

2019 Ben, Gabriel and I sat down, switched on the voice recorder, and opened up a dialogue.

This piece reflects on the conversation that ensued, and covers a vast range of shared experiences, our individual takes on the struggles and benefits of living and continuing to create artwork in London, and the nature of collaboration in contrast with working independently on projects, among other things.

Born in West Wales in 1991, Gabe grew up in Ynyslas, a village near Tre-Taliesin, equidistant between Aberystwyth and Machynlleth. We discussed the similarities in surroundings that all three of us experienced in our childhood - Ben having grown up in Preston, Lancashire, and myself Halifax, West Yorkshire. "*Countryside - for miles.*" It was interesting to talk about each of our experiences of moving to London, the consensus being that it felt like a natural progression in pursuing our artistic interests.

Whilst on the topic of 'growing up', Gabriel talked about previous musical undertakings - "*I also used to be in a shit Ska band...playing the messy Ska covers - songs that just trailed off. We were called "Taliesin Home Crew"... 'cause we were from Taliesin, but also 'cause it's THC mu'f*****! Four white boys, one of us had dreadlocks...we had no idea! We were in Wales and we were doing reggae and ska covers!*" It was said with gentle self-mocking, but it did make me think about the absolute lack of irony in youth. When you're young, you are into whatever you are into, and often the slight unawareness - a natural state for adolescence - makes you look back at how you presented yourself and may often cause embarrassment. Having said that, in this case there was no embarrassment, just comical reflection and giggles for all.

Before moving to London, Gabriel was living in China for just over a year - "*...in a little suit, working in a Beijing software company. I don't know what I was doing!*" It was around this time that Gabe had been listening to a lot of hip hop, he'd just come across Bristol based rapper *Dizraeli* - a favourite of mine too - and this newfound appreciation made him think he could also be a rapper. "*Umm, turned out I can't*", he explained with a chuckle, "*I enjoyed writing lyrics in China, and I would go back and record them over, like, really shitty garageband things that I'd made - that I'd spend hours on. After those hard business days there was nothing better than going home and rapping into my laptop!*" He mentioned that the shock of moving from a small village in Wales to such a highly populated city on the other side of the world caused an unexpected loneliness. Often this is the case - more people equals less human connection. During this time, music and poetry were an escape for Gabe, and having watched Nottingham poet, Ben Norris, perform an emotional poem about his dad, he yearned to get away from the cold office culture to a place where people were "*speaking their hearts out.*" He told Ben Norris that he really liked what he was doing and he'd love to get into it.

Having moved back from China, Gabriel was living back at home with his family for a while: "*not the happiest bunny.*" He was watching spoken word on YouTube (one of my personal favourite past times), writing stuff, and getting into *Dizraeli* and *Adam the Rapper* (Adam Kammerling).

Then when I moved to London, Ben Norris rung me up on a friday night: "you know you said you liked spoken word three years ago?" - "yeah?" - "you're in Goldsmiths right?... well, erm, one of the spoken word team has dropped out, so you can go to uni slam, if you want - it's on Sunday." - "what, this Sunday?" - "yeah, you've just gotta have 3 poems." I was like "nah, I can't do that." and then that little voice inside my head was like "ah, maybe I might be able to actually do it - fuck it!" - and

so I stayed up and wrote a few poems and did the uni slam. It was ridiculous. I did a poem, like: "everyone's speeding up, ram it in your throat, eat the iPhone 5!" it was pretty basic, like: "drink all the oil, rah rah rah." Yeah, I just really shat myself. It was scary. It was a bit of a 'baptism by fire' - but then I was doing spoken word...

The whole of Gabriel's album - *Let me out my room please* (2019) - has been one big collaboration with tons of different people. We talked about the nature of working in partnership, as I have found recently in my own practice that even something as simple as having someone to bounce ideas off often helps me progress through problems. At this point in the conversation I had a little revelation: *"I feel like I find myself not appreciating that I've actually done things recently. I think that's why I enjoy working with other people so much. 'Cause there's so much more of a highlighting of actually what it is that you're doing. And there's also constantly a conversation around it, which is, yeah... often in dire need."* It seems to me, with projects like this, that communication actually improves the process of making, and in turn improves the outcome of the work. Produced as a supplement to the album, a pamphlet was handed out at the listening party. In this, on page 21, Adam Kammerling responds to being asked "what inspires you?":

What inspires me. If I knew that I'd be more productive. Obviously in this case seeing a train full of people blank a vulnerable man inspired me. But ducks inspire me too. And babies. And books. And films. Good films. Collaboration inspires me. I think there's something in collaboration which is at the heart of inspiration. It's people. People inspire me. That's my answer.

On the other hand, there is sometimes a necessity for working independently. This parallel is something I think about daily. I am coming to the end of my degree in Drawing at Camberwell and I have experienced many different ways of working. I have narrowed down what specifically works for me - which isn't a process of being in a studio, alone, working on ideas. I personally flourish in conversation. Crucial to my practice as an artist is: language - the **constant** that guides me and stops me getting too hung up with what's 'in my head'.

Quoted from an article Gabriel wrote for a paper in his hometown, he speaks about the first recording with *Manor the LateKid*:

*In 2017 I recorded the first poet, Darius Mcfarlane (Manor the LateKid). Buzzed on a weird combo of beers and meringue we went upstairs to 'create stuff'. I didn't know what I was doing, I chopped up a recording of a lullaby-style guitar, he read a poem from his iPhone, He freestyled a chorus, harmonised with himself and it ended up sounding like... something. We played it to our friends, pleased for something to come out of our scene that we thought was listenable, **whether you liked poetry or not.***

It seems only natural to me that a project so reliant on human connection would be born out of such a relaxed situation - this was just friends playing around with the tools at hand and speaking words. Darius Mcfarlane, along with most of the other people on the album were connections Gabriel made through both the Roundhouse Poetry Collective, and also Barbican Young Poets. Both of these initiatives bring together young creatives, supporting the growth of their practices as poets and performers.

The album's title was also something that intrigued me - *Let me out my room please* - I was certain there must be some sort of story behind it, and it turns out I was right:

At the time, the door of my room at Albion Way didn't work, so you could only open it from the outside. It was sometime during one of the first few poem recordings for the album, and someone had left the room to go down to the

kitchen, or something. They had shut the door on the way out and I found myself locked in my own room. I had left the recorder going by accident, and it picked up me shouting "Laura....LAURA...! Can you let me out my room please!?" Simple as that...

The pseudonym Gabriel goes under - *Bump Kin* - also interested me. He told me that the reason for this name was mostly because when he'd started producing, he'd wanted a name to stand behind... a glamorised 'rap name'.

Bump (Beat) Kin (Family)

The poets featured on the album include:

Omar Bynon, Leke Oso Alabi, Manor the LateKid, Amina Jama, Cecilia Knapp, Raheela Suleman, Sugar J Poet, Caleb Femi, Adam Kammerling, Laurie Ogden, Zia Ahmed, Kareem 'Angry Baby' Brown, Vanessa Kisuule, Tania Nwachukwu, Zahrah Sheikh, Luke Newman, Sean Mahoney, Michelle O. Tiwo, and Victoria Adukwei Bulley.

Which lead to my next question for Gabe: "there are 19 artists on the album, how? We have no idea how this came to be..." His response was light-hearted but sincere:

It was the ego of a man who wanted to work with more and more people. It was a man who wanted an excuse to legitimately phone his favourite poets and people that may not be someone I could just say "do you wanna come over and chill?" to. I felt like I'd discovered this formula - where like people were saying I was an alright producer... and now I've got to meet all the best people that I love the most.

There's something about saying to someone "I've made a beat for you..." that's more exciting than just saying "do you wanna come chill?"

It seemed the ultimate goal for the project was more in the process of collaboration, than any 'final outcome' - an experimental format of talk and play. Along with Gabe's interaction with the poets - recording the poems and conversation - there was also help from other musicians and creatives to develop the album. Some of the live instrumentation was sampled from recordings by other people - there was live bass & guitar by Terence Calvert and Tom Sansbury, live trumpet by Joe Sansbury, and vocals by Vanisha Mistry, Maeve Tierney and Zani Moleya. The album artwork was devised by Keit Bonnici & Hannah Burrough. I also learned, during this conversation with Gabe that, as well as all of the brilliant musicians that contributed to the album, it was mastered by Chemo - a legendary South London producer who has worked with many UK hip hop artists including Jam Baxter, Jehst, Fliptrix and Lee Scott amongst others.

The mix was something I was interested to learn more about - whoever mixed it managed to get a really beautiful sound, and achieved one cohesive mix all the way through the album. Gabe explains to us that it was mixed by his mate 'Tez' (Terence Calvert):

I mean, the mix is sort of the everything, he's my mate Tez. Who's like my favourite person, he's like a guru. He's on the autistic spectrum, and he's got, like, super hearing. So he can - like - hear the key of cars, and he's just got perfect pitch and he just feels sound. But at the same time - can't really go outside because everything is, like, too high definition.

We went on to talk about our own experiences of neurodiversity, Gabe having been diagnosed as mildly ADD and myself dyslexic. Both of us struggle in a similar way with organisation and structured thought process. I find it incredibly difficult to put all my focus into one thing, as my mind tends to jump between to do lists, emotions and anything in between. Gabriel explained that he also struggles with concentration, and we both agreed that concentration is often vital when it comes to meeting deadlines. I think about this all the time,

as my dyslexia has often created challenges, but recently I have become comfortable with the fact that it's more about finding ways to work around and with your personal internal processing, than trying to suppress a key part of yourself to fit a mould created by a neurotypical-centric society. Often I find this in being around people and conversing about things that are on my mind - gaining fresh perspective, and when it comes to writing: planning and starting with all the source information at my fingertips. Hence, my decision to record the conversation with Gabriel, then transcribe the most important sections. As you will probably know, a high percentage of creative people get diagnosed with some sort of neurodiverse condition, and I think forms of non-linear thought process tend to push creativity in new and unexpected ways. Neurodiversity is not a gift or a curse - despite its typical media representation - it's just a different way of experiencing life.

Coming back to the album, though, one of my favourite songs is Track 7: *What are we?* by Sugar J Poet. The poem works on a central motif - *What are we? A sunrise forbidden from breaking* - and then lists personal and colloquial equivalents of each word in the response. When listening to the poem I pictured it in a certain way but when I found it in the pamphlet which included each poem accompanied by illustrations, I saw its intricate form:

What are we?

a sunrise ***as in waking up/as in a half peeled orange/
as in a candle through rose spectacles/as in an unrehearsed
smile/ as in occupied lips behind drawn curtains/as in OXO pier...***

.....

forbidden ***as in fruit/as in probably wasn't an
apple/as in a grapefruit/as in Born Sinner/as in a Tyndale
bible/as in an unwanted truth/as in a tongue too anxious to...***

... the continuing two stanzas on '**from**' and '**breaking**' follow the same format. But you will have to find that out for yourself by googling 'Bump Kin Bandcamp'.

...where was I?

The written and spoken word - in this recorded poem, Sugar J Poet effortlessly plays around with your preconceptions and assumptions. Long pauses, and a simple workaday checklist with occasional statements of heavily charged emotion. I'm excited by this combination - an album released alongside a publication increases the work's accessibility and deepens the level of engagement, by providing both passive (listening) and active (reading) options. Anything to aid the audience in experiencing the atmosphere is welcomed, in my book.

Gabe explains to me and Ben that one of the first beats that he produced was directly inspired by a *Joe Corfield* tune off his first EP - a producer who's made instrumentals for Dirty Dike. He tells us that it was the first time he felt confident in sending a beat to people - so he sent it to *Caleb Femi* (artist on track 8 - *Bishop and the crow*), "[it] was a long shot and he didn't reply for ages...and then he sent me a message back being like: "mate, the beat is bloody brilliant, I've been listening to it for like 3 days and I've written something to it." " The

fact Caleb wrote something to it before messaging back was encouraging for Gabe, and we talked about the need to trust in people in an industry like this - it may take time but things *will* happen.

Having such a deep relationship with conversation, I was interested in exploring Gabriel's inclusion of conversation snippets in the final outcome. He told me that there is no direct relationship between the poem and the conversation recording in each track, it was more an opportunity for him to get to know the people he was working with - an excuse to have a dialogue around creation. For me, the informality of the situation improves the overall quality of the production because it means that everyone involved is comfortable, at ease, unaffected by pressure or expectations of what should be produced. Gabe explained: "...so much of my job is capturing personality and different people's reactions to things. You just wanna try and capture that moment with the poet where you're listening. There's often a synergy that happens, when the artist is performing something and can feel themselves being heard by human ears. This was actually really hard cause if I was anxious I'd be recognising that I'm in a tiny basement with someone... and actually, that anxiety was stopping that person from completely letting go."

Wrapping up the conversation we briefly talked about 'workload' in this life of living and/or studying in London.

Gabriel: *About the busyness thing, that's a real thing that I'm tackling. Because I'm someone who really wants to be organised and work really hard, but also finds it really hard - I tend to always be behind schedule.*

Ben: *Me too, I give the illusion of having it together.*

Tom: *But that's from your perspective. That will look like something very different from someone stood next to you. This is also something worth considering.*

Gabriel: *I recognise how much I fall into that 'I've got stuff to do' mindset. I need to make a conscious uprising against that. I feel the 'stuff to do' mindset affects my being. If I don't firmly go: "shut the fuck up", I'll be 95 and saying "agh I have to finish these things."*

Through this experience I've found real comfort in discovering an artist who has had success when building something outside the usual structure of creative process. It is reassuring to me to know that he initiated this project through his social connections, and has given me a chance to reflect on where my own trajectory as a multidisciplinary artist could be moving towards. Gabriel is ultimately an extremely humble guy and it's this quality, as well as his ability as a producer, that has allowed him to work with some of his favourite artists and make really exciting work.

Find *Let me out my room please* at:

<https://bump-kin.bandcamp.com/releases>

...and keep supporting young talent!