



Laurie Cansfield interviews Adam Maxwell, and vice versa:

After a happy journey through the 80's, admiring the big kids' ghetto blasters and becoming fairly adept at entry-level body popping, Mr. Laurie Cansfield and Mr. Adam Maxwell met, somewhere and somehow, they can't really remember, and became very good friends. Together they survived a decade of Happy Hardcore crazed Sunderland during the 90's by sitting in a small room listening to Pink Floyd whether Laurie really liked it or not, or venturing out to the local disco, Pzazz, on a Thursday night where there'd be one or two girls without football tops and fake tans if we were lucky.

Off they went to university and then the real world, and to this day our twice annual trips around the streets of the old town are full of the whacky gettings-up-to that they always were. Although now we mostly talk about them rather than do them; such is life. These days Laurie and Adam are all grown up, and the talk of becoming a writer (Maxwell) and running a magazine (Cansfield) has become reality. We're not Martin Amis and Jefferson Hack yet, but pretty pleased with what we've achieved so far.

Tonto Press have just published a collection of Adam's short stories, entitled Dial M for Monkey, so Laurie thought "Let's interview Adam." Then Laurie asked Adam and Adam said "Let's interview each other." So that's what this is, two good friends talking about work, life, love and literature...

L: Medium Magazine is about to become an uncle! Will you be reading the crazy stories you write to Maxwell junior at bed time, or will that have to wait until he/she's all grown up, after a sensible childhood?

A: I have a sneaking suspicion that Maxwell Jr will be enough of a handful without creating the youngest potty-mouth in history. I fear there may be a few too many of those adult words and some 'scenes of mild peril' for the little ones out there. I have been preparing myself by reading a lot of Spike Milligan's childrens' stories to ward off a sensible childhood and I think I may be forced to do some child friendly writing not too far down the line. I was inspired by Spike's 'Help I'm a Prisoner in a Toothpaste Factory'. It's a universal theme I think we can all relate to on some level.

And anyway a sensible childhood may lead on too eccentricities too, I seem to recall that someone not a million miles away having a penchant for elaborately painted nails. Is that not so Cansfield??

L: I knew this was a bad idea! Yeah so what, i used to paint my nails, a lot of our mates were goths and they made me do it...



Actually i never felt so free as i did back in further education college, such a great time. That was a time for making made all sorts of mistakes (in fashion, relationships, public behaviour and all sorts of things) without feeling the need to learn from it or apologise for it. It was brilliant fun.

Anyway, good to hear that you'll be exposing the young 'un to creative work and even steering your own output towards that sort of writing. Have you had any ideas for themes or characters at this stage?

A: OK - I promise not to delve any deeper (and anyway I dabbled myself - the only reason I stopped was that I couldn't paint the nails on my right hand with my left hand so go figure...).

The themes and characters I tend to be most interested in tend to be inspired by things I see in the media or read about in good old fashioned books. If something strikes me as funny or interesting I just file it away in the back of my mind then try to develop it from there. I am currently working on a novel but I'm keeping my cards close to my chest on that one... suffice to say it is a sort of Terry Gilliam meets The Mighty Boosh. In a tent. Should really try to come up with more literary comparisons but I think I've flattered myself enough already.

It is an interesting question to any artist - in terms of the themes in your own work (including themes for each magazine) where do you tend to find them?

L: For the magazine i just flick through a dictionary and choose a few words. If they have interesting connotations or even if they just look or sound good as words they they end up becoming the theme of the magazine. In the second year of MM (which has just begun) there aren't specific themes anymore, it's an open call for entries so anyone can send work about whatever they like. That's one of the great things about the magazine as a medium (especially web mags), that you can try new things without worrying about blowing a huge budget if it all goes wrong. A great medium to experiment with as a designer, editor, art director, contributor or anything else.

As for my own work, half naked women are a favourite theme of mine in photography, but at the moment i'm also doing some writing. It looks like it's going to end up too long to be a short story and too short to be a novel (a 'medium-sized' story i'm calling it), so perhaps not very marketable but that's not the aim really. It's just a creative release that's giving me more enjoyment at the moment than taking photos or drawing. It's about how technology can sustain or replace relationships during periods of transition, inspired by moving to Barcelona recently. It's a comedy!



It what ways did setting up your web site www.jigsawlounge.com help you as a creative person, both artistically and professionally?

A: For a long time Jigsaw Lounge has been something that has been kept alive by Neil, who (extremely successfully) does the film section of the site. Initially the idea was always that there would be different sections for different genres; the film reviews, fiction and poetry and any other ideas that we wanted to explore creating new 'lounges' as we went along. It turned out that Neil was the only one who had the drive to achieve his goals in terms of Jigsaw Lounge until eventually I got my arse in gear and declared that the Fiction lounge would not publish anyone's work. Including my own. That it would purely exist as a repository for stories I had written and had subsequently been published elsewhere.

Basically what this meant was that it was my own website but instead of it being a vanity project it actually served the purpose of showing that I was a writer who was capable of being published by other people and not just by himself. The amazing thing was that for the next 3 years I managed to get every story I wrote published either in print or online and so content flowed quite well. Turns out that quite a few people actually think I am not bas as a writer and hence the collection shortly to be published. Job's a gud 'un.

I did get quite a few emails along the way as hits increased asking me to publish work but I think you at some point you have to make the decision whether to be an editor or a writer and I decided to be a writer. I did try to point anyone who enquired in the right direction as far as possible but my own success is relatively limited so my advice is probably offered on the same level. Having said that at least one person who emailed me has been published in (at the last count) 3 of the same publications as myself.

I suppose it's all about audience.... do you have difficulty finding an audience for your work - what do you do in terms of targetting?

L: It's been quite a while since i had my own work in public really. At the moment the magazine and freelance work (graphic design) is taking up most of my creative time. Before MM began i was doing a lot of photography with dancers and in theatres. Most of this was free in exchange for exposure. So really, to target an audience (of other dancers, theatres and companies who i wanted to eventually get paid work from) i would just offer to shoot the rehearsals and shows of a few dancers i knew, and they would refer me on to other people who needed publicity photos.

I took some pictures of a dance company called Arc, and those ended up in a programme for Anatomy of a Storyteller at the Royal Opera House. Another time i arranged a studio shoot with Form in



Motion Production dance company from Sweden, and they were exhibited at the Robin Howard theatre at the company's first UK performance. So it was just a case of finding people in influential positions and saying i'll do some free pictures for you and you can keep them, if you can get them published or exhibited somewhere.

Just like you, i don't want my web site to be a space to fill up with my own work. But i have included a couple of pieces in past issues of MM when the work happened to fit in with that of other contributors. Self publishing is always something that makes you feel self concious though, big headed, and of course if it's published by an external party that gives the work extra credibility, but there's no harm in treating yourself to some added exposure via web publishing or an exhibition or something printed i think (as long as the work is good, and it's not just yourself who thinks so)! Until you have a regular audience by way of commissioned or traditionally published work i think it's a good idea just to put what you do 'out there' yourself.

The audience of MM has developed from a mixture of targeted marketing (university mailing lists, flyers in bars that creative types go to, press releases around creative networks) plus word of mouth. Predominantly word of mouth really. I told all of my mates and colleagues and they told all of theirs, and so on. My family also helped by doing the same thing. Web link swaps are a good idea to build an audience too, if you swap carefully with sites that have visitors who are similar to your own.

Okay, a very rowdy and boyish question now, cocks out on the table: My site got 592,608 hits last year, 187,680 page views and 34,647 visits - how many did yours get? (I'm nervous now. My site is merely an infant, whilst yours, in web site terms, has already gone through puberty...)

A: You show me yours and I'll show you mine... well I don't usually check hits or pages viewed but we normally average between 40 - 60 thousand visits a month. Last year we had 448,649 visits and so far this year we have had 271,493 so it looks like we are well on target to beat it. Crikey.

L: It sounds like it's going stong. Is selling advertising space something you'd be interested in doing as the viewing figures grow, especially in the film and literature areas?

A: Tried it in the past but didn't ever get much response so we pulled it. I find it's better to promote your own stuff, that's why you have a link to my writing from almost every film review! Are you going to be in the country for the book's launch party? You



can dust off your camera and take some photos although I won't be dancing for ya ;)

L: I've missed so many good invitations since moving to Barcelona, but i'm determined to start coming back more often (both to London and up north). I'll have a look at easyjet right now and get back to you! Fish and chips cravings have been striking lately, and with the book launch as an excuse i think it's time for a trip home.

Where is the book going to be sold?

A: The book will be available from the publisher's website www.tontopress.com as well as through Amazon, Play.com and Tesco's online. Of course it will be available in shops like Waterstones but depending on where in the country (or world) you are you may have to order it in.

With all the talk of websites I also forgot to mention that I am finally going to be going alone and breaking away from Jigsaw Lounge. At the moment I am doing initial designs but in the meantime you can see the cover of the book by going to www.adamaxwell.com. And it features a monkey with a gun which I love. It was done by a friend of mine (and indeed yours) called John Hardy who actually made the stencil of the chimp and sprayed it to get that authentic look of dripping paint by... well... letting the paint drip actually. What's five times seven?

L: That depends on whether we're talking apples or bananas...

A: What's next in MM?

L: The Creative Graduate Prize! It was launched last year so this will be the second one. It's sponsored by a creative marketing agency called Societás who really know their stuff as far as visual art, photography, design etc is concerned. It's open to graduates and professionals all over the world, and the task is to create a single image that represents the idea of a theme word ('Unfamiliar' this year).

And my final question to you is:

Desert Island Book, what would you most like to have with you to read (over and over again) if you were stranded?

A: Desert Island Book... bloody hell that's too hard. Can I say 'Dial M for Monkey' by the fabulous Adam Maxwell (available at all good online booksellers worldwide)?? Probably not...

The End.



Hello from Tonto Press...

Monday 26th June 2006 saw the release of the second Tonto publication, DIAL M FOR MONKEY by Adam Maxwell.

Adam's first collection of twenty short stories is inventive, funny, dark, and hugely entertaining, ranging from a bizarre quest to find a dead rockstar's limb (Jim Morrison's Leg) to a memorable warning about the hidden dangers of building sites (the acclaimed Shooting Jelly With A Shotgun). Maxwell is a unique storyteller with a hell of an imagination, and his knack for setting up punch lines makes this a fast and fun debut.

See full details here:

www.tontopress.com/dialm

Finally, there is a last chance to sign up for one of Tonto's unique Creative Writing courses. See more here:

www.tontopress.com/courses

Best regards

Paul & Stu

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Check the PRINT section of MM for a sample Adam's writing!