

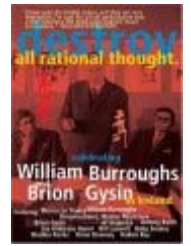


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INTERVIEW

Interview Part Three : *Destroy All Rational Thought`s* Director Joe Ambrose and Frank Rynne



Written by [Paul H](#)
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For the whole picture, read [Part One](#) and [Part Two](#) of the interview, if you haven't done so recently. I guarantee Part Three will make more sense if you do.

I really want to explore another big theme that stands out within this interview and the DVD, that of the presence, music, energy, and the cultural symbolism of The Master Musicians of Joujouka. Theirs is a compelling role, you both said that they were acting as the glue, the oil, that lubricated the *Show* and yet held it together. A unique property for anyone or thing. What was the aura like during their mesmerizing shows?

Frank Rynne: The volume these men achieved playing just acoustic instruments was astounding. The musicians played with furious intent and purpose. They were at once frightening in their intensity and beguiling through their repetitive trance inducing beats. Hamri's presence and his care for the music and its performance was evident in its wild authenticity. There was nothing remotely "Real World" or "World Music" about these performances. It was easy to understand the phrase "one thousand year old rock'n'roll band" which Timothy Leary and Burroughs, in the early 70s, used to describe The Master Musicians of Joujouka. It was evident attending the Dublin shows. However, I endeavored not to be beguiled by the half baked acid casualty baggage that attached itself to the Joujouka story when written up by people like Robert Plamer in the 70s. Unfortunately that brand of American hippy rubbish had and has little relevance to the actual music and lifestyles of the village. Bob Palmer actually believed that the hill Joujouka sits on was a spaceship.



A lot of interest surrounds this music, the culture, and the village...

FR: I have spent years working with and living with the musicians. When you know them and their families, spend a lot of time in their individual homes, and see their children grow up over a period of years it gives you a very different and more accurate knowledge about the music and the villager`s lives. It is easy to understand the culture shock that those hippies experienced. For me Joujouka is not too dissimilar to the area of Co. Clare in Ireland where my grandfather farmed. The music too is often quite similar to real Irish folk music. However, as an acid freak hitting the place in 1971, it may have appeared rather strange especially with mounds of kif clouding perceptions of the "real" reality.

Would you say the cultural history of Joujouka is core to the music as well as the work of Hamri ?

FR: Gysin's paintings especially his Moroccan ones were heavily influenced by Sufi sects. I have recently seen a review of a 1956 art show by Hamri which Gysin organized at the 1001 Nights restaurant. Gysin and Hamri set up 1001 Nights to allow the Master Musicians of Joujouka to be seen by a wider audience. The reviewer noted that all of Mohamed Hamri's works were related to the local magic of his home village of Joujouka/Jajouka, and the titles reflected this. I think it will emerge just how much influence Hamri had on Burroughs and Gysin when writers and researchers start to look in that direction.

The scene on the DVD of The Master Musicians of Joujouka playing with drummer Brian Downey, from Thin Lizzy, and Hamri, cajoling and gently teasing more from



the musicians, is another real highlight for me, what memories do you have of that gig?

FR: The first time I saw Brian Downey he was in the recording studio nailing his drum kit to the floor for the first session of my band The Baby Snakes' first album, *Sweet Hunger*. We finished the drum tracks by nine that night. Brian Downey is possibly the greatest rock drummer still with us and ranks with Charlie Watts and John Bonham easily.

To get Brian and The Master Musicians of Joujouka together was a major musical moment. Brian is as instinctive as they are and he gelled instantly. His love of the blues and jazz informed the cool sound of Thin Lizzy. With Joujouka he provided a masterful and powerful sequence of rhythms that completely fitted their beats. That was a remarkable event and improvisation. Ramuncho Matta, the surrealist painter Roberto Matta's son, provided abstract murals on his guitar and The Baby Snakes guitarist Niall O'Sullivan gave *Boujeloud* a hard rock edge. Nothing interfered with the Joujouka sound, it all just got harder and nastier. Beautiful. The musicians loved it. They have a great fascination with drum kits.

What is the connection to your collaborative cultural vehicle, The Islamic Diggers?

Joe Ambrose: The Diggers started life as a sort of anarchist movement. I edited an underground magazine called The Digger after I left university and that name derived from the Digger proto- anarchists in the English Civil War (as opposed to the contemporaneous Levellers who were proto-socialist), Emmet Grogan's Diggers in San Francisco during the Summer of Love (also anarchist in orientation), and Oscar Wilde's university-days Diggers movement which sought to dig out a road which disappeared into a bog – in other words a road going nowhere.

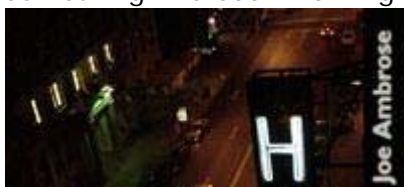
I had these political/aesthetic frames of mind in my head around the time that it became obvious that the leftist Islamic militancy of the Seventies – that of the PLO, Gadaffi, and Saddam – was losing ground to the more Koranic militancy of Osama and his merry men. I related more to the leftist anti-imperialist rebel Seventies stance and thought it'd be great if there was an anarchist Islamic movement, hence the concept of Islamic Diggers.

I've been involved with the politics of the Arab world since I was eighteen. When we started recording music together, we decided to call ourselves that name. The militancy continued hand in hand with the music. The principal manifestations of this activism are the *Cultural Intafadas* against the so-called Islamic heretic, Hakim Bey, and against Bachir Attar`s Jajouka. Hakim Bey is a fake mystic and a fake revolutionary. Bachir Attar leads a commercial psuedo-Joujouka crossover act called The Master Musicians of Jajouka Featuring Bachir Attar. In both of those Cultural Intafadas, we are reasonably successful and they are both ongoing. As far as I'm concerned Islamic Diggers is an ongoing project which can't be discontinued or prevented. We included a new track, El Fna, on the *Destroy* DVD. This was produced by Paul Schroeder, best known for his incredible work on the Stone Roses' second album, *Second Coming*. A tragically underestimated album.

What are you working on now?

FR: Musically I am working on a project with Niall O'Sullivan which brings me back to my roots as a rock'n'roll singer, performer, and songwriter. We started working together on The Baby Snakes, when we were 17 years old, and it feels good to get back to that energy.

JA: I have my next book, *Chelsea Hotel Manhattan*, out in April. I'm very excited about it because this is something I've been working up towards for a few years. I think it's my best book – I have total faith in it. It's also my most unconventional book insofar as I'm normally a pretty conservative prose stylist.



Stylistically, it bears comparison with my first novel, *Serious Time*. I hope *Chelsea*

Hotel Manhattan will make people laugh and cry. I`d like to work on something with [Chuck Prophet](#) again but Chuck has his own book to do and I`m sure it`ll be quite a book because Chuck is a cool customer in every sense of the phrase.

FR: I have known Chuck Prophet and Dan Stuart since the mid 80s and last met up at the *Green On Red* show in Amsterdam last summer which was great. Chuck is one of the greatest guitarists and that is the direction my music is going these days. I suppose we are all people who, both, knew and respected Jeffery Lee Pierce of The Gun Club. Stanley Booth, Tav Falco, the whole Memphis thing around Jim Dickinson and Alex Chilton also unites us in taste and connections.

Those [Green on Red](#) shows were good, I liked the re-scheduled Astoria gig in January last year, the anti-Iraq War slides shown during the encores were a powerful statement.....

JA: I`m also hoping to see a book which I wrote with Frank called *Hashishin* out with *Sidecartel* in the not too distant future. I had a big success in Ireland late last year with a book of Irish history and I`m doing a sort of sequel to that which should be out before the summer.

I have a handful of other projects on the boil but I tend not to talk too much about future plans because future plans are just fantasies until you`ve signed a contract and been given a release date. My main project is my third novel which is a long way from being finished. I`m pretty confident that a couple of filmic projects will come to fruition. I also intend returning to activism in a pretty serious way. I`ve been working in front of a computer too long and I`ve let some people get away with stuff for too long.

FR: I am working on a movie project with a French film director which involves me mixing my training as a historian with writing an epic movie. I have been working with The [Master Musicians of Joujouka](#) for the last year for the first time since Hamri`s death in 2000. Last year I was down there six times and brought the musicians to Porto to play an amazing show at Casa Da Muisica.

The CD *Boujeloud* which I spent four years working on was released at the end of 2006 and is getting a great reception. It contains all the music from the *Boujeloud* ritual, *The Pipes of Pan*. The musicians had a good year in 2006 and they are keen to promote the real Sufi music of Joujouka globally. They were visited by Billy Corgan in March when he was researching the new Smashing Pumpkins album.

I have an interview with Ulick O`Conner and a piece on Herbert Huncke in Joe Ambrose`s forthcoming *Chelsea Hotel Manhattan* book and the book on Hassan I Sabbah, *Hashishin* that myself and Joe wrote will be out this year. I am also currently working on a detailed study of the Irish revolutionary movement the *Irish Republican Brotherhood or Fenian Brotherhood* and their involvement in the Irish Land War 1879-83.

And here endeth the interview. Many issues have been covered and opinions given. I hope this has enabled the context as well as the content of the *Destroy All Rational Thought* DVD to be examined and discussed, as the *Here To Go Show* has proved to be a unique and powerful event.

The controversy surrounding of The Master Musicians of Joujouka /Jajouka continues. Notable is the sporadic popularity of a "Jajouka" band, led by Bachir Attar, whose father was a Master Musician of Joujouka. Attar`s musicians have toured and enlisted the support of the likes of Talvin Singh, whose own music adorns the coffee tables of many around the world.

Of particular interest to me in this is the talismanic significance of the position of a 'celebrity in production and promotion' of Bachir Attar`s Jajouka band. This is of considerable value, indeed heavy with currency, suggesting to the consumer cultural and authentic worthiness. Adding a celebrity producer enhances an aura of authenticity,

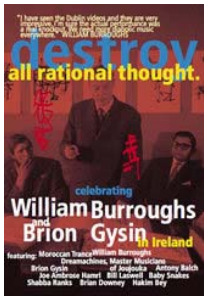
according to Philip Schuyler`s interesting essay on *Moroccan Music and Euro-American Imagination*, to the industry` product`, ie, in this case, to Attar and Singh`s Jajouka CD. It follows that one can be lead to believe without said 'celebrity', the product is therefore 'lacking' (in the consumer`s eyes) in the marketplace, i.e. the World Music Section in the supermarket, or, the full page advert in Mondomix, for example. Schulyer proposes that the addition of 'celebrity' is one of a group of signifier`s within the Music industry (1).

The term, World Music, being a Music industry created niche market. These signifiers are included, contrived, or attached to instill the attributes of authenticity, spirituality and originality in the product, making it an attractive purchase and legitimizing consumption of the product. The extent to which the village and the people of Joujouka fully feel the impact of sales, in the bettering of their lives and in preserving their cultural heritage, is difficult to establish. That is a fascinating piece of work I intend to research in the future.

Many kind thanks to [Joe Ambrose](#) and [Frank Rynne](#).

Note(1). Taken from *Chapter 6, Moroccan Music and Euro-American Imagination* by Philip Schuyler, in *Mass Mediations - New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and Beyond*, edited by Walter Armbrust, University of California Press, 2000

Joe`s book, [Chelsea Hotel Manhattan](#) is scheduled for an April release on [Headpress](#) and the release of *Hashishin*, co written by Joe and Frank, is to be released on [Sidecartel](#) later this year. Frank Rynne is hard at work on a movie project and songwriting for a new album.



Destroy All Rational Thought is available on DVD through all scrupulous online media outlets as well as over the counter at outlets at your discretion.

MVD distribute in the USA. Screenedge elsewhere.

Paul H has been interested in popular culture, music, and all of life's rich themes and contradictions for most of his life. After some time living in his car and friends sofa`s, Paul is now re-housed and re-armed with a sawn-off laptop. He likes nothing better than a cup of tea and a roll up whilst chewing over the proverbial lump of global fat with anyone who will listen. He writes for The Brink, Outsideleft, The Handstand and anywhere else that will have him.

Comments

