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## DESTROY ALL RATIONAL THOUGHT DVD INTERVIEW



Joe Ambrose by Maki Kita

By Paul H

Writer, musician and art-terrorist Joe Ambrose has seen a lot of the counter cultural world in his time. He and fellow musician, cultural historian and writer Frank Rynne organised the Here To Go Show, put on in and around Dublin in the early nineties. The film, Destroy All Rational Thought, which documents many aspects of the Here To Go Show, is a both a celebratory observance and an affirmation of the cultural impact and significance of the work of Brion Gysin and William Burroughs; both individually and collaboratively. Their favoured location, in Tangier, determines the Show's wider subject spectrum. Lassoed under the happenings they, and other Beat writers, nurtured, the Tangier Beat Scene cannot be divorced from the Here To Go Show.



Frank Rynne

It has now been woven into an exceptional DVD, containing performances from the extraordinary to the sublime, including such influential Beat scenesters as William Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Hamri (the Moroccan national painter) and the Master Musicians of Joujouka, amongst many, many others connected to the Gysin/Burroughs's Tangier B Axis. The DVD contains one of the last interviews given by William Burroughs as well as previously unseen footage of him from the 50's and 60's, a slide show of paintings exhibited by Gysin and Burroughs, the music of Bill Laswell, Frank's band the Baby Snakes, Islamic Diggers as well as texts and contributions by key writers Terry Wilson, Ira Cohen and Gysin and Burroughs. Joe and Frank themselves contribute under various guises and ongoing guerilla conditions. Usual rules apply.



L-R Hamri, Trolley Bus, Frank Rynne  
by May Sato

Joe Ambrose and Frank Rynne are men who know these cultural visionaries well, having travelled and lived among the Tangier Beat Scene; the artists, musicians, writers and counter-cultural figures that feature or contribute to mesmerising and fascinating DVD.

Human beings who, as Brion Gysin said, are "here to go", not here to stay.

I caught up with Joe and Frank to talk about the Destroy All Rational Thought DVD, the Here To Go Show and to understand more about the cultural significance of the Tangier scene and its conspirators.

Paul H: This DVD has just been released, could you tell me what spurred you to put this show on in Dublin in '92  
 Frank Rynne: It was possibly fortuitous circumstances and being in the right place at the right time...

PH: What was happening then ?

Joe Ambrose: I was squatting in Brixton, London, from 1986 onwards. I was managing Frank's punk band the Baby Snakes. That time is partially chronicled in my first novel Serious Time. By early '92 the band had some very recent highs and lows. They'd recruited a drummer called Nigel Preston - a founding member of The Cult, played on the big hit Sanctuary - Nigel brought the long-sought oxygen of publicity onto the band. I organised a meeting between the band, myself, and Johnny Cash when it was neither profitable nor fashionable to be associated with him. Even second of that meeting was filmed. Then Nigel died of a drug overdose in the Barrier Block in Brixton and the wave came tumbling down. Same time I met up with Terry Wilson, an English experimental writer and Gysin/Burroughs collaborator. That led directly to the Here to Go Show.

PH: What do you remember from those times Frank ?

FR: From my early teens I'd been a great fan of Burroughs' writing and his prophetic vision of the decay of the West. One of his close friends, Brion Gysin, had been largely ignored since his death in 1986. There were many people who knew Brion who felt unhappy about this; especially his close friends William Burroughs, Felicity Mason and Terry

L-R William Burroughs, Brion Gysin,  
Hamri courtesy Sherifiya Folklore  
Association of The Master Musicians  
of Joujouka

Wilson.

PH: There were other faces from that Beat scene on the Destroy DVD I recognised...

FR: It also attracted the support of other mavericks like Ira Cohen, the poet and photographer and Hamri who at time was Morocco's greatest living painter and who invented the vision of Joujouka music that he and Gysin promoted. In the end the show did help put Gysin back on the map. Other people who had seen the energy show Gysin's work also began promoting his posthumous reputation, which led to three books, other than Man from Nowhere : storming the citadels of Enlightenment with William Burroughs and Brion Gysin , which Joe Ambrose, Terry Wilson and I did for the show. That and related published material from the Here to Go Show are now collectors items and outside the budget of many fans and interested people.

PH: So, what did you feel was the purpose of this release on DVD format ?

JA: The movie was out on VHS globally through Atavistic in the States and through John Bentham's Screenedge everywhere else. Like everybody else who had videos out, suddenly there was DVD and endless possibilities arose

FR: It was also an opportunity to put in some galleries of the work that was shown and to republish tributes from various people that participated in the show.

JA: Doing a Director's Interview gave the chance to put a bit of context onto a rather unconventional film which to be filmed guerilla-style, due to ongoing guerilla conditions.

PH: What was the magic between Burroughs and Gysin that this DVD portrays? What was the significance of their work ?

FR: They toyed with magical ideas such as the "Cut-up Method" applied to word, sound and film. Their concept called "The Third Mind": advocated a method of artistic collaboration which proposed that collective ideas produced new concepts that went beyond the extent of their parts.

JA: Burroughs was a trail blazer who left his mark on so many aspects of 20th century culture. Gysin was a close of his at some stage, when they hung out together in Tangier and at the Beat Hotel in Paris.

FR: There was also their perverse and deep connection with the spiritual and political myths surrounding Hassan Sabbah, the "Old Man of the Mountain" and leader of the Hashishin/Assassins of the 11th century. In Hamri and Joujouka they found the magic of Pan/Boujeloud, the goat man. In Joujouka they found spirituality predating the religions of "the book".

PH: Yet Gysin wasn't able to have the same, I don't know... public persona, cultural clout, that Burroughs had ?

JA: I don't know what the strange fascination that Gysin exerted over Burroughs was but Gysin spent much of his trying to play catch-up on Burroughs' charismatic trailblazing leadership.

PH: Although he wasn't completely without admirers, was he ?

JA: His followers tended to be creepy meatbeaters like Genesis P. Orridge, Coil, and Ramuntcho Matta. Genesis allegedly no longer has any meat to beat. By the end of Gysin's life in the mid-80s the Burroughs/Gysin friendship had clearly waned. Burroughs stuck by the deal, though, and was still doing his best to push Gysin when the Here Go Show came around in '92. I think an unstated aim of the Here To Go Show, as far as I was concerned, and as far as our sponsor Gordon Campbell was concerned, was to do something about Terry's status as a novelist.

FR: Terry was in touch with Gordon Campbell who was interested in financing a Gysin related art show. It began there.

JA: It's no joke trying to make it as an obdurate investigational novelist or even trying to get your work into print when you do the kind of work that Terry does. Terry also gave us access to his remarkable archive and collection Gysin paintings. As did Felicity Mason, a formidable old lady who is somewhat forgotten right now but who deserves to be remembered. She was one tough dame and I liked her a lot. She was terribly ill at the time of the Show but she really got involved and was a great supporter. She said me and Frank were, 'two charming Irish terrorists.'

FR: I think as so much of this work also relates to Morocco it is worth commenting a little on Paul Bowles' role. He did give material for the show and recorded interviews with me and video with Joe Ambrose. Though a great writer Bowles was often a destructive force in the affairs of Moroccan artists. He used his influence to try and steer people away from people like Choukri and Hamri; or others who he had fallen out with. Hamri insisted I visit him in 1994 and I must say he was charming and incredibly intelligent but a real tricky man too. He began meddling in the affairs of Joujouka/Jajouka in the late eighties which was bad for the village. He was a very dishonest artist yet a great artist. He did great damage to many Moroccan people especially male artists who had moved out of his camp. He was also surrounded by a bunch of pretty sick American men who still hang out in Tangier. The exploitation of Moroccan children is something that I really revile. Bowles was a great writer but his malevolence and debauchery informs that art and must not be ignored if his art is to be understood.

PH: Watching and listening to Hamri and The Master Musicians of Joujouka playing on the DVD, they seemed to conjure up real spiritual vibe, you guys were there, what was the atmosphere like ?

JA: The Musicians have conjured up their own spirit since a long time ago, probably since the Forties when Hamri

started knocking them into shape up in the mountains. Then Hamri brought Gysin to hear them and he became a fan. Hamri brought the Musicians with him to Dublin because he thought, correctly, that no Gysin party would've been complete without his favourite music.

FR: The performances were amazing. It was The Master Musicians of Joujouka's ethereal spirit and Hamri's knowledge and vision of the Joujouka/Jajouka music, contextualized through his artistic genius, which so influenced Brion Gysin. Hamri understood the old Morocco and imparted his knowledge to many in small amounts and to a fan in profusion.

PH: Staying with the Moroccan Scene, the sentence "documentation is everything", to the Tangier Beat writers philosophy, keeps echoing in my head, what do you understand by this, their philosophy and the relevance to the Here To Go Show ?

JA: I think up until the Beats came along there was more of a convention wherein, if writers were making work in any way autobiographical, there was a tendency for them to portray themselves as superheroes. This is fine or acceptable because being a creative person is sometimes just a kiss away from being bipolar but the Beats were part of what dismantled that self-glorification.

PH: In what ways did they peel this convention apart?

JA: Kerouac, Burroughs, and Ginsberg made themselves available in a very public way.

FR: Continuous documentation, whether it is released or not is essential as so much is quickly forgotten by people involved in this oeuvre.

JA: Just in the last few months we had this extraordinary spectacle of seeing Saddam being put to death, seeing what he looked like as he dropped from the gallows, seeing him on a gurney with his neck broken, all that shit. Profoundly watchable and horrible. It seems to me to belong within the exact same universe as that which, say, Warhol or Burroughs occupied.

PH: The Here To Go Show clearly has a wider contextual panorama, I think you have talked about some of that in this interview. What further material was produced ?

FR: The Here to Go Show led directly to several projects. The first was The China White aged 23 Show which featured China White works and works by Genesis P. Orridge, Hakim Bey, Bruce Ryder and Joe. In 1994 I travelled Morocco and began recording the Master Musicians of Joujouka. This resulted in three CDs directly, Joujouka Blat Eyes (1995), Sufi (1996) and the most recent release Boujeloud (2006), on the Sub Rosa label.

PH: So the show led to further artistic and cultural projects ? I think that's important, to build on the themes and dynamism of the Show, to keep the impact of the Tangier Beat Scene relevant.

JA: We're planning a reissue of the album we produced 10% File Under Burroughs, for later this year.

FR: It brought together documents related to the show such as Burroughs and Gysin sound Cut-ups, Brion Gysin and Terry Wilson's Here to Go Tapes, as well as new contributions from artists like Herbert Hunke, Paul Bowles, Terry Wilson, Ira Cohen, Scanner, Chuck Prophet, John Cale, Marianne Faithfull, Stanley Booth, Sufi trance from The Gnoua Brotherhood of Marrakesh, whom I had recorded for the Sufi CD, Bomb the Bass, The Master Musicians of Joujouka and Bill Laswell's Divination and Material. It also included further new creative projects like Islamic Diggers which was Joe and myself tackling some of the ideas that arose from the Here to Go Show mixed with Moroccan Trance and our own musical irreverence. The same year we made the film Joujouka with Marek Pytel and Chris Campion about Moroccan trance music that was shot on Super 8 film.

PH: 10% is on the Sub Rosa label, I'm looking forward to getting a copy, I missed out on its earlier release....

FR: While Burroughs was alive he endorsed the work done by myself and Joe Ambrose and Terry Wilson. He made special reference to the performances of the Master Musicians of Joujouka in his endorsement of Destroy all Rational Thought;

"The actual performances must have been a real knockout. We need more diabolic music everywhere".

I think William S. Burroughs sums it up right there!

And I think here seems a good place to pause and let the many issues Joe and Frank have covered breathe.

Part Two of my Destroy All Rational Thought interview's will follow. Part Two contains more thought provoking cultural observations and sharp eyed interrogation of the kind that Joe and Frank have already chewed over and spat out in this interview. You will also hear Joe and Frank talking about current work and future plans. These include the release of Joe's book, Chelsea Hotel Manhattan - scheduled for April and the release of Hashishin, co-written by Joe and Frank. Frank Rynne is hard at work on a movie project and songwriting for a new album. The Master Musicians of Joujouka are managed by Frank Rynne.

Thanks [Joe Ambrose](#) and [Frank Rynne](#)

Destroy All Rational Thought is available on DVD through all scrupulous online media outlets, including The Master Musicians of Joujouka [website](#), and Joe's site, as well as over the counter at outlets at your discretion. MVD distribute in the USA. Screenedge elsewhere.

Paul H. March 2007  
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Thanks to Thierry Poiraud for the photo of Frank Rynne and to Joe Ambrose for the others.

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