriguing) word play...not immediately clear... which causes the brain to wonder and wander' (Cullen 2007), referred in part to the infamous Burma Railway (on which my father had worked as a POW), he did not realise that the song was written specifically about my own parents' journey, when he chose to play the kind of guitar he played. Whilst I was certainly aware that my mother had always liked Hawaiian Guitar, the significance of the connection to the POW liberation had long been parked in the deepest recesses of my own memory so it never occurred to me, hence I was certainly in no position to 'brief' Steve Reinthal as to that background, in order to influence his choices. Indeed, as demanded by my own self-imposed 'rules', like the other musicians, Steve independently chose the song, chose the instrument, chose his melodic journey and chose what effects to apply to his guitar. It has to be said that in no way could I ever be convinced that what Steve Reinthal plays is anything like 'Hawaiian Guitar'; but the sound is obviously reminiscent enough of that sound to evoke instant, deep and profound recognition (and a significantly positive response), from an 84 year-old woman, to what can only be described as a very contemporary guitar treatment.

In a remarkable postscript to the serendipitous example described above, literally the same week the album was being pressed in Melbourne, I happened to be watching 'Australian Story' on ABC Television ([www.abc.net.au/austory](http://www.abc.net.au/austory)). This particular episode (a repeat, originally transmitted 30/08/2001) coincidentally featured another 84 year-old Dutch woman, by the name of Jan Ruff-O'Herne, who has since been internationally recognised, indeed awarded, for her tireless quest to extract an apology from the Japanese government for the 'comfort women' atrocity of WWII.

As her story unfolded it was clear that there were many parallels between her family's story and mine, so by the end of the program I had decided to send her a copy of the album, containing the song 'SIAM', which I did via the ABC. A couple of weeks later in the post, a beautifully hand-written note on a postcard arrived, featuring the photograph and title of Jan's book: '50 years of Silence'. The note read, amongst other things; 'I love the song Siam – and ode to your parents' love and wartime survival'. The other things which Jan wrote made it clear that there were even more parallels between our respective families than I had imagined. What therefore began as 'musical serendipity', now extended well beyond just the music itself.

## Conclusion:

The most fundamental question thrown up by the creation, development, implementation, achievement and evaluation of this project utilising the Blind Collaboration process is:

### **Does Blind Collaboration work?**

A more sharply focussed question might be: Has the Blind Collaboration process *informed* or *deformed* the artistic process? Or indeed vice versa – has the artistic process informed or deformed the Blind Collaboration process?

Through actually living the experience one would probably have to answer, ‘all of the above’. The evidence garnered from Listening Forum feedback suggests overwhelmingly that in this case, as one would have hoped, Blind Collaboration did work, in both principle and actuality.

This is not to suggest that the process was without its challenges. From a composer’s point of view there were certainly times of anxiety and uncertainty – artistic and other. The first thing the process requires is letting go of control of the art and the creative process:

As opposed to the European movements that emphasized the composer’s control over almost every aspect of the composition, “Process Music” came from the belief that music can be a procedural and emergent art form and that there are many ways of handling form other than constructing structures... In such procedural process-based music, *the composer sacrifices certain aspects of direct control in order to create an evolving context by allowing rules* (in closed systems) *and performers* (in open ones) *to determine and shape the nature of music.* (emphasis added)

(Weinberg 2002)

Whilst I was responsible for both the nature of the process and the basic material that would be subjected to that process, the guest musicians certainly ‘determined the shape and nature of the music’ to a significant extent by virtue of their contributions. Their work ultimately determined the style and direction of the songs. However successful these contributions proved to be in the final analysis, they were largely an unknown quantity at the start of the process and that required a significant leap of faith. Letting go of one’s art, of one’s creations, and handing them over to others to ‘do with

what they will' is not always easy, particularly when those others are not that well known to the artist - as suggested in a more personal way by Sting:

Songs are a little bit like children in a way, you give birth to them and you do the best you can for them, give them the best start in life, and then you watch them grow and carry on growing...other people adapt them, change them...and you can only feel pride that your song has gone into the world and now exists as an entity...they're almost humans

(Sting 2003)

Song writing like any other art is indeed a very human and personal activity and whilst I had the artist's own confidence in the songs themselves – a confidence ultimately justified by Listening Forum comments (2007) such as: 'a strong album...songs that are well crafted and stories that are well expressed; 'a very self-assured set of songs'; 'a very polished set of songs'; 'a really well-balanced set of songs'; 'range of song writing styles evident in this strong collection'; 'skilfully crafted songs' - artistic self confidence is invariably tempered by the artist's inherent insecurity, an insecurity which is often the actual driver or motivator of the art and which is equally a very human and personal thing.

Art, any art, by definition is fundamentally a very human process. It is full of human conflicts, human contradictions, human instincts, human achievements, human imagination, human skill, human insecurities, human fallibilities and human frustrations.

Whatever the particular nature of the artistic process, we can plan, prepare and organise within and around all the constraints of; time, budget, logistics, resources, technical limitations etc. Whilst these factors are important in influencing the artistic process, they are ultimately peripheral considerations. Equally, we can tweak and fuss and polish the technical details to within an inch of their technically perfect lives. But, ultimately, what is it that reaches an audience? What is it in art to which people relate? In the final analysis, on a very personal and individual basis, human beings relate to the imperfections of other human beings, as expressed through their (imperfect) art. I concur with Phil Collins (1999), who poses the question, 'What is 'good'? Does it reach you, does it touch you?...that's the most important thing'.

What is important in art, the fundamental driving force behind the art, is not achieving technical perfection. Whilst I am professionally immensely proud of this album and 'delighted with both the process and the product' (Willems 2007), I have not attempted to make an album which is 'perfect' - quite the contrary. I have in fact deliberately

retained some of the minor imperfections inherent in the work - work whose focus was *the exploration of a tantalising possibility*, rather than the attainment of some impossible definition of perfection.

Imperfections in art are what make that art human and 'relatable to'. I have not sought to process and re-process and refine the work into 'white bread' - grinding the humanness and nutritional value out of it completely. I want to celebrate the perfection of imperfection.

Blind Collaboration is a process which fits this notion beautifully and (im)perfectly.

There is an inherent individual and collective humanness to the guest musicians' contributions - the fact that they could not see, hear, or record with each other in the same place or at any time, virtually guarantees that. And yet the artistic cohesion and quality embedded in the final product belies the logistical and musical context in which the artists worked. The mixing process could potentially have extended for months – continually revisiting the work and remixing, re-editing, reworking. But, like Phil Collins, I prefer to acquiesce to the limitations, constraints and idiosyncrasies of a process and let that process find its own life, identity and rhythm – literally:

My attention span is kind of limited in terms of...'let's do this and let's move on'...as opposed to 'no, let's do this until we're really sick of it'...but it'll be perfect...nothing is laboured over, *nothing* is laboured over...on my records.

(Collins 1999)

Nothing has been laboured over on this record either. If any labouring was involved it has been a 'labour of love' by all involved - or perhaps more accurately, a 'labour of Trust'. As noted in my album notes:

Unlike my previous solo album which was titled 'Trust No-One', for this album I essentially had to 'trust everyone', however when you surround yourself with a bunch of world-class musicians, the risks are minimal - the rewards magnificent.

(Willems 2007)

Ultimately, you have to trust the art, you have to trust your artistic instincts, and you have to trust the artistic instincts of those artists that you trust. You also have to trust the 'process essentially of throwing my songs to the wind and seeing what came back to me' (Willems 2007). Trust to the fates, and see what the fates provide.

To quote the lyrics of one of my own songs ('*Got No Clue*') from my previous album, somewhat paradoxically titled '*Trust No-One*', you have to:

trust your angel to provide guiding light...till the Universe, for just once, gets it right.

(Willems 2005),

In the end, what has been proven? Does Blind Collaboration work? Apparently, it does:

you've found a wonderful way to test your theory... you've certainly achieved "blind collaboration".

(Hansson 2007)

**Christiaan Willems** *Grad.Dip.ArtsAdmin, MA*

*If we hadn't been given the chance to at least be working for this kind of ethereal project...we would have just gone into the studio with the demos and just recorded the way all our other albums were recorded, whereas this album is a real organic album.*

(Daltrey 1999)

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Appendices:

1. Sample letter - Listening Forum
2. Sample letter – Guest Musician Listening Forum
3. Time Lines – Proposed and Actual
4. Chronological ‘To Do’ Lists
5. C.W. - Comments
6. Listening Forum Feedback Forms
7. Biography – Christiaan Willems

Appendix 1:

## *SAMPLE LETTER – Listening Forum*

26 January 2007

XXXXX XXXXX  
XXXXXXXX St.  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

**Re: Doctoral ‘Listening Forum’ – ‘Once In A While’:**

Dear XXXXX,

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the ‘Listening Forum’ for my Doctoral album (working title: ‘*Once In A While*’). I appreciate your interest and for taking the time to be involved in this part of the project.

Speaking of which, the album’s running time is less than 1 hour (approximately 54 minutes) and your role involves simply listening to the songs and noting your comments about each track - as well as any overall comments you might have – prior to final Mixing/Mastering.

My intention is that the Forum is representative of a broad cross-section of the music/arts industry – including musicians, technical, production and promotion professionals – in order to harvest opinions from a number of points of view – so I fully expect (and welcome) a diversity of views and feedback.

In the interests of time efficiency, to facilitate your process I enclose:

- a brief outline of the rationale for the project and process – extract from Project Brief
- a list of tracks/musicians with space for your written comments (individual & overall)
- Audio CD - Draft (F) – preliminary Mix (14 tracks)

For reasons of both efficiency and academic timetabling I need to impose a time limit which is (ideally) one week from your receipt of the Draft album, however there may be a little ‘room for negotiation’ on this. I also enclose a stamped, addressed package in order for you to return the Draft CD together with your feedback sheets.

Thanks again for your interest – I look forward to your comments.

Regards,

Chris Willems *GradDipArtsAdmin. MA*

Appendix 2:

*SAMPLE LETTER – Guest Musician Listening Forum*

26 January 2007

Steve Reinthal  
PO Box XXXX  
XXXXXX QLD 4XXX

**Re: Doctoral ‘Listening Forum’ – ‘Once In A While’:**

Dear Steve,

Firstly, many thanks for your musical contribution to my Doctoral album (working title: ‘*Once In A While*’). I very much appreciate your interest, involvement, the time you invested and, of course, your exquisite playing and your considered, stylistic approach.

Secondly, we are now at the stage of having a Preliminary Mix and as part of the Doctoral process I have convened a ‘Listening Forum’ to garner feedback prior to final Mixing/Mastering. The forum comprises a broad cross-section of the music/arts industry – including musicians, technical, production and promotion professionals so I fully expect (and welcome) a diversity of views and feedback.

This notion of a Listening Forum also extends to the musicians actually involved whom, as you know, have not heard either the other musicians’ contributions or their own parts in the context of the mix - the fundamental difference between the respective ‘listening forums’ is that the guest musicians have obviously heard the earlier original basic versions of the songs whilst the other ‘forum-ees’ have not.

So, I am pleased to enclose a Preliminary Mix – and would be delighted to get your feedback, thoughts, suggestions etc – regarding not only your own tracks (‘*Siam*’ & ‘*Foolish*’) but also those you did not play on. For convenience I also enclose a list of tracks/musicians with space for your written comments (individual & overall).

For reasons of both efficiency and academic timetabling I need to impose a time limit which is (ideally) one week from your receipt of the Draft album, however there may be a little ‘room for negotiation’ on this. I also enclose a stamped, addressed package in order for you to return the Draft CD together with your feedback sheets.

Thanks again for your interest and involvement – I very much look forward to your comments.

Regards,

Chris Willems *GradDipArtsAdmin. MA*

## Appendix 3:

### Timeline – Proposed and Actual:

<b>Stage Details:</b>	<b>Start Date:</b> <b>Actual</b>	<b>Anticipated Completion Date:</b>	<b>Actual Completion Date:</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
<b>Recording basic tracks</b>	3 Jan 2006	31 Aug 2006	<b>31 Aug 2006</b> + <b>30 Sept 2006</b> (extra track)	Additional track composed and recorded and added to list as Track 14 ('Hold Everything')
<b>Select &amp; Contact guest musicians</b>	1 July 2006	15 Sep 2006	<b>16 Oct 2006</b>	
<b>Recording guest musicians</b>	15 Sep 2006 <b>5 Nov 2006</b>	31 Oct 2006	<b>8 Jan 2007</b>	Mark Hilton (Bass) final guest contributions to arrive – for logistical & musical reasons
<b>Vocal &amp; Percussion - Selective re-record at the QUT Studio (additional)</b>	N/A	N/A	<b>14 &amp; 17 Dec 2006</b>	To take advantage of free studio time. Two sessions were arranged.
<b>Preliminary Mixing</b>	31 Oct 2006 <b>6 Nov 2006</b>	20 Nov 2006	<b>17 Jan 2007</b>	Assessment & selection of guest musician input; Preliminary Mix/Assembly
<b>Listening Forum</b>	31 Oct 2006 <b>26 Jan 2007</b>	20 Nov 2006	<b>22 Feb 2007</b>	Ongoing throughout Edit/Mix process as Feedback arrived
<b>Edit/Mix</b>	31 Oct 2006 <b>6 Nov 2006</b>	20 Nov 2006	<b>22 Feb 2007</b>	More fine-tuned selection of guest musician input; Edited Mix
<b>Final Mixing &amp; Mastering</b>	20 Nov 2006 <b>5 Mar 2007</b>	25 Nov 2006	<b>14 Mar 2007</b>	Intended to be done in Melbourne at Honeyface Studios (Mark Hilton) but changed – refer below
<b>Design &amp; Artwork</b>	1 July 2006	25 Nov 2006	<b>20 Mar 2007</b>	Ongoing throughout project. Subject to

				final details of guest musicians, credits etc
<b>CD Production</b>	27 Nov 2006 <i>22 Mar 2007</i>	8 Dec 2006	<b>4 April 2007</b>	Media Technology in Brisbane & Melbourne
<b>Contingency</b>	8 Dec 2006	22 Dec 2006	<b>10 April 2007</b>	Contingency period to cover unexpected delays, eventualities - at any stage of the process

Appendix 4:

Chronological 'To Do' Lists (27 August – 17 December 2006)

Chris Willems – Album ‘To Do’ list – (as at **27 August 2006**)

(Draft 25)

	TITLE	STATUS	GUITAR	VOX	BV's	BASS	PERC	KEYBDS	OTHER?	NOTES:
1	<b>ONCE IN A WHILE</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
2	<b>INTOXICATING</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		?			
3	<b>JUST THE SAME</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
4	<b>BRAND NEW DAYS</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		+			
5	<b>SIAM</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓ X			Re-do initial Goat in first part
6	<b>TAKE THAT</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		?			
7	<b>FOOLISH</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
8	<b>STEPPIN' OUT</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		+			
9	<b>SATISFIED</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		X			
10	<b>DO IT ALL</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓	✓?	+			Keyboard Bass only - Re-Do Bass?
11	<b>PERHAPS</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓+?		✓			More Percussion???
12	<b>SLIDE</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
13	<b>AS LONG</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		?			

LEGEND: ✓ = Done (CW) X = To Do (CW) □ = for Guest Instrument  
 ? = Does it Need it? ✓ = done but Re-Do/Fix + = Needs More

Chris Willems - Album 'To Do' list – (as at 8 October 2006)

(Draft 29)

	TITLE	STATUS	GUITAR	VOX	BV's	BASS	PERC	KEYBDS	OTHER?	NOTES:
1	<b>ONCE IN A WHILE</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
2	<b>INTOXICATING</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		?			
3	<b>JUST THE SAME</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
4	<b>BRAND NEW DAYS</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		+			
5	<b>SIAM</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
6	<b>TAKE THAT</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			Perhaps re-do (too busy)
7	<b>FOOLISH</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
8	<b>STEPPIN' OUT</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		+			
9	<b>SATISFIED</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		X			
10	<b>DO IT ALL</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓	✓?	✓			Keyboard Bass only - Re-Do Bass?
11	<b>PERHAPS</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓+?		✓			
12	<b>SLIDE</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
13	<b>AS LONG</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			Refer below
14	<b>HOLD EVERYTHING</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			<b>N.B!</b> Added 30/9/06 as alternative final track to 'As Long'. Keep both.

Chris Willems – Album ‘To Do’ list – (as at **26 November 2006**) (Draft G2)

	TITLE	STATUS	GUITAR	VOX	BV's	BASS	PERC	KEYBDS	OTHER?	NOTES:
1	<b>ONCE IN A WHILE</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
2	<b>INTOXICATING</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		?	Piano	Cello	22 & 23/11/06 (Jeff Usher & Briony Luttrell) Draft G2
3	<b>JUST THE SAME</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
4	<b>BRAND NEW DAYS</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		+?		Sax Cello	5/11/06 Sax (Ceri McCoy) Draft G1 (Issue 'L') 23/11/06 (Briony Luttrell) Draft G2
5	<b>SIAM</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
6	<b>TAKE THAT</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
7	<b>FOOLISH</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓	Piano	Guitar	22/11/06 (Jeff Usher & Steve Reinthal) Draft G2
8	<b>STEPPIN' OUT</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		+?			
9	<b>SATISFIED</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓		Sax	5/11/06 Sax (Ceri McCoy) Draft G1 (Issue 'L')
10	<b>DO IT ALL</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓	✓?	✓	Piano		22 & 23/11/06 (Jeff Usher) Draft G2
11	<b>PERHAPS</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓+?		✓		Cello	23/11/06 (Briony Luttrell) Draft G2
12	<b>SLIDE</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓		Sax	5/11/06 Sax (Ceri McCoy) Draft G1 (Issue 'L')
13	<b>AS LONG</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓		Cello	23/11/06 (Briony Luttrell) Draft G2
14	<b>HOLD EVERYTHING</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓		Cello	23/11/06 (Briony Luttrell) Draft G2

Chris Willems - Album 'To Do' list – (as at 17 December 2006) (Draft G2QUT)

	TITLE	STATUS	GUITAR	VOX	BV's	BASS	PERC	KEYBDS	OTHER?	NOTES:
1	<b>ONCE IN A WHILE</b>	OK	✓	Re-do 17/12/06	✓	<b>Mark</b>	Re-do 17/12/06			17/12/06 QUT Session
2	<b>INTOXICATING</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		?	<b>Piano</b>	<b>Cello</b>	22 & 23/11/06 (Jeff Usher & Briony Luttrell) Draft G2
3	<b>JUST THE SAME</b>	OK	✓	Re-do 14/12/06	✓	<b>Mark</b>	✓			
4	<b>BRAND NEW DAYS</b>	OK	✓	Re-do 14/12/06	✓		?		<b>Sax</b> <b>Cello</b>	5/11/06 Sax (Ceri McCoy) Draft G1 (Issue 'L') 23/11/06 (Briony Luttrell) Draft G2
5	<b>SIAM</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓	<b>Mark</b>	✓		<b>Guitar</b>	14/12/06 (Steve Reinthal) QUT Session - loaded
6	<b>TAKE THAT</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓		✓			
7	<b>FOOLISH</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓	<b>Mark</b>	Added - fast bit 17/12/06	<b>Piano</b>	<b>Guitar</b>	22/11/06 (Jeff Usher & Steve Reinthal) Draft G2
8	<b>STEPPIN' OUT</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓	<b>Mark</b>	✓			
9	<b>SATISFIED</b>	OK	✓	Re-do 17/12/06	✓	<b>Mark</b>	Add in mid-8 17/12/06		<b>Sax</b>	5/11/06 Sax (Ceri McCoy) Draft G1 (Issue 'L')
10	<b>DO IT ALL</b>	OK	✓	Re-do 14/12/06	✓	<b>Mark</b>	✓	<b>Piano</b>		22 & 23/11/06 (Jeff Usher) Draft G2
11	<b>PERHAPS</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓ + ?		✓		<b>Cello</b>	23/11/06 (Briony Luttrell) Draft G2
12	<b>SLIDE</b>	OK	✓	✓	✓	<b>Mark</b>	✓		<b>Sax</b>	5/11/06 Sax (Ceri McCoy) Draft G1 (Issue 'L')
13	<b>AS LONG</b>	OK	✓	Re-do 17/12/06	✓		Re-do 17/12/06		<b>Cello</b>	23/11/06 (Briony Luttrell) Draft G2
14	<b>HOLD EVERYTHING</b>	OK	✓	Re-do 17/12/06	✓		✓		<b>Cello</b>	23/11/06 (Briony Luttrell) Draft G2

Appendix 5:

C.W. – Comments

(26 January 2007 & 28 February 2007)

Chris Willems – Doctor of Creative Industries (QUT) - Project 1:

**‘Listening Forum’ - Music Album** (Draft ‘F1’ - as at 26 January 2007)

Please note your comments in the ‘Comments’ column allocated to each track (x14).

In addition, there is a space for Overall Comments at the end of the Form if appropriate.

Name (optional): **CHRIS WILLEMS**

Date: *26 January 2007*

<b>Trk:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Musician:</b>	<b>Instruments:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
1	<b>ONCE IN A WHILE</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Vox definition - a bit ‘wooly’ – EQ?  Bass/Kick volume too high?
		Mark Hilton	Bass	Chorus on BV’s - excellent Snare ‘stumble’ at end?
2	<b>INTOXICATING</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Violin is the issue here. Pitch issues here & there? Also stylistic clashes with Piano & Cello. Violin intros to verses good but levels need attention.  Vox a bit ‘wooly’ – EQ?
		Jeff Usher	Piano	
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
		Stuart Day	Violin	
3	<b>JUST THE SAME</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Relative levels of Bass & Percussion. Bass feels a bit loud. Love the Chorus/Delay/Nasal stuff on the 1 <sup>st</sup> ‘just the same’.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	

<b>Trk:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Musician:</b>	<b>Instruments:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>BRAND NEW DAYS</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Feature Sax more – getting lost – relative levels to Vox & Cello  BV's levels in Instrumental can come down a bit.  2 <sup>nd</sup> last ‘...these...’ – pitch consistency? Use following one (copy/paste?)
		Ceri McCoy	Saxophone	
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
<b>5</b>	<b>SIAM</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	As much as I love it, Electric Guitar levels might need to come down - <b>a bit</b> - during early Vox - to feature more during instrumental and at end.  Pre-intro ‘raindrops’ interesting and unusual – I like it.  Bass really adds lots to this – good support, not intrusive - lovely
		Steve Reinthal	Electric Guitar Acoustic Guitar	
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
<b>6</b>	<b>TAKE THAT</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Added ‘double-dots’ at start – nice.  Vox – ‘walk’ is missing a ‘k’ – can we do anything about this?
<b>7</b>	<b>FOOLISH</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Repeats – hold off until next chorus.  <b>‘Where (BV)...where’s all the good times...’</b> . BV to feature – in <b>earlier + level</b> .  Snare sounds a bit ‘pissy’  Instrumental – <b>Guitar + Piano UP</b> . BVox DOWN
		Jeff Usher	Piano	
		Steve Reinthal	Acoustic Lead Guitar	
		Mark Hilton	Bass	

<b>Trk:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Musician:</b>	<b>Instruments:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
8	<b>STEPPIN' OUT</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Nice 'Goat' sound.  <b>Stab!</b> Levels UP? (Chorus 2 & 3 only)
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
9	<b>SATISFIED</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Vox a bit 'wooly' – EQ?  Sax generally UP to feature – particularly in relation to Electric Guitar. This is a real <b>Sax</b> song and very nicely played.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
		Ceri McCoy	Saxophone	
		Rob Phelan	Electric Guitar	
10	<b>DO IT ALL</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Love the 'Marianne' 'repeats' in intro. Reverb on Lead Vox? – a bit dry?  Toms seem a bit 'thin'  Copy/paste last '...do it all...' for the previous 2 choruses???
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
		Jeff Usher	Piano	
11	<b>PERHAPS</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Do we need Guitar Intro? Or get straight into it?  Lose BV's (oooh, aaaah) under Cello break? – a bit superfluous I think.
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	

<b>Trk:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Musician:</b>	<b>Instruments:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
12	<b>SLIDE</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Sax UP generally – to feature. Jazz, Sax chaos - especially over final ‘..slide..’ (x4) Sax can take over these Vox to a large extent.  The more chaotic this is the better contrast into the next track.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
		Ceri McCoy	Saxophone	
13	<b>AS LONG</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Vox a bit ‘wooly’ – EQ?  1 <sup>st</sup> ‘...time...’ - copy/paste later one?  I like the Cello coming in and out at (apparently) random intervals.  Vox repeats on ‘...we look around...’ ???  <b>N.B!</b> I absolutely <b>adore</b> how this builds...and carries – the Slide Guitar makes it soar. It’s absolutely majestic. Who needs an Orchestra????!!  Do we need to boost levels/reverb on Drum Fills as it progresses?
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
		Rob Phelan	Electric Guitar	
14	<b>HOLD EVERYTHING</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Cello is a delight.  1 <sup>st</sup> ‘...How...’ harmony? Copy/paste final one? (it’s more ‘Beach Boys’ than the Beach Boys!!!)
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	

**Overall Comments:**

Pretty consistent overall. Some vox seem a bit ‘thick’ and wooly – needing some more top end. I need the Sax to feature a bit more strongly in some of its songs (particularly ‘Satisfied’ and ‘Brand New Days’).

I am (quietly) **very** excited about this. Thanks Yanto!!!

## Chris Willems – Doctor of Creative Industries (QUT) - Project 1:

### ‘Listening Forum’ - Music Album (Draft ‘F2’ - as at **28 February 2007**)

Please note your comments in the ‘Comments’ column allocated to each track (x14).

In addition, there is a space for Overall Comments at the end of the Form if appropriate.

Name (optional): **CHRIS WILLEMS**

Date: **28 February 2007**

Trk:	Title:	Musician:	Instruments:	Comments:
1	<b>ONCE IN A WHILE</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Vox definition - a bit ‘wooly’ – EQ? Bass/Kick volume too high? Chorus on BV’s - excellent Snare ‘stumble’ at end? <b>Snare fill just after ‘...papers...’ – sloppy – cut &amp; paste next one</b>  <b>Snare ‘stumble’ at end – drop Snare? Or replace with ‘build-up’ fill from previous ‘stop!’</b>
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
2	<b>INTOXICATING</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Violin is the issue here. Pitch issues here & there? Also stylistic clashes with Piano & Cello. Violin intros to verses good but levels need attention. Vox a bit ‘wooly’ – EQ?  <b>Return some violin? Level up @ end?</b>  <b>Guitar Harmonics level down a bit? (Plunk!)</b>
		Jeff Usher	Piano	
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
		Stuart Day	Violin	
3	<b>JUST THE SAME</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Relative levels of Bass & Percussion. Bass feels a bit loud. Love the Chorus/Delay/Nasal stuff on the 1 <sup>st</sup> ‘just the same’.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	

Trk:	Title:	Musician:	Instruments:	Comments:
4	<b>BRAND NEW DAYS</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Feature Sax more – getting lost – relative levels to Vox & Cello BV's levels in Instrumental can come down a bit. 2 <sup>nd</sup> last '...these...' – pitch consistency? Use following one (copy/paste?)  <b>Vox - '..new <u>age</u>'...? (at end)</b>
		Ceri McCoy	Saxophone	
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
5	<b>SIAM</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	As much as I love it, Electric Guitar levels might need to come down - <b>a bit</b> - during early Vox - to feature more during instrumental and at end. Pre-intro 'raindrops' interesting and unusual – I like it. Bass really adds lots to this – good support, not intrusive - lovely
		Steve Reinthal	Electric Guitar Acoustic Guitar	
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
6	<b>TAKE THAT</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Added 'double-dots' at start – nice. Vox – 'walk' is missing a 'k' – can we do anything about this?
7	<b>FOOLISH</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Repeats – hold off until next chorus. 'Where (BV)...where's all the good times...' BV to feature – in <b>earlier + level</b> . Snare sounds a bit 'pissy' Instrumental – <b>Guitar + Piano UP</b> . BVox DOWN  <b>'...where's'... – maybe <u>slightly</u> more subtle in?</b>
		Jeff Usher	Piano	
		Steve Reinthal	Acoustic Lead Guitar	
		Mark Hilton	Bass	

Trk:	Title:	Musician:	Instruments:	Comments:
8	<b>STEPPIN' OUT</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Nice 'Goat' sound. <b>Stab!</b> Levels UP? (Chorus 2 & 3 only)
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
9	<b>SATISFIED</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Vox a bit 'wooly' – EQ? Sax generally UP to feature – particularly in relation to Electric Guitar. This is a real <b>Sax</b> song and very nicely played.  <b>I love the ending...</b>
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
		Ceri McCoy	Saxophone	
		Rob Phelan	Electric Guitar	
10	<b>DO IT ALL</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Love the 'Marianne' 'repeats' in intro. Reverb on Lead Vox? – a bit dry? Toms seem a bit 'thin' Copy/paste last '...do it all...' for the previous 2 choruses???  <b>Fade out end... (Mastering)</b>
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
		Jeff Usher	Piano	
11	<b>PERHAPS</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Do we need Guitar Intro? Or get straight into it? Lose BV's (oooh, aaaah) under Cello break? – a bit superfluous I think.  <b>Restore Cello level where we dropped it? (break)</b>
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	

Trk:	Title:	Musician:	Instruments:	Comments:
12	<b>SLIDE</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Sax UP generally – to feature. Jazz, Sax chaos - especially over final ‘..slide..’ (x4) Sax can take over these Vox to a large extent. The more chaotic this is the better contrast into the next track.  <b>Restore previous level (lower) on final sax (3<sup>rd</sup> ‘...sliiiiide...’)?</b>
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
		Ceri McCoy	Saxophone	
13	<b>AS LONG</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Vox a bit ‘wooly’ – EQ? 1 <sup>st</sup> ‘...time...’ - copy/paste later one? I like the Cello coming in and out at (apparently) random intervals. Vox repeats on ‘...we look around...’ ??? <b>N.B!</b> I absolutely <b>adore</b> how this builds...and carries – the Slide Guitar makes it soar. It’s absolutely majestic. Who needs an Orchestra???! Do we need to boost levels/reverb on Drum Fills as it progresses?  <b>Dubious Cello note on 1<sup>st</sup> ‘...world can’t be a better place...’?</b>
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
		Rob Phelan	Electric Guitar	
14	<b>HOLD EVERYTHING</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Cello is a delight. 1 <sup>st</sup> ‘...How...’ harmony? Copy/paste final one? (it’s more ‘Beach Boys’ than the Beach Boys!!!)  <b>Did we copy/paste all of ‘..how...’ harmony – including lead vox? They still seem a bit different and 1<sup>st</sup> one doesn’t seem as ‘clean’ as final one?</b>
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
<p><b>Overall Comments:</b></p> <p>Pretty consistent overall. Some vox seem a bit ‘thick’ and wooly – needing some more top end. I need the Sax to feature a bit more strongly in some of its songs (particularly ‘Satisfied’ and ‘Brand New Days’).</p> <p>I am (quietly) <b>very</b> excited about this. Thanks Yanto!!!</p> <p><b>Sounding very nice thank you.</b></p>				

Appendix 6:

Listening Forum Feedback Forms – Sample (Phil Cullen)

Chris Willems - Solo Album 2 (Draft F1)

'Listening Forum' (as at 26 January 2007)

Please note your comments in the 'Comments' column allocated to each track (x14).

In addition, there is a space for Overall Comments at the end of the Form if appropriate.

Name (optional):..... Phil Cullen .....

Date:..... 8 February 2007 .....

Trk:	Title:	Musician:	Instruments:	Comments:
1	ONCE IN A WHILE	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	A good song to establish a theme for the collection . with a hooky refrain and a crafty lyric line. Joyful, energetic but, ultimately, incidental ....because the lyric line does not quickly find a sense of shared experience in a general audience.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
2	INTOXICATING	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	I can hear this song, and many others on this collection being adopted by a strong female lead, with the delightful layers and grace notes of cello and violin contrasted against a soulful bottom end. A beautiful song.  Exquisite performances.
		Jeff Usher	Piano	
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
		Stuart Day	Violin	
3	JUST THE SAME	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	This song has immediacy and punch, recommending further treatment in a rock idiom with an accent on angst.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	

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<b>Trk:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Musician:</b>	<b>Instruments:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>BRAND NEW DAYS</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	This lends itself to further application of craft, and could find a radio home with a pop treatment similar to that employed by Ian Anderson in the various formulations of Jethro Tull, and successors. It has the beat and similar references in jazz and folk and could be 'tightened' for pop impact.
		Ceri McCoy	Saxophone	
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
<b>5</b>	<b>SIAM</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	The word play is intriguing and the setting sinuous. A mood piece, the 'point' of which is not immediately clear (and which causes the brain to wonder and wander). Clever but complicated soundscape, which may benefit from a more refined and direct lyric line.
		Steve Reinthal	Electric Guitar Acoustic Guitar	
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
<b>6</b>	<b>TAKE THAT</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Beat poetry comes to mind. Stark setting, which lets the lyric take purchase. Could work in a variety of pop idioms.
<b>7</b>	<b>FOOLISH</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	This song appears to have the best overall structure, leading to immediacy in popular appeal. The melody line commends a pass on the 'whistle test' while the lyric is accessible and easily achieves and sustains listener 'empathy'.
		Jeff Usher	Piano	
		Steve Reinthal	Acoustic Lead Guitar	
		Mark Hilton	Bass	

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<b>Trk:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Musician:</b>	<b>Instruments:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>STEPPIN' OUT</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	More beat poetry. Almost a trademark lyric structure, worth consideration and possible development as a signature ...in personal performance. An uncluttered setting, with instrumental highlights, is good.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
<b>9</b>	<b>SATISFIED</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Theres a lovely humour, a smile, behind this song, which needs highlighting through a lighter and less disordant approach. The musical accent should rise to underscore 'satisfied' as apposed to 'unsatisfied'. Perhaps I've missed the point on the lyric idea but this is a good lyric and strong melody which could develop to seduce a wider audience ...if desired. Good song.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
		Ceri McCoy	Saxophone	
		Rob Phelan	Electric Guitar	
<b>10</b>	<b>DO IT ALL</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Great lyric. Good potential for broad empathy and appeal. Perhaps a less busy setting ...focus on the guitar and rolling rhythm.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
		Jeff Usher	Piano	
<b>11</b>	<b>PERHAPS</b>	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Lovely mood piece, which should also perform well in this fashion.
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	

Solo Album2 Listening Forum – Chris Willems ©2007 – for Doctorate @ QUT

<b>Trk:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Musician:</b>	<b>Instruments:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
12	SLIDE	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	There's a quality and style of production used by Chicago performer Lisa Lauren, which would favour this song. ...which works her turf. In final production more sonic separation of the instruments, improved presence for the bottom end and vocals forward. Bring out the bounce.
		Mark Hilton	Bass	
		Ceri McCoy	Saxophone	
13	AS LONG	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	Something to think about. A think piece, for late night indulgence or contrast in performance. Easy to emphathise, hard to sing along (even though it has that structure). In another treatment, keyboards might favour the strong melodic theme and better milk the melancholy.
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
		Rob Phelan	Electric Guitar	
14	HOLD EVERYTHING	Chris Willems	Vocals Acoustic Guitar Percussion	I like the more personal quality of this song, in this setting and position. It is a signature. A summary of your virtues in articulate composition. A good night song. Leave a coin in the jar.
		Briony Luttrell	Cello	
<p><b>Overall Comments:</b></p> <p>This is a very self assured selection of songs. Articulate and etherial, in a mainstream music media environment populated by cheersquad simplicity and earthy rhythms. The demo shows an inclination to feather light, jazz tinged articulation, not favoured in current mass media, but the songs are capable of reworking to suit a variety of production styles and musical genres and performers. This is a strength in the song writing, with certain pieces even commending attention for a popular market still sensitized to style through recent attention to Jamie Cullam, Norah Jones etc.</p> <p>If this set of songs is to assume life for airplay in the artists name, then I'd like to hear: the vocal brought forward and presence accentuated ...the current blending of voice as an instrument works against clear compression of strong lyric lines and is a tad frustrating.</p> <p>Skillfully crafted songs, with extraordinary potential for performance in a variety of settings.</p>				

*Solo Album2 Listening Forum – Chris Willems ©2007 – for Doctorate @ QUT*

Appendix 7:  
Biography – Christiaan Willems

# CHRISTIAAN WILLEMS - Mime Artist, Designer, Songwriter

## Professional Biography (as at April 2007)

**CHRISTIAAN WILLEMS** has worked extensively in almost every aspect of the performing arts and television - as a performer, writer, director, designer, musician, producer and lecturer. Christiaan began his artistic career as a musician in the 1970's with seminal Brisbane band '*Silas Farm*' – starting a musical journey which ultimately led him into theatre and television.

This evolving artistic focus took Christiaan to London in the early 1980's where he studied both Mime and Television Design simultaneously, and he has since that time, continued to specialise in both of these areas - applying them to a diversity of creative projects for both stage and screen. His Stage work has been presented from the outback to the Sydney Opera House, Adelaide Festival Centre, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, whilst his work in Television includes BBC, ABC, SBS, commercial and independent productions.

In addition, Christiaan's involvement in the Adelaide Festival and Fringe; Montreux, Banff and New York Video Festivals; Melbourne Film Festival; Queensland Biennial Festival of Music, Commonwealth Games Festival, and others, bears testament to his innovative, multi-disciplined approach to and achievements in artistic practice.

In 1990 Christiaan brought his parallel professional contexts of Television Design and Movement together in a unique stage-to-screen adaptation of his solo stage show '*Son of Romeo*'. This work achieved international sales, broadcast and awards, culminating - due to its unique use of the medium - in inclusion in the permanent collection of the *Museum of Television and Radio* in New York.

Music however, has never been far from Christiaan's artistic work - invariably finding its way into his stage and television productions. He has recently returned to it – composing, performing and recording his distinctively evocative songs, exploring a diversity of musical styles, culminating in 2005 with the launch of his first solo album, '*Trust No-One*', followed more recently (2007) by his second solo album, '*Once In a While*' – which forms part of his current Doctoral research. These solo albums follow two previously released albums by his four-piece ensemble which enjoyed airplay on

ABC, SBS and Planet Radio – as well as regular live performances including the internationally renowned Woodford Folk Festival.

In the tertiary education sector, Christiaan has lectured at QUT, Griffith University, is currently a Lecturer in Design & Performance for Stage & Screen at USQ and is a guest lecturer at University of the Sunshine Coast in 'Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship'. In addition to coaching television presenters, journalists, actors and performers in other tertiary and professional contexts, including specialist Presenter training for corporate executives who need to present (and represent) their organisations on camera for corporate videos, videoconferencing and/or internet.

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