**INTERVIEW: FIRE & DUST MEETS DWANE READS**

**THE ANNOYING MEGAPHONE PIGEON BY DWANE READS**

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Based in Derby, Dwane Reads has been kicking around in different artistic guises since 1985. He is a member of the DIY Poets in Nottingham, and was the 2017 winner of the Derby Poetry Festival competition. Dwane is educated in Fine Art, has trained as a teacher, and plans to keep writing and performing his work. He has published several books, including 'The Annoying Megaphone Pigeon' (2013) and 'Slogans Soundbites & Poetry' (2017).

In June 2018, Dwane headlined at Fire & Dust, HCE’s regular poetry night. We caught up with him after the gig, to find out more…

**When did you first start writing and performing poetry?** Writing has always been in my psyche. I started writing at Secondary school. Late seventy’s during lessons where the teacher had no control of the class, you could pretty much do as you wanted. (sad but a reality). 1985/6 Performing at odd venues: (A Motor macanics garage inside a railway arch, various unpopular Old Men’s pubs, gigs in Laundrettes, Abandoned shops as a Pop-up poet & house parties). A few venues in the centre of town (Danny’s Bar & Jelly Rolls) took a chance on poetry events with mime artist, performance art, just to get punters in. When some Local bands where playing, I would organise the running order as compare and do a few poems in between.

Community Arts contacted The National Poetry Secretariat who would allow grants for poets to get paid for performing, transport etc. Poets in the pub events would be one offs (so the back rooms of venues would be packed) These events would bring established out of town poetry acts. Attila the Stockbroker, Martin Wiley etc.

**How would you describe your style, i.e. what can audiences expect if they come to see a Dwane Reads live performance?** An Audience will hopefully will see My passion for spoken word. I write about people, things we experience, some odd observational stuff; I believe, I have a social conscience with twist of the surreal. It’s no good trying to write about stuff you know nothing about. Poetry can deliver a message, and for me connects with people, but it needs to be honest.

**What would you say are the recurring themes in your poetry?** There has always been a tilt towards the ordinary, the everyday observation, whilst challenging people to think outside the box, with a take on social injustice. It is also good to have a twist of nonsense to lighten the mood. A strong cross section of different themes delivered not just to please an audience in performing. But, to try and engage those who read my poetry with something thought provoking and of interest.

**Has your writing changed much between your first book, *For One Lost Poet,* and upcoming collaboration *The Reprobate Poets*?** I Hope so, early on I would get on stage and rant from the notebook. Very quick, without stopping for introductions as poets would be subjected to unmerciful heckling. Once I had it written down, that could be it. With little or no edits. The subject matter for poems from an assortment of ideas, crap relationships, football teams, with some attempts at being funny. This would be fine for the time. I think experience of life and what it throws at you have developed me as a writer and performer. I changed my mind about the Reprobate project. I decided it wasn’t for me. I’d rather not than rush to find an anthology with these new poems. I will approach some Publishers, develop further some ideas and release a new book of my own poetry in the future.

**How often do you create a poem, and do you have a writing routine?** I write on the go. I carry a red Silvine notebook which has become a comfort blanket over the years. Sometimes poems just happen, in the moment and your trying to remember a line or franticly scribbling. I try to discipline my writing, especially the re editing routine to sitting at the laptop. working on a theme or intended idea. I now keep all re edit drafts. To allow me to monitor how my writing is developing.

**Some of your poetry puts us in mind of punk lyrics – direct and rousing, with no time for bullshit. Who/what are the biggest influences on your work?** Firstly, when I was younger I noticed market traders. Born performers, who just knew how to work the crowd and have them wanting in on what they had for sale. Horse racing commentary, no time for pausing in the final straight. The Influence of Punk with a platform from community Arts gave myself and others the Belief in yourself, to attempt things and learn. Likeminded people encouraged Painting, Printing, Photography plus Writing. Allowing you to share your work, display it on the walls and perform. Maybe totally rubbish now, defiantly binned. However, in developing these intended ideas, it allowed you to grow in confidence.

From this I went onto Art college. Influences: Mark E Smith (The Fall), John Cooper Clarke, Frank Sidebottom, Ivor Cutler, Pip Southwell (Derby poet), Seema Gill. DIY Poets based in Nottingham.

**Do you read/listen to much contemporary poetry? Which poets have recently made an impression on you?**

Its’ always great to discover a fresh voice and read new work. There is so much out there. Joe Hakim, Mike Watts, Matt McAteer, Miggy Angel, Matt Nicholson, Ifika Youika, Ash Dickinson, Antony Owen, Sophie Sparham, Helen Mort, Emma Purshouse, Steve Pottinger, Chris McLoughlin. Spoken Worlds Poets in Burton run by Gary Carr. Plus, everyone at Nottingham’s DIY poets.

**Any good anecdotes from when you used to tour and gig with bands, and renowned poets like Henry Normal and John Cooper Clarke?**

Approx. 85/6. I did a gig with Henry Normal in Derby at what was called the Arch. The venue was in fact a Car maintenance garage during the day, that doubled as a band rehearsal place and gig venue for those in the know, after hours. Illegal music and poetry gigs in one of the railway arches off Derby’s Famous Friargate bridge.

Discharge gig during the mid-eighties, Mardi Gras. Nottingham. Chairs been thrown due to the band changing musical direction, informing the crowd they wouldn’t play Decontrol. Shall we put the poet back on? No way!

1990 States of unrest (political band from Huddersfield/Hull). Summer Tour. (North East, Yorkshire, Midlands, London). I was the support for the tour. We had little money and had to sleep in a mini bus. We had some gigs where Local bands had not put up flyers. Amps or guitars not working. We therefore some nights lacked an audience. We Busked during the afternoon in Scarborough for fish and chips. Some of the band couldn’t eat the chips as they are cooked in lard.

Approx. 2017. Dwane Reads and Eagle spits\* on the road to promote the album Empires fall. Booked to perform at the Traitors Gate in Greys in Essex. Setting up a merch stall, pre-performance people came up and chatted to us both with interest. Some Punks we knew popped in to show support, Landlady (her brother is a punk comic) offering us complementary drinks. So, I go on, a few poems in “what this then? What’s that about?” From a few in the audience. Five, six poems in the guy who put us on gestures to me. I thank the audience, come off stage. On goes Eagle, which goes from bad to worst. Three poems in, he is getting Heckled. By now the promoter is Kaking himself. Rather than stop. Eagle gives them a new poem about Theresa May. “That’s our Theresa, he’s Slagging Mrs May.” Are we in a Conservative Club? A small crowd of young men and women, loaded on beer, testosterone and arms like Popeye observe. I’ve put our Merch stall in the suitcase. I Hurriedly guide Eagle by the arm off stage avoiding the microphone leads, White stick in his hand. I requested “Door please,” managing to get outside the pub I guide him across the road. “hundred yards max,” Just keep walking till I tell you. We jump in the car. I notice a small crowd now outside the pub. We are on the road and away. Very Lucky to escape a hiding. (Eagle spits is a partially sighted Punk Poet) \*

**Which regular poetry events in Derby do you recommend for**

**a) nervous newbies?** Twisted tongues. Arranged by Dan Webber at the Bell hotel on Sadlergate. Poetry events at the Queens Head in Belper. A short distance outside of Derby. A great Poetry supporting venue. Gigs are held upstairs with a stage, lights and a pa. Well worth a visit. **b) open mic veterans?** Word wise. (there are workshops before some events). A Must visit event. Run by Jamie Thrasivoulou. Held at the Brunswick Tavern on Railway Terrace.

**We enjoyed your Fire & Dust set. It’s clear from how you express yourself that you’re genuinely passionate about each poem’s subject. Any tips for beginners on how to be more confident and engaging at gigs?** Try not to shake with your hand-written paper or phone in hand. Look around, read your poem and enjoy reading it. You might find someone in the audience who likes what your reading, focus on them. As you gain confidence, look for others. Remember, your performance will be over in No time. So, try to relax, if you need to hold the mic and stand do so. If it doesn’t work for any reason try Not to get flustered. Someone will readjust the mic stand for you. Most importantly, you have written this, you have something to say. Get on with it and enjoy it no matter how many are there be it 1 or 100 in attendance. If at the end of an evening and you liked someone’s work please let them know. Ask if they have a book or more info about themselves.

**Tell us more about the Alzheimer’s Society fundraising that you do?**

My Ma passed away 2016. She had Dementia for six years. She loved the Idea of getting on with the creative process, her passion was Textiles and dressmaking.

I produced the Slogans book for the Melbourne festival as a limited edition. All proceeds of the Sales have been passed onto the Alzheimer’s Society. A small way to help those with the illness.

**What publications/projects/performances have you got coming up next?**

Currently, I Hope to get some work published in some lit mags. Look back through some older ideas and rework them. Try out some workshops, to exercise the writing muscle, this might spring the odd surprise. Also; I will be seeking out various places to perform. I visit Eire in June with gigs in Dublin and I hope Cork. Mid-August I Travel with The DIY poets to Edinburgh.

**Opportunity to plug some website/social media links here:**

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