

The Relative Band 1987

If I had had the money (or any money) back then, I would have hired a studio and recorded this band of **Joëlle Léandre**, **Steve Beresford**, **Fred Frith**, and **Jon Rose**. So it goes. The group of musicians was put together on the basis that this constellation was extremely unlikely - impossible to imagine. The music had all the constituent parts of a 1980s post modern collision - a *Zusammenstoß*. Improvisation, genre quotations, cuts ups, tunes (or bits of tunes), noise, theatre, humour, extreme juxtapositions of material. Manfred Fischer was the entrepreneur who put the tour together.

1987 was the last time I used the moniker 'Relative Band' as this central idea to all my work was beginning to be replaced by more prescient (better paid) radiophonic projects. There were six concerts in this tour, one in Germany and five in Austria. There was some hierarchical friction between some of the musicians but this may have added to a certain knock about argy-bargy on stage.

These two extracts are recordings from the penultimate concert at the Elizabethan Theatre in Salzburg on the 19th October 1987. Judging by the sound balance, the cassette recorder was placed in the audience in front of Joëlle's bass amp. The concert lasted over 90 minutes, the two sections come from the ends of each set. Everybody in the group sang in their own individual way, particularly Joëlle - fair to say Steve actually sang his *melody Four* songs quite a lot and they are not evident on these extracts.

The recording was well - a cassette recording with lots of wow and flutter. I've tarted it up a bit and reduced the tape noise. The separation was quite good, so you can hear what the musicians were getting up to.

I've decided to put this memoire up on the site as it seems to me that improvisation has settled into quite fixed genres by now, becoming a little dull, expected, formulaic, whereas a lot of improvisation back then tended to the iconoclastic, unexpected, interrupted (check the live radio broadcast arriving unannounced through the PA at the end of the second set).

Joëlle Léandre - double bass, voice

Steve Beresford - piano, tuba, trumpet, and cheap Casio sampler, voice

Fred Frith - guitar

Jon Rose - violin and 19 string cello, voice.

https://jonroseweb.com/sound/a_jonrose_memoire15.RelativeBand1987A.mp3

https://jonroseweb.com/sound/a_jonrose_memoire15.RelativeBand1987B.mp3

The Relative Band events and festivals started in Australia in 1980 (often with the help of **Jim Denley**), and moved with me to Berlin in 1985/6.

Here are three earlier iterations with studio recording quality:

With **Greg Goodman** - piano, **Henry Kaiser** - guitar, and myself on 5 string violin in January 1982. Beak Doctor Recordings - *The Dingo in Quest*. (recorded at 2MBS FM by Julian Whichello).

https://jonroseweb.com/sound/a_jonrose_memoire15.RelativeBand1982.mp3

The second with:

Eugene Chadbourne - guitar, **David Moss** - voice percussion, **Jim Denley** - flute, **Gillian McGregor** - voice, **Steve Moore** - soprano saxophone in April 1985. This is side 1 of Hot Records 1017. Tracks are: *Soft and Fragile*; *Billy Jean Stings*; *You'll Never Walk Again*; *Hands Up (Psycho Drama pt1)*; *Oh-O-Oh*; *Gone with the Wind*; *Tel Aviv Bats*. (Recording by ABC radio - yes they offered studios for this kind of thing back then).

https://jonroseweb.com/sound/a_jonrose_memoire15.RelativeBand1985.mp3

Memories of the Relative Band: Well there are many, not all of them printable even on my site. In the 1984 version of the group with **Maggie Nicols**, **Roger Turner**, **Luc Houtkamp**, **Marcel Cuypers** (what ever happened to him?), and the late **Richard Ratajek**. (photo below taken by Jane Marsh at The CellBlock Theatre, Sydney).



Out of all the possible days, a disturbed (mentally impaired) man escapes from an institution and finds the overnight motel of Maggie Nicols staying her first night in Melbourne. Out of all the possible rooms, he breaks into hers and steals her underwear - which he hangs as trophies on trees outside in the yard. Not a great 'Welcome to Melbourne' for a member of FIG (Feminist Improvisers Group). Maggie took it in good spirit, but must have thought she was amongst perverts.

A week later we were entering the old ABC premises on Forbes Street. On arriving at security, we inform the guy on the gate that 'The relative Band' is booked in for studio 221. Without asking for a repetition of the name (he may have been hearing impaired), he turned to the intercom and announced 'I have 'The Tel Aviv Bats' here' - a piece of transformative brilliance or cognitive derailment - the like of which I have never heard again. At 24'.22" you can hear the ABC spontaneous mixer-producer Andrew McLennan joining in through the tannoy system in the studio.

The third iteration.

https://jonroseweb.com/sound/a_jonrose_memoire15.RelativeBand1984.mp3

A proper festival venue for the Relative Band in Sydney was hard to negotiate. In 1982 The Festival of Sydney offered us a spot under the pigeon's favourite tree in Hyde Park - Oh but there will be some power there too said the official. In 1985, we were offered the Performance Space (the old premises in Cleveland Street). On arriving to set up, we found that we were to share the space with an experimental performance group. After some discussion, we were told none of the set could be moved and we were offered the corner of the room; the rest of the space was covered waist high in straw. On the side existed a mass of barbed wire, with an inaccessible chair parked in the middle of the entanglement. 'That's the chair for Derek Bailey' Eugene Chadbourne quipped as he arrived for the concert.

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