

Drowned Out by Acid House and more  
by Stuart McKenzie

After studying at Saint Martins, Stuart McKenzie was in Paris working as an assistant on a Vivienne Westwood show when he was encouraged to get his stories on paper by a colleague. After a succession of musical projects, and cemented by a collaboration with seminal post-punk band the Raincoats, McKenzie began to unleash his spoken word in front of audiences. Part poet and part raconteur, McKenzie's work has been published in Magma, Envoi, Southbank Poetry and The Delinquent amongst others. He lives and works in London, and is currently collaborating with James Jeanette on a musical project entitled Wild Daughter. Here, he collects some of his best new poems for AnOther.

Found on the Internet  
(A Photo of Myself and David Sylvian)

A bit Warhol / Debbie Harry his hair.  
You know the blonde at the front,  
brown at the back, coral tones illuminating  
the geometry of his twenty-something face –  
a faint whiff of Quentin Crisp. And there was me,  
my 15-year-old self: tight mouthed, dimpled  
chin – air filling my cheeks up in awe.  
We'd marched into the Piccadilly Hotel  
looking slightly dishevelled, record covers  
under arm – slept in the doorway  
the previous night of the wrong hotel,  
grown ups treading over us to get to their rooms.  
Stumbled across the "dirty white van"  
we'd wrote our names on the night before –  
now the days spells itself out to us  
through the artificial light of the morning –  
THIS IS GLAMOUR!

Nature Trip

Let's start with a canal stripped of its barges,  
a disused lock where I lost a thumb nail -  
result of a carefully guided missile thrown  
from the "Iron Dingers" railway bridge .  
Industrial estates, pylons in fields with horses,  
cows, run its length and sewage pipes give up  
their secrets of coloured condoms, paper towels.  
Looking up towards Tandle Hill, its monument  
fenced off, I can see what's left of Tonge Farm –  
its barns we visited on nature trips, a hybrid  
smell of straw, newly hatched chicks – the warmth  
of a lightbulb used as incubator against my cheek  
and as a lorry whizzes passed me on Whitechapel  
High Street, packed with bales of hay – I'm gone.

Heatwave

It seemed a long way from the top of Boarshaw Road  
(up near the canal) to where you lived back then on  
Addison Drive, a bit of a trek in bare feet when the weather's  
pushing 80, hottest we'd had since God knows when and  
you're dodging chewing gum, glistening on the bubbling  
tarmac, avoiding the cool moss in the cracks of the pavement.  
Yes and you were teary-eyed too, head down watching your  
thighs wobble in your too tight floral trunks, every step you  
made on the soft pitch of the steaming road seemed to brand  
your name into the soles of your feet and the misery you  
carried pressed hard like the decorative buckle digging into  
your waist. Was it all of your friends or a few, who stood there  
fully clothed, pointing and laughing – the quickest turn you  
ever made, to make your getaway?

Cicero Street

We will live in this house forever.  
Each Christmas, large plastic Santa shaped sacks  
will be hung from the mantelpiece – below which  
I'd roll newspaper, folded into large knots  
and throw onto the fire to get it started.  
My mother will always scrub the front door step,  
the marching sound of which, alerts me to the fact  
she cleans exactly the same spot  
where the dip in the step appears deepest.  
There will always be an outside toilet,  
a coal cellar and a back gate  
that leads via a cobbled entry to the neighbours,  
where I'd be caught on the roof of their shed.  
I will always share a room with my brother,  
have a world map pinned to the wall  
of all the places I'd wish to conquer,  
my fur lined boots beside my bed  
– should I decide not to go barefoot.

Travel Games

This week I've played solitaire  
with my multiple selves,  
removing each character  
one by one, hoping they'd slip  
down the back of the sofa

to share a space with the crumbs,  
loose change and redundant keys.  
Or maybe they'd be sucked

Droom in Het Wood (Dream in the Forest) Photographs by Ato Kando Text by Thomas Kandaé  
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The Children of Washington Heights by Yamamura Gasho

up by the vacuum to reside  
(for however long it takes

to empty the bag) with lengths  
of stray hair, particles of skin  
from my daily scratch  
when I first get up.  
Lodged in the tread of a shoe

perhaps they'll see the world,  
make it past the crazy paving  
and crumbling asphalt path –  
where the weeds doing their best,  
come up recklessly – year after year.

#### Her Extraterrestrial Son Lands

I'd shed my skin  
as I painted the house  
with my slug like trail.  
Reaching the top  
of the dorma window,  
standing, basking  
in the moon's glow,  
I owned this place:  
an open room  
hovering  
with glass ceiling,  
me, skinny dipping  
in the midnight's silence,  
patterned nets  
blowing in the breeze –  
this my secret hideaway.  
Mum's house  
was a spaceship  
and I, a chameleon-like alien  
that lived there.

#### Birch Services M62

Midday weekends I was delivered  
to my fate: a fine striped lime green  
apron, polyester shirt, navy trousers,  
too short in the leg, via a mini bus

that went all round the houses,  
arriving to a roll call of cakes  
and salads, pot wash and tea point –  
told to refuse the old dears

who came back to give their bags  
another soaking. Health and safety  
had my hair tied up in a pony

while the striking miners

tried to trip us as we cleared  
away trays and Boy George  
sang "War war is stupid" on tv  
as I fantasised bout painting my lips red.

#### Drowned Out by Acid House

The 80s painted us black  
and you're still wearing it.  
In some bijou backstreet boutique  
You ask does the top button fastened  
make me look a little  
Joy Division ?

Enter Comme des Garçons  
with their post Hiroshima chic –  
we were all angles back then.  
Our nylonness hung from us  
like spent umbrellas caught  
in the big storm of 1987.

The cigarette burns we endured  
to our viscose vêtements –  
a kind of frazzled broderie anglaise  
caused by fag ends of the niteclub effete elite.  
We dressed like the evenings  
we try to get through now,

that somehow rendered us  
outside of it all:  
block printed figures  
against an apocalyptic skyline –  
before we gave in to high top trainers,  
and a sea of mauve tie-dye.

#### Delinquent

You were never quiet,  
neither one to tow the line.  
Not quite a queen –  
quiff like a sand dune,  
your shadow by the dent  
of a parked car in a tree-lined  
street: duet with a fist – a tune  
to drop out to – leather clad teen:  
do anything for a few quid.

Found on the Internet (A Photo of Myself and David Sylvian)  
*and Heatwave first published in Domestic Cherry; Nature  
Trip, Travel Games and Birch Services M62 first published  
in Envoi*