

C & G interviewing David O'Hagan about Sheffield's Harcourt Road

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Clara (C): Today is the sixth of August, 2024 and Gum and I are here with David...how can I pronounce your last name properly?

David (D): O'Hagan.

C: O'Hagan, thank you... David O'Hagan and his beautiful studio, which produces Irish whistles. Okay, so first of all, David, can you tell us a bit about your memories of Harcourt Road, like maybe a few really lovely moments that you can recall from Harcourt Road, because you've been basically living there for how long?

D: So, yeah, since I was... I grew up there, so yeah, all my life really. Yeah, the best memories I think I have was when I was growing up there. The world was in many ways, quite different then. You know, there was no problem going to the going to the local park, or walking down the road on your own when you were, you know, six, seven years old or, you know, so, because it was only ... we were friends with people down the road. So, yeah, we'd meet, meet friends in the park, or we'd walk to each other's houses, and it was just, yeah, it's just a very kind of lovely place to grow up because of the park and we used to ride our bikes in there. I remember one year there was... a whole big load of sand was dumped in the car park in in Crookes Valley Park. So it was like a huge amount of sand I can't remember why... I don't know why it was, maybe some building works, but everyone, we were all... it was like having a huge sand pit. So we all used to play.... We used to play in the in the sand pit. So, like one whole summer we were playing the sand pit and yeah, this was one nice memory.

C: Was that in the 90s roughly?

D: Yeah, probably like, yeah, late 80s. And then other memories: the park was very good when it snowed. It's still very good when it snows, so for sledging down, down the hills, and it was very magical when, when it snows. Was always, always magical. And yeah, very good memories of meeting friends in the park and sledging and it was just a sort of perfect winter scene with, you know, the park full of people with sledges and making igloos and snowmen.

Gum (G): Your friends, were they from Harcourt Road also?

D: Yeah, yeah. They don't live on Harcourt Road anymore. But yeah, when I was growing up, I grew up with someone called Willie William Rishi. He was, he lived, we lived the top end of Harcourt Road, second from the end, and then they lived the bottom end, second from ... so, so, yeah, the they moved their family moved away when, I think he was about 12, so, but yeah, up until then, we were very good friends, and we'd always meet the park. And then there's, you know, other friends of, a bigger circle friends not living in Harcourt Road, it would also come but, yeah, he was the main, the main person that lived on the road. And then there was some other people lived on the road, Andrew and Netty, they were called. They used to come to the park sometimes, yeah, I mean, there's probably, there's probably actually more. I'd say there's more families on the road now than they used to be. There weren't so many families,

C: But you had friends from the bigger neighbourhood... So well, mentioning about families on the street. So I guess you also witnessed the changes after more families moved to Harcourt Road. What are the major differences before and after? And did you like it particularly... which way did you like it better?

D: Yeah, I think, I think there's much more community now on Harcourt Road, like I said before there was, there weren't many families, and it was, it was pretty much all students, and there was, I think there was some kind of temporary housing for people. It was, I would say it was probably more more rundown, that that road was more rundown, and I guess the - with the the university becoming much bigger, and a lot of foreign students and just the general campus becoming bigger with university, and, you know, that brings money and so, so the road's changed and awful lot since, since I grew up there. And, yeah, I think for the better, for sure. And there's a much more, because the university, they sold off I can't remember how many, 20 houses or something, it must have been in, it must have been in very roughly 2008-9 or something, so, yeah, they sold a lot of houses, and the there was Nic and Penny Ralph, which I'm sure you've met, they did a lot of work to put a covenant, to ask the university to put a covenant on the houses that they couldn't be sold to landlords, which is why a lot of families moved onto the road. If it wasn't for that, they would have all just gone to landlords, and it would have just been all students again, so it's a much, much nicer mix now of students and others.

C: And do you still recall how that well, let's call it a campaign to to negotiate with the university, how did that come about? And how did the other residents also, were they involved? And how did that come about?

D: Yeah, I think, I mean, there was a general. I mean, even now, there's always, there's always this problem with students and sort of the noise, and so it's always, it's always going to be like that. And also, in the off term time, when... Because there's not the university terms aren't actually that long. So a lot of people would leave the area and there would be hardly anyone on the road. So which, that's another thing that wasn't so good. And it was, yeah, there was definitely involvement from other people, but it was Nic and Penny who really put the work in. But there was a general feeling that this was a real opportunity to change, change the road for the better. And yeah, and it's been, I think it's been successful.

G: How did you know the University of Sheffield would sell the houses? Did they just, just tell, tell the neighbourhood

C: Did they consult?

D: I can't remember. It was just, it was just known about, I think it was quite, it was quite open news that the university was selling off. It wasn't just Harcourt Road. They sold off, I think all their residential type properties, virtually, which was a lot. So it was generally known about.

C: Oh. And since you also live quite close to the hole, the Harcourt Hole, can you recall what... Because we've heard different pieces of stories and memories of the hole like, do you remember, like, when the construction trucks come and, what did people feel about it? Like, yeah. Or even earlier that, in the earlier days when the laboratory was, was, was, were you? Were you? Were you around?

D: Yes, yes. Our house is right next to, next to British Glass. So, yeah, British Glass was a glass research company, and it wasn't great living next to them, because they made a lot of noise. So they had big furnace that would go sometimes. So there was ongoing noise problems with British Glass. And then I think, I think there was one quite long period they were doing some experiment, and they had, they had the furnace on very loud for a long period of time. And I think and it was quite hard to live with. But then I think something went wrong and the furnace got damaged, or something happened. Not good, not good for them. It was after that that British Glass decided they were going to move. So we

were quite pleased about that. And I am guessing this must have been, but they ... it's around 2003/4/5, when, when Prince Naseem, the boxer. He bought the grounds. So there was a, I think the university wanted to buy it, but he, yeah, he outbid them. And so it might have been even earlier, because these things, like putting in for planning. And, you know, before anything happens, it can be quite a few years. And so he put in, he bought the piece of land, and he put in planning permission for a huge block of flats, like it's completely out of proportion to the area, and all the residents got together and wrote objections to the council, and then went to the council meeting. I went to that. I remember presenting the arguments not to build this thing, and that plan was turned down by the council. And then they went away and modified the plan, and then they came out with something that was still completely inappropriate for the area, but it was much better than the original one, and the council granted it, which is a classic trick you do. You put in something that's, you know, really not good, and then you come up with something that's 40% better, and it's like, whoa. This is much better. It wasn't a much better plan, but it was still too big, you know? And they got Planning Commission, so we were like, Oh, great. This is not a good plan. And they started, well, I say they started work, but basically what happened was, there was there was a guy - it was basically one guy with a digger - for four months, and for four months, I think he was, yes, he was digging for like three or four months, just one guy with a digger, and he was just just digging and digging and digging. So he would dig, and then he would put all the rubbish, all the rubble, on a big, a big truck. He would fill it up during the day, and then the truck would go away or come back. So it just went on and on and on. And then this hole was getting bigger and bigger.

G: So before the hole is smaller?

D: Yeah, well, well, there's, I mean, it's always, it always goes down, but this big hole in the ground, it wasn't there. So there was a, it's like at the top of Harcourt road. There's a small bank, and then, and then it was just a building. So you can still see where the land was, because it's the area around the hole - that was the - that was basically where, where it was, but that whole hole was okay, yeah, and yeah, we started to get concerned because he was digging closer and closer to the road. And we would, I think, multiple times we contacted the council and said, you know, we're concerned that he's digging too much in the council ignored us as they always do. But then I think it got... it carried on, you know, getting carried on. And I think finally, my mom, or someone, they finally, actually came out and looked at it and and they were, they agreed it was slightly concerning. And I think some engineers came out and they said, yes, this is not good. The road's gonna start like falling in. So the council ordered them to put big steel girders into the ground. So if you go, if you go to of Harcourt Road, it's hard to see now because there's trees, but if you just walk along just, just very close the road, like a couple of feet away, these very big steel that's been pushed in right, deep, deep to just to support the bank so it doesn't start falling. And so just shortly after, so, and, yeah, the Council told them to stop, stop, stop digging, because it was like what they do. And if you look, if it look, in the bottom of the hole, it did start with a little bit of foundations and a bit of concrete and some and some, some metal. So, yeah, that hole was basically dug by one person. He thoroughly enjoyed digging a big hole. But it's like, if you look at the plans for the, for the building that they have planned a mission for, you know, you'd expect, like, you know, like a serious, it's a serious build. So you'd expect, like, you know, a temporary office. And like, you know, all the you know, you expect, like, a, you don't expect one guy with the digger to be there for three months and then, so obviously, they didn't know what they were doing, really. And so that, the work stopped then, and then shortly after that, there was the financial crash in 2007 and I think the building firm that was involved, they might have gone out of business, or something like that, or it was just the, you know, the economic situation changed after that, and they stopped work. And it's been, yeah, it's been like that ever since...

C: Oh, I see, yeah, okay, now many trees grow there.

D: And yeah, actually, till about, up to about five years ago, it was like, actually, like a little forest there. And unfortunately, someone complained about the rubbish, and the diggers came in and knocked all the trees down.

C: There used to have even more trees than that?

D: Oh yes, yeah, it was, it was almost like, yeah, like, silver birch trees, like, you know, like proper trees. It started to look really nice. I mean, you imagine 15, yeah, like 10 years. 15, yeah, maybe 10 years of tree growth. 10 years, probably. So you can imagine, you know, there was a lot of trees and growth. It was looking really green and beautiful. But then the digger came and just completely flattened everything. And it's just starting to come, come back up now and looking a little bit nice.

G: I remember two years ago there was some wood board to block the scene.

D: Oh, yeah. That's because a lot of people keep dumping rubbish on the site, so I think the council ordered them to secure the site, and they put up the fence that, the doors that now there, and then they screwed some, some bits of wood to the wall, but they just blew down. Yeah, yeah, we see that, yeah. So yeah. And I think, as far as I know, It still own by Prince Nazeem, the boxer, and yeah, it just sits there.

C: So have you met him on Harcourt Road? Prince Naseem?

D: Yeah, he's been, he's been on site a few times, yeah, I think I've seen him on the site. I've never spoken to him. I think, I think my mom might have spoken to him, yeah, he's been, he's definitely been there.

G: So if one day the boxer just has another plan for the land. Yeah, maybe a bigger plan... Do you think you would just do the same thing again to object?

D: I think so. Yeah. I mean, it's a question, they could argue they did start work, even though it was only a bit of concrete at the bottom of the hole, but they might be able to just build what they have planning permission for now to carry on, although I think times have changed a lot, and they might want to come up with a new plan anyway, or they might just sell it. I think it's, that area is only coming up, so it's just, it's a good investment. I mean, I think it's probably, I think he paid 1.2 million or something for a piece of land. I'm guessing it's worth more than that now. It's probably just gonna increase in price.

C: And we know that you also have your music instrument business. Can you tell us a bit more, a bit about how, like when you grew up on Harcourt Road and about how you brought this interest about, like sound engineering, and also your interest in making musical instruments... it is really quite unique...

D: Yeah. So well, my father, Marcus, was an architect, and when I was, when I was very young, you know, 2 or 3 or 4 or 5, years old, he was involved in building a number of recording studios in Sheffield, some, some quite, quite well known ones. So the Human League he built, he designed that studio. So him and Kevin Bacon designed that studio, and then the two of them worked on, also it was called Font studios, and also Axis studios and so, so Font Studios was, was the kind of, I guess you could say the birthplace of Warp Records is, which is a very big, still a big record label now. And that was, Warp Records were started by Rob Gordon, who's a friend of mine, and engineer and so... and Rob Gordon was a, quite a well known producer in the 80s and 90s. And he started Warp Records, and that became so... there was a real, in the 80s, there was a real, very vibrant music scene in Sheffield. And so, you know, a lot of the early sort of dance music came out of Sheffield. And, yeah, it was quite a big sort of birth of the whole dance music scene and Warp Records was quite involved in that. So, so that was a that was quite a quite a big studio, and then Human League One. Then there was Axis Studios, which was another, another successful studio that was two record producers, Kevin Bacon and Jonathan Cornby. They work with lots of famous artists, Finley Quay and the names have slipped me now. They're the Longpigs. They were a band in Sheffield. You could look up Jonathan Cornby and Kevin Bacon, and I'm sure they have a discography of who they work with. So, that was another studio. And those students were being built when I was very, very, very tiny. And so I, you know, I sometimes go

with him when they were being built or and, and then further on, when, when they were actually operational. And I just thought these, these places were just like amazing with all these like this, all this high technology and equipment. And when I was very young, like three, three years old, I would, I would play about, play it being, being in a recording studio, and I would plug skipping ropes into drawers and all this kind of thing. And I also loved anything mechanical and electronics, and I would, yeah, again, from almost like one or two, not one, but yeah, 2, 3, 4, years old. I would just love to play with anything electric or mechanical. And I would, I would take everything apart, so I'd have screwdrivers and yeah, just, I'd take everything, I just dismantle everything, and then I'd have to be bit careful, because I'd start unscrewing the sockets on the wall. So, yeah, I was always, I guess I was very inspired by being in these recording studios when I was very young, and I used to collect, like, wires and electrical components and all this kind of thing. So, yeah, this went on for a few years when I was younger, and then, yeah, I guess I got, I got older, went to school and kind of, you know, just kind of forgot about this to a single extent. I was still, I still, I've always loved technology. And I started DJing when I was 13/14 years old. Back then, not many people were DJs. And so it was quite unique, I think I was the first person in the whole school to start DJing. It was big school, like 800 people, and then a number of friends started DJing, which some of my friends are still, they're still DJing, and actually quite successful making their own music and everything. And so there was a real, yeah, it was a nice it was nice at school that we used to get together and mix records together. And my biggest sister, she's, she's kind of responsible for that, because she was, she's a, she's a bit older, and she was involved in the whole like rave dance music scene, and she was going out with a DJ so, I used to meet her sort of friends, and I was inspired by these, these sort of older, slightly older people who would like, you know, DJ in a club. I wasn't old enough to go to a club, but I used to collect all the flyers from the club nights. So I still have them. I have box full of all these rave flyers. Probably quite valuable. Some of them probably. So then I got into DJing. So when I was 13 or 14, and I had the kind of inspiration that I wanted to start writing music, creating music, rather than just just DJing and so I left school when I was 16. I didn't like I didn't like school, I didn't have a good time at school, so I was very happy to get out of there, and I was trying to think what to do. And there was a teaching school in, I guess a college, say, called Red Tape studios. So it was Council funded, and they ran, they ran, like a, like a year course in sound engineering, music production. So I kind of knew about this through, maybe through my dad or and I applied to, so I was, I was 16, and I applied to go to Red Tape. They never had anyone that young before. So it wasn't it, because it was, you know, the people on the course, it wasn't somewhere you go when you finish school. That's not the idea it was people from my age to, you know, 40 or something, you know, it was just people who wanted to learn about using production sound. So I applied to go on the course. And then I think they had, they shortlisted a number of people, and then we had to go in for like a trial day or something. And, you know, they showed us the studios and all this kind of thing. And, yeah, so I did that. And, yeah, I was very lucky that I got onto the course. So this was a year- long course. And I really, really enjoyed the course, and then, you know, coming towards the end of the course, I didn't, I wasn't sure what to do next. And this Red Tape Studios is, was actually, is actually in the same building as the three recording studios that I told you about, Font studios, Human League and Axis studios. So these are actually upstairs in the same building, and Red Tape was a bigger space on the bottom floor. This building is, I mean, there's still the three studios there, although they're not functioning in the same way. If you know the Site gallery, yeah, it's actually in this building. So these studios are behind the Site Gallery. So if you go into Site Gallery, actually, behind that is the studios. And if you walk down the little ginnel and walk down the front, you'll see, you'll see Red Tape. It might even, it might even still say, I don't, I don't think I've done anything with the building. It only shut maybe two years ago. So this Red Tape, so I did the course in Red Tape, which is just below these studios that my dad designed.

So after that, my dad took me to see Kevin Bacon, who's the guy he designed the studios with. He is a successful producer and it was probably shortly after he did Finley Quay's first album, which was very successful. So I had a meeting with, well, he just took me to see Kevin and Jonathan. Kevin Bacon, Jonathan, so, yeah, they gave me a job making tea and coffee. So like in the music industry, that's really how you, you generally don't go to university and then go and get a job. It's like you, you start off being a tea boy and just helping out, and you set up the microphones. And then, you know, they teach

you, maybe, about the microphone placement or and then they show you the mixing desk and the tape machine. So I just caught the very end of the analog tape machine use. I mean they're still used today, but hardly, but yeah. So I actually learned right at the end of the analog era on the big 24 track tape machine. So I just had the bigger Atari tape machine, which is a very high quality one, and you have to line up the tape machine, you play test tones and calibrate it. So I learned, I learned all these, all these, these skills. And so, yes, I'd worked there for, for a year. So I, you know, making tea, helping set up the microphones, take down all the cables, and so at the same time I was allowed to use the studio at weekends. That's kind of the deal. So, you know, you get paid virtually nothing, and there's long hours and there's hard work. But yeah, you could, you get to learn to use the studio. So you're learning to become a proper engineer. So I'd start recording some bands at weekends, and I learned how to actually record. So this carried on and then, so I worked there for about a year.

And then after that, there was the other studio my dad had designed, which was Font studios that had changed ownership, maybe, probably about the same time I started working at Axis. So this was probably, yeah, like 1997, something like this roughly, and so it changed its name from Font studios to Steelworks Studios. And so this was it. This was completely new producers, engineers and everything. And so I was, as I was working at Axis I got to know because it's just two doors down, you know, I got to know the, I got to know, the people working at steelworks a little bit. And I then got a job at Steelworks doing assistant engineering, and again, sort of, you know, doing the, making the tea, backing up the computers then. So I started working there at the same time but at the same time, I carried on working at Axis, at weekends, doing engineering. So I'd still be recording bands at axis, and then I'll be learning how to use Steelworks, which was interesting, because Axis was like traditional analog studio, with the big it had the big Neve mixing console and the Atari tape machine, and they had the Pro Tools recording system as well. But Steelworks was the complete kind of opposite. It was a big - it was a Neve desk again, but it was a digital Neve, it was one of the first really high end digital consoles. I mean, this thing costs 250,000 pounds, or something like really expensive stuff, amazing, amazing technology. Yeah, it's like, it's like being in front of a spaceship, or something like Starship Enterprise, all these lights. And this incredible thing, so that still is with the digital one. So again, I'd learnt, he learned how to use this, this, this studio. And do you know, assistant engineering bits of engineering, recording, vocals and this kind of thing. So, yeah, I kind of learned how to use that studio, I'd start, and I started to do some recording at steelworks during the weekends, engineering and that kind of thing.

So I can't remember how many years I worked at steelworks. I think it was probably, it must have been, like three or four years, I think, and, yeah, that was a really, yeah, really great experience, as was Axis and Steelworks, yeah. Also the music was quite different. So Axis was more leftfield bands, more kind of as producers, their thing was that the kind of what's leftfield becomes mainstream. So they were working on the slightly like the more leftfield that's becoming mainstream, kind of kind of sound, kind of angle whereas Steelworks was full pop production, so when I was there, you know, we had artists like Billy Piper, the boyband Blue. Take that? Or was that just before I got there? Bryan Adams, was there, and the Spice Girls. So quite high profile pop artists.

C: How about the weekends when you were using the studios? Did you invite some other bands to work with?

D: At first, when I was learning, yeah, I would just find a band and say, do you want to come record for free, but I'm just learning, you know, so they don't expect amazing results. So this to start with. But then, pretty quick, pretty soon it was, it was studio bookings. So someone would book the studio, and then I get a call saying, can you engineer this session in the weekend, so for both axis and steelworks? Okay, so I was working. Yes, I was, so I was, when I was working at Steelworks, I was, I was doing this, still doing a little bit of work. But then after I left Steelworks, I was doing more work at, you know, like most weekends, I'll be recording a band and I also started working at a Yellow Arch studio, which is another studio in Sheffield, again, which is still going. So I was, I was engineering for these three, three

studios for a while, and I kind of got to the point where the reason why I got into the whole... I wanted to do music production, sound engineering was because I wanted to do my own music and ended up just recording other people's music. So and I wasn't really, I didn't feel like I was going where I wanted to go with just recording bands. So, yeah, I guess I made quite a big decision, and I decided that I wanted to develop more my sort of musical abilities.

And I started to learn, learn singing. And I did, I did a kind of year, part time course, at a place called Tonalis. This was around 2006 to 2007. I started learning singing and trying to practice playing instruments more, piano, guitar, and then, I went on this quite an interesting course about technology and the internet, and from a kind of understanding, from a spiritual perspective, like, what, what is the internet... What's it becoming... You know, where did it come from. And so I went, Yeah, it was, it was a week long course in Scotland. This very much inspired me and the guy who ran the course, he was, it was actually an English guy from Leeds, which is close to Sheffield. He worked in Switzerland. He ran a research institute that was researching what he called moral technology. So it was, it was technology that was powered by a different, different energy to our current technology. So all our, all our current technologies are based upon electricity, magnetism, burning something, fossil fuels. It's always all, it's all kind of, it's kind of destructive in its nature. All our technology and it has a huge benefit, but it also has the downside that it damages the earth.

So this was a technology based upon kind of the life forces. So it was based upon Rudolf Steiner's work of spiritual science, which is to research and understand the non physical world in the same way that we use our intellect to understand the physical world using the scientific method. So with the scientific method, we have great objectivity. We've separated ourselves from nature so that we can, in a sense, master nature, and we can create all these incredible things we have around us, so which, again, has an upside but has a downside, because we're so disconnected from nature, we are kind of destroying it and so, but that, that method of understanding, which is to apply objectivity to the natural world... Rudolf Steiner took that mode of thinking and applied it to what he called spiritual research. So he could see from a very young age, he could see the non physical world just as we can see the physical world. And he would study this world using a scientific method. So he would, he would, you know, test... He would perceive something, and you were tested, and, you know, kind of almost like experimenting. So, in order to reach an objective understanding of this world. So it's not just some undefined kind of dreamlike reality. It's actually in some ways more real than this reality because it informs this reality. But

whereas in the past, we have all the various religious texts, but it really, you know pretty much a lot of the time they speak in metaphor. And there's not, it doesn't have our ... It doesn't really satisfy our modern intellectual need for understanding something. You know, you can read it well, yeah, there's great truth in this, but what's it actually mean? So what he was doing is sort of saying that you can actually understand these things with the modern intellect, and it's just a science. So this research institute, they were trying to develop new forms of technology based upon the life forces. So the forces that that help plants to grow, or, you know, what are the forces that hold all the planets in their orbits? What's the force that turns the Earth? There are these incredible forces of creation. What are these forces that we say we haven't really even started to understand what, what reality is. So, the idea is, Steiner's indicated, you could create a whole new sphere of technology that's not based upon electricity or magnetism. It's actually based upon resonance with the life forces. So you would bring mechanisms into resonance with non physical rhythms and energy. So if you look at a plant growing on a time lapse, you'll see it doesn't just it doesn't go like that. It grows in a rhythm. Everything in nature grows in rhythms. And we have the rhythms of the seasons, the rhythms of the planets. So everything, the whole of physical existence, is made of these rhythms. And so, the idea is that these rhythms are actually the result of non physical rhythms. And if you can bring a mechanism into resonance with the non physical rhythms, then you could, you would essentially have what you would perceive as free energy, because, but it really isn't, is it, I don't know if free is the right word. It's energy without any downside. So it's, it's powered by life forces, rather than, I suppose you could say, you know, death forces, as in, oil is dead matter, and every day we use the dead matter to bring it to create energy.

C: So does this study also then bring you influence to do what you're doing, because I see the relevance - to what you are doing nowadays.

D: Yes. So, I guess in terms of, in terms of sound and music, and it's, I've always wanted to sort of understand, or what's been important is, is what lies behind the sound so with the with the music production and sound engineering you can create a sound that's almost more than the sum of its parts. So the music is sort of freed from the speakers, if you like, and then there's a more, it has more of an energetic, positive effect on you. And then, likewise, with instruments. So, so why is it that a Stradivarius violin moves people more than a good modern violin? You know, they're both very good instruments, and they both... but there's something magical about this. And what's going on? It's just, you know, it's like there's more than just sound waves resonating wood and lacquer. And it's like there's this you can, we can, I think we can create things in the physical world that have become kind of doorways the non physical. And same with singing, we can sing in a very materialistic way, which is just really moving the physical apparatus of the body, or we can, or we can sing in a way that the body becomes the instrument for something to manifest. So with trying to develop the instruments, I guess I'm always trying to look for a sound as a bit more than just the physical, the physics of the instrument, something that moves you a bit more emotionally, has more magical quality to it.

C: Did you find some of these elements at the beginning when you were inheriting Howard music?

D: I don't know, yeah. I mean the the whistle that I'm making now is, I mean, it's pretty much the same, the same, same sort of fundamental design that Brian made, and he too was like he had this ability to kind of find a sound that was more than the sum of its parts. So the work I've done is really just to develop where, where where he, where he got to in the research. I've understood more about how the actual manufacturing process affects the tone and the quality of the sound. And I've got a few more projects I'm working on, really, you know, sort of combined the quality of the metal, and enhancing the because, yeah, before, before I took over, how music, I went to Brazil to learn to make hand beaten gongs. If you see up there, you see. So these are, these are made, made on a forge. So, like, I have a forge here. I haven't started making them here yet, an anvil. So you'd heat that, you'd heat the metal. And in Brazil, we used hardwoods, because actually the type of heats used in the making of the gong affects the quality of the tone. So if you make a gong on an electric furnace, it'll sound different to a gong made on some hardwoods. And you know, you can actually... the guy, there's a German guy who I worked with. The guy I worked with in Brazil was a German guy, and he's a teacher, Manfred Leffler, as he's called. He did many studies on this. And he said he did tests where he'd use - make this the same gongs with different hardwoods. So he'd make one gong with oak, one gong with birch, one gong with ash. And he said, you can actually hear the different, hear the quality of the sound, that it took on some element of the tree, actual tree that was used because, you know, normally you would just, if you're going to use hardwood, you might have five different hard different hardwoods and you've just gone but he actually, just for practical reasons, is very, you know, it's very, quite expensive and challenging to just get a pile of ash, you know, and just use ash to heat the gong, because you have to heat them multiple times. It's quite a process. But he did. He did that, he made gongs with each wood.

So, so it's like the idea that everything affects everything, and yet, the new, the newest sound developing, is based upon heating the metal in a forge type device, and then working the metal to bring out some of the resonant qualities of it.

C: So, now when, when you mentioned, you've also started making your own music, and then also, I mean, now you are also producing the whistles. So are you doing more? Are you improvising like or how do you refine the making of these instruments and how is this practice of producing musical instruments related to the, you know, the general philosophy related to technology and life and nature that you mentioned, like, how do you... I'm trying to understand how all of these come together.

D: Yeah, I'm not sure, really. I mean, I guess they're all part of trying to understand, really, this interaction between the physical and non physical worlds that and I guess music is maybe the most... it's a very close connection between these, between these two worlds, because sound is, it's, it's quite different from, well, music's quite different to all the other arts in that it's... there's nothing... There's nothing there. You know, you create something in time for a short period, and then it's gone. So it is... you can't feel - pick up - you can't pick up a piece of music. It's something that you create in the moment, and you bring, you manifest something, and then it goes away. I mean, that's changed, that relationship's changed a lot because of recorded music. And okay, you can record, and then you have a CD, and you can replay that event, again and again. But before recorded music, you think the musicians come together with the instruments, and they create something, and it exists in that moment, it exists in the present moment for a certain period of time, and then it's gone again. And that piece of music will never, would never, ever be repeated. It would be a unique event. And, you know, same as today, with a, you know, an orchestra, every time they play, it's a, it's a special, unique event. And yet, that's changed because of recording and technology. But really, that's what music is. It's something we, we kind of manifest. And I think it, because of its, it almost has this spiritual nature anyway, because it's, it's not physical. It is a kind of time, time experience that it that it kind of fits with, kind of like trying to try to understand the world really and what, what is matter? What is reality? What is, what is this experience we're having? And certain things take us closer to moving beyond this physical experience, or you could say, bringing the non physical into the physical. So it's this interaction between, between the two...

C: Then some then, well, then maybe, to my understanding, then that the instruments you are making, they can probably help, they help to provide, sort of a medium to to interact with these different elements, definitely the technology. But I think this is also very unique. The technology that we see here in this studio is the mechanical. So, really different from the digital technology everybody is using nowadays and that also brings this really unique physical energy. Well, I don't know if I use the right word, the physicality is something really unique, the texture, and then how, how this medium is helping the human body to, well, to make the sound differently. But then perhaps, as you said, making, while making the sound, somehow, will hopefully can help us to this, help us to sort of connect with some other elements around us, to echo, to the elements, maybe?

D: Yeah, yeah, absolutely, okay. I think all instruments have this possibility, yeah, I guess I try and enhance that ability. This, in the instrument. But, yeah, I think that's the magic of music and instruments, is there are these, just these objects that do nothing until we bring them to life. I mean, they might be very beautiful. A violin is, is, really, is kind of, it's nothing until someone picks up and makes music with it. And it takes a lot of practice to make music with the violin, yeah, absolutely.

C: One more question related to the instrument, because it's particularly the Irish whistle that you're making and you have the Irish inheritance - I mean, does it, is it one of the reasons that really encouraged you to inherit Howard's business. Is it part of it?

D: Not necessarily, just yeah, I learned how to make the make the kind of gongs in Brazil and I was, I was actually looking for a workshop, to set up a workshop. And a family friend, he was retiring, I had a few health problems, and he couldn't find anyone to take on the business. I came to an agreement with him, and so instead of making the gongs, I started making the whistles. It wasn't planned at all. It was one of those things that life does... And this place, which is Hybrid studios, this was designed by my dad. And this workshop was built for the instrument making from the start of the project. And so, yeah, it's interesting that it's, it's an instrument making workshop in a recording studio rehearsal rooms, which is quite nice, in a way, so you've got the music, and then the actual instruments we made in the in the same building. So it's nice...

G: How important is it for you to keep or preserve heritage, like traditional Irish whistle? Is it very important for you? I'm not sure, would you try to improve or make something, an improvement for that kind of instrument, or would you try to do something, improvised?

D: Yeah. I mean, the sort of new projects I'm working on, I've been working with the Sheffield University on developing a new whistle head, which has some kind of quite interesting ideas in it, based upon aerodynamics and so, yeah, yeah. Very much trying to push - use, you know, the late cutting edge, latest research and also manufacturing ability that we have now, so the 3d printing, for example, I've been using the 3d printing to be able to test many different designs. So, yeah, absolutely trying, trying to try to to keep what's important about the heritage of musical instruments, but, but bringing in the kind of fruits of modern science and technology that we have and, yeah, and in terms of heritage, I think obviously the heritage of the instrument and all instruments is very important. And as well as that, for me, being in Sheffield, the heritage of, you know, the modern technology and the skills that came out of Sheffield, which, I mean, Sheffield was really the heart of the whole industrial revolution, which transformed the whole world and so, and I guess that's what, that's why everyone seems to want to come to England. It's this little, tiny place. It's, you know, good and bad elements, of course, the British Empire and the industrial revolution, but it has transformed the whole world and continues to do so. And then, you know, there's, I mean, stainless steel was invented in Sheffield. This incredible - there was an incredible amount of skill and knowledge that came out of that industrial revolution. And it's still in Sheffield to a certain extent. Unfortunately, it, just now, really a lot of the old, the older, really skilled makers, are kind of retiring or dying in the nicest possible way, because ... and a lot of that knowledge isn't getting passed on to people. And I don't really mean the sort of the knowledge of modern manufacturing. I don't mean that, but a lot of the skills in Sheffield were really in people's hands. Because, you know, we didn't always have the computer controlled CNC milling machines and the computer CAD software, this is all relatively recent. And, you know, a lot of the people that are kind of, you know, not, not with us anymore, they had, they actually, they made incredible things just through genuine engineering skill and knowledge and understanding. I mean, this lathe, the computer, wasn't near this lathe, so everything, every part of this lathe, was made from, you know, people's engineering skills and and this so, yeah, it's very important to remember that heritage, and I think it's sort of in the atmosphere of Sheffield, in a way, it's still there, and it doesn't seem to have, it has transformed, in some ways, like you have the Advanced Manufacturing Park in the university, which has a lot of top companies and technology there. You know, Sheffield still is kind of ... a lot of it is getting lost, but then there is something sort of new coming out as well. Yeah.

G: You mentioned that you have a studio in your home, Harcourt Road... Is it because your house in Harcourt Road isn't big enough for the sound recording? Is it soundproof?

D: Yeah, the soundproofing, I have it. It's acoustically treated. It's not so much soundproof, but I just, I just have to be mindful of the sound. But I'm happy to show you if you call around another time. It's actually bigger than this workshop, but it's got just as much stuff.

C: Maybe one, one last question from me related to Harcourt Road and because I think it is amazing for us to discover a lot of amazing people living on Harcourt Road when we visited, like musicians, the DJs. Simon is also a DJ, like a couple of DJs. Actually, people love music, and then, yeah, so the archetype, like so many, is also the people like, what do you feel about the district like that? Maybe a few sentences from you about Harcourt Road...

D: It's a hard question, because I've lived there, lived on the road, all my life. So pretty much all my life. I was in Switzerland for a year, and I did some travel, but basically, I've been there all my life, so I don't have much of a ...

C: You don't find it fascinating?

D: It does seem to be quite a special road. It was interesting. I was traveling in Colombia, and I met some people in the hostel place where people stay, you know, you stay cheaply, traveling people. And, yeah, just talking to some random people. And they knew Harcourt Road, because ...

G: Sheffield Harcourt Road?

D: Yeah, because they were from England. They were traveling but their friend went to university in Sheffield, okay, and there was still, still now, but there used to be a lot of parties on Harcourt Road, so most students who have been to Sheffield for the last 30 years. They know Harcourt Road. They've heard they know the name Harcourt Road because they've been to parties and it's close to the university. So it's like, it's a very well known street by an awful lot of people. And if you imagine there... you know a little bit less so. But there's still a lot of landlord student houses on there. So every year there's pretty, you know, 70 students, 80 students living on Harcourt Road. So, year after year after year. And they, generally, change the students. So it's fresh people every year. And then, so, yeah, a lot of people seem to know about Harcourt road.

G: Thousands of students.

C: Do you still like to stay here, living here?

D: Yeah, for now, it's nice to find some new adventures soon, but, but it's a special place.

C: Thank you. Maybe we will end the recording first. Thank you, David, for talking to us.