

IDIOT for September 2011

ONE TRACK MIND.

Q.1 What is your real name (optional) or the name you would like to be called?

Alastair Martin (but like the Paul Simon song - you can call me Al)

Q.2 What is your age group? 20 - 30. 30 - 40. 40 - 50. 50 - 60. Over 60?

30-40 (just). If you'd asked me next month then I'd say 40-50. Not sure how I'll handle being 40, its kinda crept up DOH!

Q.3 How did you get started in music?

I got an Axe electric guitar when I was 17. It was about £80 and came with a tiny amp, 2 tuition songbooks and cassettes. It sounded cheap and horrible too but it was the launch pad really. (At least it was better than miming to Dire Straits with a tennis racket). A couple of years later I bought a Yamaha SG250 off a mate. Wow, it sounded fantastic and stayed in tune! I use to get together with some mates and jam in my house basement. We were called the Plastic Snails. It was good fun. We later changed personnel and actually did a gig (my only ever) as part of the local festival in 1994. We only had 7 songs rehearsed (and 4 of those were covers), so we played them twice. One of our singers was so nervous he was sick on the beach before coming on. We went under the name of "The Suicidal Snails" but all the little kids thought we were "The Seaside Snails" (which is probably just as well).

I use to record on and off with one of my friends from the band (under the name of Blister) for the next 8 years. Then I probably stopped recording all together around 2004. Then in early 2009 I downloaded Audacity and Kristal Audio Editor software and I thought "wow what a great tool a pc is for recording" and it opened the door for me once again.

Q.4 Can you list your top 3 music genres?

Pop, Indie, Electronic, rock (oops that's 4).

Q.5 Of the four, which do you associate with mostly?

That's a tricky one. I go through stages of liking guitar led music and other times more electronica led. I think that's because I'm massively influenced by New Order who are masters at both rock and dance. But really I like all sorts - from Peter Gabriel and Fleetwood Mac to Dizzy Rascal and Ellie Goulding to Kraftwerk and Hot Chip to Arcade Fire and Biffy Clyro. I have a very varied mixture on my iphone and I have it on random and skip till I find a song for that moment.

Q.6 What is your talent? Don't be modest.

Well its not singing that's a given lol. I'm good at creating something from nothing. I can create simple yet catchy melodies. So I get an idea and that's the seed and I nurture it until it becomes this huge tree. Sometimes its an overgrown tree that needs trimming though. Its my flaw. I get too many ideas and feel compelled to incorporate all of them. I can play a bit of guitar and I'm getting to grips with playing synths, making drum loops, bass patterns, sequencers, etc with Apple apps on iphone/ipad. It really is a whole new world and one that I embrace (although I'd admit, I've bought apps and not got a clue how to use them!).

Q.7 Of the talents you have not listed, which would you like to do most?

Be able to improve my vocals. I'm always hung up about how I sound and never really liked my own voice. I wish I could reach high notes or just stay in tune for a whole song. But I can only work with what I got. I try to treat it as just another track rather than the centrepiece of the song at times.

Q.8 Let's talk a little about lyrics. Do you write any of your own?

I always write my own lyrics. I don't tend to spend too long on them as I'm usually rushing to get a song done by the KAE deadline. They tend to write themselves from an idea I have (or if KAE challenge song then by the criteria set). Then afterwards I think a phrase I've used could have been worded better. Sometimes they're personal lyrics but other times it's just things that pop into my head at that moment.

Q.9 Since you say you can't vocalise and a couple of other things, do you agree that sites like TTM and KAE are good for getting musicians together and creating something worthwhile? What drawbacks, if any do you see in this kind of collaboration?

Yes definitely. With Combobob and mungbean09, I sent them rough demos with my vocals and they added their vocals (interpreting the song in their own way). Needless to say their vocals were far superior, so theirs were used ha ha

The drawback was these two folk are Aussies!!!! Ha ha which meant when I sent them a music file in the evening, they were just off to work (as it was morning over there) and I'd have to wait another 24 hours (after I'd slept and done a day's work) before I was back in front of my pc and had had a reply. This meant the collaborations were fairly drawn out affairs and it could get frustrating.

Q.10. Can you ever envisage a day when a 'cyber band' may have a commercial hit ?

Definitely. I can't think of one to hand but there have been a few instances where duets have been recorded and released and yet the artists were never in the same room. Say one was in New York and the other in London and they send the vocals tracks via internet. Then you might see them in the songs video acting as if they're the greatest of friends. So by the same token - cyber band members could record their own parts (wherever they are in the world) and send them to a producer to put together to form a song.

Q10A. 'Send them to a 'producer'? Do you think then that there may be a business for budding mix masters in their own homes?

Who knows? Computers are becoming more and more into our lives. Music as a commodity is changing as vinyl (except for DJ's and a small minority of the public) and cassettes are dead and I think in 5 years time CD's could follow. So if the norm for music distribution is downloads, I can see people will more readily make their own compilations or mixes. There could be more opportunities for people to mix other people's songs, whether that be a cyber band or a proper band. In fact some bands have already released the soundboard tracks for their fans to make their own mix, so I think the possibilities are pretty endless.

Q.11. I think you are probably more and more involved with digital music since you mention 'Kraftwerk' and our 'Karm'. would it be true to speculate that this is where you may go as the youth years die away (now that you are 40 LOL)?

Bloody cheek. I thought this was a high brow piece of journalism. I'm off to my next appointment with Rollin Stone magazine!!!

Just kidding, erm...I never really think about what music I might make that much, I just kinda go with whatever I feel at that moment. So, that could be that I pick up the acoustic and play some chords I like and use that as the basis of my song. Or I could be on my ipad making up beats and laying down some synth parts.

Q.12 From the list of members you know, who interests you most and why?

(doesn't have to be because you think they own the best talent)

12xu22(Kristal member) and Karmanistic are both enigmas. And their music fascinates me. You just never know what they will come up with next. I don't know what they do or how they do it but it sounds fantastic. A grade for an intriguing character. He seems a hard man with a soft centre. Fantastic guitarist, from heavy metal to soft acoustic.

Q.13 Have you ever collaborated with another member or members on a recording?

Yes Ive done a few. Ive collaborated with Combobob(3times),Lefrash,Leevvii09 (Mungbean9), Smurf did a great drum track for one of my songs and Schprocket and BigB.

Q.14 Which of your colabs did you enjoy most and why?

The one I did with BigB, Schprocket and Combobob for Fortune and Fame. It started out as just my acoustic guitar track and my vocals and these guys came up with their own parts and it just built and built until it was transformed the to another level. It kinda felt like I was in a group for a moment and I really enjoyed the experience and bouncing ideas around with the others. I'd love to collaborate more. Ive got a track on the back burner that I've been working on with Karmanistic. It should see the light of day sometime this year.

Q.15 Have you a favourite mix from our bandroom? (Could be one of your own.)

"Hypnotic" is a song I knocked up pretty quick which maybe best illustrates my passion for electronic and guitar music fused together. I think its one of my better mixes (probably because I didnt spend too long, I didnt get the chance to mess it up)." I love The Bottle song done by Badfinger. I think Lefrash and Dino get really good clear recordings too. Of my own, I'm really pleased with 'Nightwatch' and 'All's Not Lost'.

Q.16What is your ambition both musically and personally?

Musically – I'd like to one day release a CD of my music but Im happy enough just banging out tunes. Making music is my escape. But my output might be less due to.....

Personally – me and my girlfriend have recently bought a house. And its in need of modernization. Theres all these horrible lights everywhere, horrendous wallpaper and carpets that need to go. Plumbing and electrics are all a whole new ball game to me too. Plus we have a baby on the way, which we're both ecstatic about. So Im gonna be extremely busy for the next year.

Q 17 Do you belong to any other indie websites and will you name them?

I'm on Kristal, which was the launchpad for me to really get into home recording again. Dino suggested I enter the KAE challenge, so I did in Feb 2009. And the rest they say is history.

Q.18 Where do you see TTM in 5 years time? What role can you play in it's development?

Hmmm...that's a tough one. Im sure the regulars will still be around. Im not sure how many new members will come along. It's a bit of a niche market. I don't know what I can add development wise, as im not computer savvy enough. Ill just add bad jokes and sabotage other peoples thread but I promise, I WONT add spam.

Q.19 Who is your next choice for the IDIOT?

I think Combo Bob would be interesting.

Hey All! thanks for a very relaxed and interesting interview. I have had pleasure in compiling it and I know our members will have enjoyed the read as well. Way2lon