

IDIOT for June 2011

TOADMAN

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

Mick is my birthname. I would like to be called Superstud but the lady at the registry of births, deaths and marriages said that's already been taken.

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

I'm 52 but one day my wife says I'll grow up.

Q.3 How did you get started in music?

I bought a guitar when I was 17 with the aim of joining a band and meeting lots of girls. I just ended up meeting lots of other guys who had bought guitars for the same reason. It never occurred to me that a minimal amount of musical talent was required to be a musician. I just loved the way listening to music made me feel.

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

Hard question to answer specifically. I suppose rock and roll but I like anything that has a strong melody eg 'Many rivers to cross' by Jimmy Cliff, 'Canon in D' by Johann Pachelbel, 'Surrender' by Cheap Trick, "I fall to pieces " by Patsy Kline (what a voice!). I'm not a real metal fan but I like 'Psychosocial" by Slipknot too.

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

Like I said, it's the 'hook' that hooks me. I think it comes from growing up listening to Top 40 on the radio. I read somewhere that Joey Ramone was a huge fan of 'bubblegum' rock, hence the 'pop' flavours in many of their songs. When I recieved this email I had just finished watching Thin Lizzy on YouTube doing 'Black Rose' live. Good song but it's all those Gaelic melody lines in the instrumental section I really like, especially when they're played by 2 guitars in harmony. 5ths and 4ths always get me going.

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

Songwriting and guitar playing. Like Spiral said, I'm not a great guitarist but I get by. I realized a long time ago that I'm not a 'natural' musician. My 'ear' isn't that good nor my timing (as many of you have already noticed but have been too polite to point out) so I find covering other people's music a struggle sometimes. But if I can do things my way, it comes naturally. I think it's a case of being able to express myself emotionally and the only person who can do that honestly and spontaneously is yourself.

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

Singing. I would love to be able to sing.

When I was playing in bands, I used to use notes on the guit to show the vocalist how the melody line went. I recently sent Schprocket a reggae song arrangement and the next day he sent it back with a melody line he scat sang on top. All I had to do was turn his scat line into lyrics and hey presto! the song was finished. It's a method I'll probably use again on collabs as it gives the vocalist the opportunity to do things their way. Plus they don't have to listen to my appallingly bad 'guide'tracks. I 'sang' one to Schprock over Skype last year and he hasn't seen his cat since.

Q.8 You have a great sense of humour Mick. Where does that come from?

I'm not sure. Like a lot of things in life it may be trial and error. Something one person finds amusing another may find annoying. In the end though, IMO you have to be true to yourself and decide what you think is both funny and socially acceptable at the same time.

Q.9. Let's elaborate on your band days. Give us some names. Did you play pro? Did you earn

lots of dinero?

Did you ever hear of "Larry Kent and the Low Rent Rockers"? No? How about "Two Dogs Chocka". Doesn't ring a bell? Not surprising. Since I wasn't interested in the mainstream, the people I generally played with had the luxury of calling ourselves whatever we wanted to and playing whatever music we liked.

I spent about 15 years playing in bands in Perth (I moved here from Sydney in 1976). While Perth is a great place to live, it's tough if you want to play original music as there is such a small population and only a small percentage of that is interested. So no matter how often I worked, I made little if any money at all after paying for strings, rehearsal rooms, P.A. hire, road crew wages, posters, recording etc etc. I did play in cover bands but found that wasn't very rewarding spiritually. You could do the worst version of the Kinks' "Lola" in the history of Western Civilisation (out of tune, unco-ordinated and generally awful) and people would go nuts. I suppose it was because they already knew the song. I guess that makes me a snob musically but it was something I found depressing and unrewarding, even if I was getting paid for it.

Q.10. I notice you said you like Gaelic melody. What are your origins? Do you have any Gaelic blood?

I've had a lot of Gaelic blood **on** me when playing in Irish bars!

Seriously though, I have been told I have an Irish and Danish heritage from way back. The thing I like about Gaelic melodies are the combinations of notes. I don't know enough theory to be specific but I know it makes me feel good. Like the first time I heard 'The Twist' by Chubby Checker (what a voice!) or 'Paranoid' by Black Sabbath. It felt like my feet had been nailed to the floor and nothing in the world existed except for the sound coming out of a tiny, tinny transistor radio. Ahh, memories.....

Q.11. Does anything annoy you?

Lots of things but someone once said to me "When the going gets tough, turn the TV on and you'll see 300 billion people worse off than you are". I don't know if the figure is accurate but the sentiment certainly struck a chord with me. It's a philosophy I try and live by. Notice I said 'try'.

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)

Another hard question. Dino and Combobob are obviously talented and experienced musicians and I like their stuff a lot. Conversely, Schprocket has never been in a band but not only has a great voice, he is easily able to connect with the emotional side of the lyric and interpret it. His track on 'Hold me close' moved me to tears. The same with Mung. He sent me an improvised vocal over one of my chord progressions that was perfect but he asked me not to use it. I would love to try something with him again (not in the biblical sense, though).

G C Downey is not only a great bass player but he blew my socks off with the guitar solo he sent me for 'Too Old to Rock 'n' Roll', a song that he gave me the idea for in the first place. Smurf can play standing on his head asleep and still come up with a lot of creative and sympathetic ideas on his track. PapaG has a great, pure voice, Ag is a ferocious guitar player and funny guy. Jimbo too. His song "Things are looking up" is one of my favourites. I loved TJ's stuff because his feel is so good.

The list goes on and on as everybody has a talent of some sort. Apologies to anyone I've left out.

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

I've done a few songs with Smurf & Schprock, just the 3 of us. I've collaborated with GC, PapaG, Jimbo, yergoodself Dave, Ag, TJ, BigB, TeeEff and Mung. Joom gave me a couple of great lines for DWDTT and just recently I played on BB's "18 wheels of hardened steel" and she sent me a keyboard line for "Snowing" (a title I stole from you, Dave).

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

'Suicide' because I got to play with TeeEff again. We were in a band together a long time ago and not only is he a great musician and all-around-nice-guy, he plays fretless bass and his sound and style became an integral part of the songs I was writing at the time. Unfortunately, his circumstances have changed and he is no longer available.

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

Too many to list here but Jimbo's "Things are looking up" is a killer track, IMO.

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

Personally, to live long enough to see my 2 boys grow up and be happy and successful in their chosen fields (one's already there).

Musically, to keep writing songs that other people bring to life through their contributions. Oh yeah, learn another scale apart from the same one I've been using for the last 30 years!

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

I tried Indaba but quickly gave that a miss. It doesn't have the same community feel as TTM.

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

I can only see it growing as the cyberspace community grows. I'm a latecomer to computer technology (some people say I never really arrived!) but it's a fantastic opportunity to connect and share with like-minded people. And this is the perfect time to thank JOOM & Schrock for keeping this site going. My role is hopefully to continue to be a minor contributor.

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

Smurf, Ag or Combobob.