

O My Friends, There Is No Friend

Eight Portraits of Friends Rendered in Recordings of Drums

by Seth Kim-Cohen

01. Secretss

a portrait of Brad Larrabee whom I've known 336 months

We met in the Ossining High School cafeteria. I was reading *Tai-Pan*. Brad was stoned. With my brother, Matt, we attended Woodstock II in 1979 at the Parr Meadows Racetrack in Yaphank, Long Island. (There was another Woodstock II in 1989.) Country Joe played without the Fish, Stephen Stills without Crosby, Nash, or Young, Alvin Lee without Ten Years After, etc. We were mugged and had enough leftover cash for one soda among us but not for the train ride home. While living without electricity or hot water in a shack in Vermont, I would skateboard to Brad's place to take showers. One summer, we painted houses on Martha's Vineyard. We had only two cassettes: De La Soul's *Three Feet High and Rising* and the Pixies' *Doolittle*. We defaced a statue of a Confederate soldier (or maybe we just talked about it). We went to New Orleans for New Year's Eve, 1987. A while after that, I worked at an art gallery in Tribeca. Brad came into the city to work at the gallery's gala benefit. He drank too much and passed out on a pile of dry wall with a stunning view of the Hudson River and New York Harbor. After that, with our friend John Przyborowski, we moved to Madison, Wisconsin and formed a band called the Big Body of Venus Lacy. Brad played the turntables. Three of us lived in a two bedroom house and practiced in the basement which periodically flooded with sewage. We had a couch with no legs and a television which required a smack to turn on. But we also had a pool table and cases of Huber Bock cost less than five dollars. Brad worked as a bell hop at the Edgewater Hotel. For a while, Brad and I made the Pop-Stock fanzine in Chicago. Then, in the waning months of the twentieth century, we started Zero-Fi, an MP3 download site. Later Brad moved to Portland, Oregon where he lives with his wife Shanon and their son Lucian.

Sources: "Secrets" by Mission of Burma from the album *Vs.*; an interpolated melodic figure from "Secrets" by the Cure from the album *Seventeen Seconds*; Opening theme to Jacques Tati's film *Playtime*, composed by James Campbell

02. Making = Breaking

a portrait of Michael Lenzi whom I've known 156 months

We met on Paulina Street in Chicago. Michael was a new drummer and I was forming a new band. Pat O'Connell and I auditioned Michael and, though he was rough around the musical edges, we were persuaded by his enthusiasm. The three of us formed a band. We considered calling it Jet Pack, but settled on Number One Cup. Michael and Pat and I produced a few dozen songs, a handful of CDs and vinyl records and played to audiences, thick and thin, in locales as disparate in space and feel as Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Vancouver, British Columbia; and Groningen, the Netherlands. On a stage in Rennes, France, Michael destroyed my

Telecaster while I played his drums. We formed the Fire Show and played our first show New Year's Eve, 2000. We watched the first sunrise of the twenty-first century from the lawn of Amundsen High School. Thankfully, Michael is still rough around the musical edges.

Source: Recordings of Michael playing drums in his basement in July 2006

03. The Third Kind of Music

a portrait of Eric Roth whom I've known 84 months

When we first met, Eric used that Duke Ellington line about there only being two kinds of music: good and bad. I never believed that. Eric played drums with the Fire Show and wrote string and horn parts. We once took a walk around the block while Eric carefully and considerately explained why he couldn't go on tour. He's a careful and considerate man. I will always remember being at the premiere of his piece "Together is the new forward". I do believe that.

Source: Eric's composition "Both Teams Played Hard" for solo snare drum performed by Chris Froh

04. Wif

a portrait of Jules Kim-Cohen whom I've known 72 months

We first met three times, but I don't remember the first two. The third time, she was on the arm of a bassist. When he took the stage, I took to Jules. I asked her to marry me in the cinder block staircase of the Century Mall Cinema in Chicago. We ate zucchini flowers overlooking the beach in Acquafredda di Maratea. I cried in her arms at the Picabia exhibit in Paris.

Sources: "Mundo Civilizado" by Arto Lindsay from the album of the same name; "Nong-Ak" and "Chang Gu Dance" both from the CD *Traditional Music from Korea*

05. How Do We Remember?

a portrait of Drew Morgan whom I've known 24 months

After he played cello on *Saint the Fire Show*, Drew and I met again in London. We formed Unst Collective and made radio art.

Source: "Almaz men eda nèw" and "Kulun mankwalèsh" by Mahmud Ahmed both from the album *Almaz*

06. The Lévi Breaks

a portrait of John Lely whom I've known 15 months

We met on the lawn in Russell Square, which is surely a nineteenth-century song lyric.

Source: "The Savage Mind" by Claude Lévi-Strauss set to the kick drum pattern of "When The Levee Breaks" by Led Zeppelin from the album *Led Zeppelin 4*

07. Drumming

a portrait of Christoph Cox whom I've known 6 months

Christoph believes that trees can read.

Source: "Drumming" by Steve Reich

08. Quarter ((No) Quarter)

a portrait of Jarrod Fowler whom I've never met (though we spoke on the phone once)

Thanks.

Source: Drums extracted from "No Quarter" by Led Zeppelin from the album *Houses of the Holy* and set to the rhythmic patterns of "Quarter" by Jarrod Fowler from the CD *On Pulse, Repetition, Percussion and Layers*

Design: Seth Kim-Cohen with color copies of an object by Rebecca Cohen