

All these dreams Changing track

LAMMO



▼ Top Left: John at the Neve desk in Gracieland Studios; Top right: The string section of the BBC Philharmonic; Bottom left: Jim in reflective mood writing a new song; Bottom middle: Jim at the Dubai Gold Cup 2011; Bottom right: Jim laying down the vocal tracks



Do not ever doubt the fact that the GTC harbours a multitude of varied and sometimes quite surprising unsung talents! Chat on the back of a crew bus and you never know what you will discover. This is the story of how one such conversation led to the creation and recent release of *All These Dreams*, an eleven-track album written and performed by cameraman Jim Cemlyn-Jones. After years as an unpublished singer/songwriter, this year Jim has finally realised his dream of releasing an album, and who better to produce it than fellow GTC member John Brierley, cameraman and – wait for it – founder of the legendary Cargo Studios, launchpad for Joy Division, The Fall and Echo and the Bunnymen to name but a few.

Converging paths

Lighting cameraman and record producer, John Brierley

John's job as a cameraman and his sound recording career both started at around the same time. In the sixth form he was already recording bands as a hobby in a homemade studio. One of the bands, called Tractor, was subsequently signed up to John Peel's 'Dandelion' label where they became the label's best-selling artists.

After leaving school John joined the BBC on the T029 course at Evesham before being sent to Manchester to start his camera career on *Look North*, *Question of Sport* and *It's a Knockout*.

A move to YTV followed, where he learnt how to shoot drama on peds – a skill that still comes in handy today as John still does stints on *Emmerdale*. Ped operators seem to be a dying breed!

After YTV he moved to Granada where LE shows like *Shang-a-lang* with the Bay City Rollers, *Wheel Tappers and Shunters Club* and the *Marc Bolan Show* were being produced. While at Granada, John got back into recording bands, and built the only mobile recording truck outside London. Granada would hire it to record location music shows like *So It Goes*. Most of Granada's sound guys were location men and only used to a 416, SQN and Nagra; suddenly they were presented with a 24-channel mixing desk with full EQ, something they were completely unfamiliar with. Unofficially, they would ask John to do the mix and he ended up recording bands such as Iggy Pop, Blondie, Elvis Costello, and the Buzzcocks.

After four years, he sold the mobile truck, left Granada and built a 16-track recording studio in Rochdale – the now legendary and blue-plaquet Cargo Studios. It was here that he engineered and produced bands like Joy Division, OMD, The Fall, Echo and

the Bunnymen and hundreds more, all listed on the excellent website about the studio at www.cargostudios.co.uk. The studio opened in 1977 and closed in 1984, the year John went freelance as a cameraman.

It was in 1990 that John first met Jim Cemlyn-Jones while working on *The Hit Man & Her* with Michaela Strachan and Pete Waterman that John first met Jim – little did they know then that they would work together in a musical capacity many years later!

Cameraman and singer/songwriter, Jim Cemlyn-Jones

My career in television started out on the TV Programme Operations Course at Ravensbourne (1985–87). As part of the course, the college provided 'work experience' for me at HTV Bristol, following which I was offered a trainee camera job in the summer of 1987.

It was a great place to start, with the work varied and interesting. I recall Spike Milligan being the funniest and most memorable person I filmed during this time. All the while I was playing in bands, writing songs. I would regularly finish a gig in London, drive back through the night and then hop on the back of the Heron for a day on *Rolf's Cartoon Club*.

At this time, I was also a regular on the streets of Bath, Bristol and Paris – busking in a 4-piece ensemble The Jelly Babies. I have a particularly fond memory of being 'moved on' by the gendarmes outside the Pompidou Centre for being too loud!

In 1991 I left HTV to go freelance, giving me time to release a single 'Love House' with the band Nautical William. This was played 10 times on Radio 1, and the video was shown on MTV – but we didn't have an album to back up this success and the band split up.

Meanwhile, life as a freelance cameraman was eventful. On one



▲ John and Jim mixing in Lisa Stansfield's Gracieland Studios

fateful occasion, I nearly lost a Test Match for England in Sri Lanka when I managed to miss Mike Atherton catching the ball. There was an element of doubt, the decision was referred to the third umpire and the batsman was given 'not out' as my camera angle wasn't there. Thankfully, England went on to win the Test despite my intervention.

On another unfortunate sporting occasion, I became the first non-professional snooker player to break the balls off at a World Championship. If you have ever been to The Crucible, you will know that it is a pretty 'intimate' venue and doing the handheld player 'walk ons' there is quite a challenge. As I tracked back with Steven Maguire, my cable got

during a PSC shoot at Air Studios (a case of one gel too many on the lights as I was setting up to film John Cale of Velvet Underground fame). The building was evacuated and out of another part of it emerged Chris Martin and the rest of Coldplay – a chance too good to miss. I couldn't resist asking Chris Martin to teach me to play 'Yellow' – which he duly did... what a top bloke!

My most recent freelance adventure was at a poker tournament in Berlin; six masked men carrying guns and machetes held up the casino where we were working. Mass panic broke out as tables full of poker chips were overturned and everyone ran for the exits. The TV scenery fell over and I hid underneath a large curtain. One

From dreams to reality
So, I had already known John for 20 years when we finally discovered that we had two things in common: firstly, we had both had outrageous haircuts in the 1980s (see pictures opposite) but more importantly, we both shared a complete love of music – an illogical passion that you can do absolutely nothing about!

Now, the hanging around in television can wear you down so, a few years earlier, I had made a point of using the downtime to write songs. Sometimes it can look strange – a lonely figure in the back of a car, strumming, singing and frantically scribbling, but it worked and I had accumulated enough songs for an album.

both worked in the music industry, but nevertheless it was on this bus that we hatched the plan to record the album, determined to do the project for the right reasons and to enjoy ourselves.

I gave John a copy of my demo just before he left for Nigeria on another football job. Confined to his hotel room for long periods of time for security reasons, John spent much of the three weeks working on the songs and he arrived back with loads of ideas on the arrangements.

The services of engineer and string arranger Steve Boyce-Buckley were booked, and musicians Jim Milne (lead guitar) and Corin Dingley (percussion) assembled at the Gracieland Studios in Rochdale, owned by Lisa Stansfield.



▲ Jim on stage with Steve Mitchell (steadicam) filming the video for All These Dreams

As I told John about this, his eyes lit up; clearly there was a side to him that I had never been aware of before. In this meeting of minds I had found a producer and John had found an artist to record.

Clearly, things had moved on both technically and musically since we

As neither myself nor John had been near a recording studio for 20 years we were both quite apprehensive, but what an experience! The studio had the best of both worlds – from analogue to digital – with the original Neve desk giving a warmth to the overall sound while Pro tools offered



▲ Top left: Jim at the Marquee Club in London 1993; Top right: Cargo Studios 1980 where John Brierley produced and engineered bands like Joy Division, OMD and the Fall; Bottom left: John at the desk in Cargo Studios 1982; Bottom right: Jim at Thekla in Bristol 1992

the latest digital control.

John had meticulously worked out a plan for each song. Zithers to sitars were marked on his masterplan and he ticked these off as each instrument was recorded in turn. Meanwhile, helpings of the classic Rochdale Co-op ginger cake soothed nerves and speeded progress.

With drums, bass and a guide vocal laid down, the songs started to come together. Then it was time for the strings. Steve Boyce-Buckley had recruited four members of the BBC Manchester Philharmonic Orchestra to play his string arrangements. Now, I've been touched by music before but, I have to say, sitting at the back of the control room as the quartet played my songs... it was something else! This had started as a strum on a guitar and a scrawled lyric penned in the back of a car – now this, transformed by the BBC Philharmonic. It was too much for me; dark glasses were definitely required!

On the bus in Switzerland, I had asked John why he had closed down the studio. He told me that years of late night indie bands had taken their toll and he had been afraid that his hearing was beginning to go. This was definitely not the case in my experience though.

A brass section from the West End was ticked off on John's chart, followed by backing singers including John's niece Izzy, a definite star of the future. Then, just the final vocal performance left. Hopefully the energy and enjoyment was being captured.

The songs themselves, because they were written in car parks and

hotel rooms all over the world (scribbled lyrics on hotel stationery give testament to this), are quite varied which hopefully gives All These Dreams the interest of diversity.

'Love the Feeling', for instance, began at a campsite in Nottingham and finished on a nudist beach in Barcelona! 'Nevada Sky' was penned during a meteor storm in the middle of the Nevada desert when I awoke at 3am wondering why my heart was racing while a living organic sky played out its show. 'Skateboard Park', captures an image of a couple in full ballroom dancing attire practising in a park in Guangzhou, China – a particularly unusual sight in a country where self-expression is rare.

Which brings me to 'Blind Leading the Blind' – "... being led by a blind bloke, he don't know where he go". Sound familiar? Years of standing behind a camera listening to instruction helped write this one – an anthem for cameramen! Of course, I can't mention any names... but a big thank you for the inspiration over the years!

The songs are varied, but the glue that binds them all together is John's expert production.

With the album mixed and mastered, the next step was a video for the title track 'All These Dreams'. At this point I was staggered by the generosity of the 'Cameraman's Union' stepping in to help. Steve Mitchell (steadicam), Neil Lammond (Jimmy jib), James Knight and Damian Watson all kindly gave up their time for free. We hired a theatre in Todmorden, West Yorkshire, and John produced

and directed, while I went to the other side of the camera, make-up duly applied. A series of tracking steadicam and sweeping jib moves of the guitar and piano followed, and the day ended with a walking shot outside the theatre's loading door.

For 'Blind Leading the Blind' we filled my local pub with assembled talent, opened a tab behind the bar and John choreographed a one-take shot, expertly filmed by Steve Rouse. John once again produced and directed and directed and also assumed the mantle of 'Head of Bubble Machines' (see video for an explanation!) By Take 6, the beer and pub were both in full flow and thanks to a great performance from the brass section (TV's finest, Mark McCafferty, Lammo and Vince Strawson, ably

assisted by Stu 'Sticks' Stidwill) it was in the can; only the bar bill needed attention! Both videos can be viewed on YouTube and at www.cemlynjones.com, a website created for me by fellow cameraman Graeme Bickerdike.

We are now in the process of promoting the album. A launch gig in May received a 9/10 review from the Bristol Evening Post and interviews on Radios Bristol, Lincoln and Humberside have helped to push its profile. There are plans to release 'Love the Feeling' as a single, with further live dates to follow.

I have been genuinely staggered by the help I have received throughout the process of transforming 'All These Dreams' into a reality. Happy listening!

One of the tracks 'Blind leading the blind' is an anthem for cameramen

stuck and dragged across the top of the table, scattering the balls. To this day, Willie Thorne says it is "one of the best break-offs" he has seen at The Crucible!

A fond memory, and quite relevant to this article, occurred when I accidentally set the fire alarms off

million in euros was stolen but later recovered.

During this period, I had occasionally worked with John, before eventually, in 2008, we found ourselves sitting on that bus in Basel, Switzerland during the European Football Championships.

Fact File

'All These Dreams' is released on Kargo Records, available on CD or to download from iTunes, Amazon and Play.com.

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