

MICK GEYER

MUSIC GURU 1953 - 2004



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FULL TRANSCRIPT OF DOCUMENTARY #1

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Nick Cave interviewing Mick Geyer in 1996:

NC: Mr Mick Geyer, my chief researcher and guru, he is the man behind the scenes. How important is music to you?

MG: It seems to be a fundamental spirit of existence in some kind of way. The messages of musicians seem to be as relevant as those of any other form of artistic expression.

MUSIC: John Coltrane - Welcome (Kulu Se Mama)

LISA PALERMO (presenter):

Welcome to Mick Geyer: Music Guru. I'm Lisa Palermo and I'll be presenting this 4-part documentary series paying tribute to Mick, a broadcaster and journalist in the Melbourne music scene from the 1980's and 90's. Mick died in April 2004 of cancer of the spine. He'd just turned 51.

His interests and activities were centred on a love of music, and as you'll hear from recent interviews and archival material, his influence was widespread but remained largely outside the public view.

In this first program - 'Making Connections' - we'll explore the beginnings of Mick's passion for music and contemporary culture, through recollections of his brother Greg, teenage friends Paddy Lakey and Barry Palmer, musicians Chris Wilson, Peter Jones, Mick Harvey and Henry Rollins, and PBS insiders Ian Stanistreet and Cameron Paine.

We began with Nick Cave turning the video camera on Mick in Sydney in 1996. More from that recording in future programs.

Greg Geyer:

My name's Greg Geyer, Mick's younger brother by two years. We've obviously lived together a long time until he went off to boarding school and secondary school. He was always really big on sport as a matter of fact in his younger days, he was an avid sports follower, like into cricket, football, all that sort of thing. And he was heavy on the statistics, so cricket is rich in statistics and he was just like he was later with music, collecting every angle of it and exploring who was the best at whatever, so he was kind of obsessed with that mainly.

MUSIC: Rolling Stones - Walking the Dog (The Rolling Stones)

Greg Geyer:

It was in the sixties, it was just the atmosphere that was just everywhere with the music, he wasn't particularly different to anyone else. My older brother who was three years older than him, they had the Stones and the Beatles from an older point of view. And uh, so there was all that British stuff around and before that of course, there was the 'My Old Mans a Dustman' and all that sort of stuff was the stuff we heard, thats how far it goes back. So through my older brother, who didnt really follow it up, but Mick sort of caught it and followed it up, like we were listening to Frank Zappa say 67-8 something like that. Well they were listening to it, and I was there, so you sort of pick up on it.

MUSIC: Frank Zappa - Lumpy Gravy Pt.1 (Lumpy Gravy)

Greg Geyer:

LP: Pretty crazy stuff for little kids to be listening to!

GG: Yeah it is, it was fantastic. And once you start reading about the music then you get all these references back to the old blues guys and stuff and that's what he picked up on, as a researcher you see, this was his big thing as far as what I think and he sort of carried on all of that stuff, the obsession with sport, he used to collect all these records of Olympics and all sorts of things, and Mick later on when he approached the musicians like the jazz guys, Archie Shepp all those guys, he approached them like he had previously approached the sporting greats, with that sort of obsessive collector's attitude - following up on links between people. For me, I see that straight through. He tried to play serious cricket, like Country Week cricket, which is sort of a level below State cricket or something like that, and after he sort of went as far as he could with that he just ditched sport altogether and moved across to music full time. And slowly literature etc.

Paddy Lakey:

My name is Paddy Lakey, born and raised just outside of Sunbury and Michael was born in Sunbury. We went to Primary School together at Our Lady of Mt Carmel in Sunbury, so I knew him probably from Preps or Grade 1 onwards. It was a really quite small community, a very tight community. We'd all be 'dormied' at school played marbles, went to sports, mucked around at lunch time together, all the things that kids normally do at lunchtime. I went to the Catholic College in Sunbury 'Rupertswood', Michael went to a high school in Geelong, and came to Rupertswood in his 5th and 6th Form. Ok, now at that time we probably re-connected and developed a friendship because we both listened to music, and that was the common thing.

I've got very, very fond memories of Michael. We would go from the Catholic School - ride down the street to the Fish & Chip shop, dinking, getting 5, 10 cents of chips and sharing them and going back. Really, very very simple memories.

MUSIC: Jimi Hendrix - All Along The Watchtower (The Singles Album)

LISA:

Barry Palmer has played guitar with The Soul Twisters and Harem Scarem, he's travelled the world with Hunters and Collectors, and we've recently seen him in the reality TV series, The Hit Game.

Barry Palmer:

I met Mick, I was only a kid, cos Mick grew up in the same town as me in Sunbury. I knew about him in the background but I actually met Mick for the first time in hospital, I'd had an accident with a truck, collided with a truck on my pushbike, and I woke up about 2 months later after a thousand operations and this guy walked in, clad in motorbike gear, took off his helmet, introduced himself as Mick Geyer. He played football with my dad, so I knew about this guy, but I'd never actually talked to him. And he'd just come down to visit me. That's how we met. It was fantastic and it was a really freezing cold Melbourne winter night. He hung around and, first of all like, a person six years your senior walks in dressed in that kinda gear, and I was only like 11, it was very strange.

I suppose in one way that's something about Mick, he seems to have incredible insight into people, he just knows, I can help here, and off he goes. Doesn't really ask questions, just jumps in and helps. You think about the people that he's involved with in music and the strange connections he makes, there must be something about Mick that was very, I dunno, subtle, beautiful. And then he kept on coming down all the time, he was like my private bikie stalker - it was really nice. Mick brought down a little portable mono record player, he started bringing me all these things, like Bob Dylan, which I'd never heard.

LP: Are we talking about Mick Geyer when he was like 17 years old?

BP: Mick was massive.

LP: He's already started on this path.

BP: When Mick, when Mick overseas the first time he financed I think his airfare by selling his record collection. I think at that time he had probably about one and a half, two thousand records. So he was only 18, 19 at the time. He had records coming out of his records!

Greg Geyer:

He had a huge collection and had to sell it down a couple of times. Before Mick had travelled overseas, he managed to swing a job down at the airport in customs, and he was like a trainee customs officer and the only interesting thing about working at customs for him was that there'd be people like Dave Pepperall, that had Archie & Jugheads record shop, and they'd be coming out to the airport to receive their boxes of imported records, and of course that would've twigged his interest a lot, and seeing all these beautiful European copies of records and stuff like that.

MUSIC: Bob Dylan - The Times They Are A Changin' (The Times They Are A Changin')

Barry Palmer:

So I had Mick on one hand playing me Bob Dylan, and he had a real biding love of country at the time too, things like, I've probably got my dates wrong, but I know things like the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, he had already listened to other things way outside of that. He had that thing, his dad owned the newsagency and electrical shop, they sold small record players, but Mick, they also had a record section and they'd have all those TV albums that you'd see, the ones advertised on television. And Mick would go and listen to those things.

MUSIC: Dionne Warwick - Anyone Who Had a Heart (Sings the Bacharach & David Songbook)

Barry Palmer:

So he'd listen to the collection by Dionne Warwick, course which turns out to be all these fantastic Bacharach songs y'know, and he was listening to records that I think everybody in the entire universe at that time would've said that's just too daggy. So I had my friends and they were hanging out with Deep Purple and what else was around at the time, Led Zeppelin and all that kind stuff and then Mick throwing me Dionne Warwick, Bob Dylan, and things like Hendrix, y'know. That's how we started our friendship, based around music.

And so Mick had this group of people, he had this little clan, and they were all music lovers. So you'd go to the Lakey's place and they spent every single cent of their life on music. I remember going there the first time with Mick, Mick took me out there to meet them cos I had to go and look at their record collection, thousands, there was a room full of records, when I was a kid, something I'd never seen before. So Mick introduced me to music, he introduced me to all the strange kinds of music in the world you could possibly imagine for any little guy, you just don't know this stuff.

Once when I was young I was home from school one day, I was really sick, and theres this party going on outside the house and it's the first time I ever heard Bob Marley, this incredible music. Im like what in the hell is this, sure enough, get outta bed, theres Mick, it was my mum's birthday and hed turned up with a few friends, his brother and a few other people, out with the booze, the champagne, and Bob Marley.

MUSIC: Bob Marley and The Wailers - Burnin' & Lootin' (Bob Marley and The Wailers Live!)

Paddy Lakey:

We were exploring, but we both went in slightly different directions, but at that time Hendrix was still alive, Led Zeppelin, The Who were still about, they were putting out significant albums, but we went to English Folk, Planxty, Fairport Convention, John McLaughlin. We went to Jazz, we went to Coltrane, but what you do you kind of see who plays on this album, and

then you jump back and then you jump back another step and look who produces the album, and all of a sudden there's a great big kind of a link of people who listen, and the musicians listened in some ways and got producers and side players and then you went back and investigated those people, and you did read as well.

MUSIC: Shakti with John McLaughlin - Come on Baby Dance with Me (Natural Elements)

Paddy Lakey:

We had big ears, we actually listened very, very widely. We listened to ECM. We listened to Jarrett quite a lot, Jan Garbarek, those people, Charlie Haden. We bought, we listened, we commented, we passed things on we swapped. I mean we listened together in some ways. Miles Davis, I mean you went back with Miles Davis and that was fascinating, then you get to Charlie Parker. Then Michael went to things like Reggae and some French Country, which I left him go, very very peculiar bands, 20-25 years ago French Country bands, I can't remember their names for the life of me. As for Punk too, Michael went to Punk and I let Punk go too, it was too much grief.

MUSIC: Sex Pistols - Anarchy in the UK (Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols)

Barry Palmer:

In Sunbury, he was definitely the outsider. At that time he had really long hair when no-one else had long hair - and it wasn't very long before he was wearing it in a pony tail - once again we were in a country town of about 800 people, and Mick was like a freak. But he knew how to live in both worlds because he was a great football player, least he loved football, and like what he did for me, Mick also was fantastic on the whole social side of the football club. He's the guy that'd go and help organise all the events, for the old people, it was great! It's really weird that he did all these different things.

So he had his football playing, music loving, and he was always writing then. He used to hide it, but he was. I don't know, one thing was that I think Mick didn't find it really easy at school. I think, he went to school and he was always a smart guy, I always thought he was probably one of the smartest people I've ever met, but in terms of conventional education, he didn't really fit in.

Greg Geyer:

Well he didn't waste any time in school, so that gave him a lot of time that people usually use at school. And he wasn't encumbered by the curriculum of a school telling him what to study. So while he was at school he was into sport, studying and researching it. After he finished school and sort of then got into his mid 20's, you sort of lose your connection with sport, unless you're really good because you're starting to wear out. So at that stage he was kinda moving across into music.

MUSIC: Beatles - Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except For Me And My Monkey (The White Album)

Greg Geyer:

It's hard to imagine now but tapes were a really sexy technology for a while! And we only had turntables and you know, once you'd been to a party with a record you couldn't play it again virtually. So what Mick'd do, he wanted to buy fresh records and then quickly get them onto a tape so that he could store the record. And he never trusted me with his records really because when he bought the Beatles double White album, he was very gracious and lent it to me, like he lent a lot of people records in the future, although he didn't lend me records because I dropped it out of its cover, took a big hunk out of 'Birthday'...

MUSIC: Beatles - Birthday (The White Album)

Greg Geyer:

...but you could listen to the rest of it after about the third track on both sides. But he just hated me for that, he never trusted me with a record again.

MONTAGE: Rolling Stones - various song introductions (The Rolling Stones)

Greg Geyer:

But we used to look at these Stones records because of this Keith Richards thing about the way you start off a song, right. In a three-minute pop song you had to grab everyone's attention in about the first ten seconds. So there was this fascination about, what do these guys that aware of this doing in the first few seconds of their songs.

And the early tapes we would make would be all starts of songs, like, just which has got the best start of songs, and the Stones were always there because they would actually make a skill of it, because if they could grab you on the little car radio in the first few bars then the rest of the song was almost irrelevant. So this was a great thing, a great discovery and I think that was one of the ways that he started to do that. And he just got out of control, used to do it all the time.

MUSIC: Rolling Stones - I've Got a Witness (The Rolling Stones)

Paddy Lakey:

Michael had a lot of other things to do, he was a good sportsman, he was more of a ratbag than I'll ever be. Louder, more vigorous. We both probably just got through Yr 12 or Matriculation in those days, we both went for the Commonwealth Service Exam at the same time, Michael was offered a job in Customs, I was offered a job at the PMG - Post Master General's Department. We tended to see a fair bit of each other on weekends, we played sport together. But basically because we listened to music we connected. I mean we started. We listened to mainstream stuff, I can remember a big kerfuffle when 'Tubular Bells' came out, I can remember when 'Thick as a Brick' came out. We got the album, we sat, we listened, it's quite an interesting experience. We went to concerts together, we bought records together, we had a policy where we didn't duplicate, we bought different albums. If I got one first then Michael wouldn't buy it, so we broadened our range. Michael and I attended concerts regularly. I've got many, many fond remembrances of going to concerts with Mick. I think Frank Zappa toured and we went to 3 concerts in a row.

MUSIC: Frank Zappa - Live at Festival Hall, Melbourne 1976 (private tape)

Paddy Lakey:

A thing I was always amazed about with Michael, he did it time and time again at concerts. They'd finish playing, they'd come out maybe do an encore. Michael would be amazing, he would stand up and demand a second encore, without shame, in the middle of Festival Hall or in the middle of Dallas Brooks Hall or the middle of Melbourne Town Hall. Shamelessly he would scream and shout and often get people back just driving it by himself. Michael again had this marvellous ability of getting backstage. I can remember clearly going to a Keith Jarrett concert I don't know how we got there, all I know is that Michael at the end of the concert took off, I followed blindly and we ended up backstage shaking Keith Jarrett's hand. Lovely pianist but he had about the most, about the limpest handshake. Probably got sick of people coming backstage anyway. Not a significant event, but I'm still amazed at exactly how we got there!

MUSIC: Keith Jarrett - Bremen July 1973 (Solo Concerts - Bremen, Lausanne)

Paddy Lakey:

We used to go to Carlton, Carlton was a much quieter place, we would drink hot chocolate and muck round playing pool, and just as a concert would end at Festival Hall, Michael again, they'd open the doors on the side, because the concert would end at such and such and we would sneak in and we'd basically get all the encores or often a lot of encores.

I remember when Cocker was touring and he was basically arrested or he was drunk and disorderly, and we almost got a full concert because the band played, Cocker had come back late, they opened the doors at the time the concert was supposed to end and the band kept on playing. We probably got 45 minutes to an hour of free music, which was significant because we were always poor, always poor, although records and concerts were relatively cheap in those days.

MUSIC: Joe Cocker - Let's Go Get Stoned (Mad Dogs and Englishmen)

Paddy Lakey:

We would probably attend concerts fortnightly, weekly, at Dallas Brooks Hall, Melbourne Town Hall. I mean all the Daddy Cool concerts, um obviously went to Sunbury. Going to Sunbury was interesting. I got into the first Sunbury for free, because we simply crossed the creek because we knew the person on the boundary, but with the second Sunbury Concert, Michael's Dad delivered newspapers, so Michael just rode in on the car, with the family truck, sold the newspapers and we both got off!

MUSIC: Daddy Cool - Hi Honey Ho! (Highlights of Sunbury '74)

Greg Geyer:

I also have to mention we grew up in a newsagency. This is crucial because we had access to all these magazines and stuff! This is in Sunbury and we'd have kids at Rupertswood the local school there, like Maurice Frawley a musician who's well known. I was at the same class as him and I used to provide him with all the current issues of 'Go Set' and all these magazines. Well Mick'd pick up all these things too, we'd had all this access to all these magazines, I spose there were jazz magazines and stuff like that, and you just take it from there. And you'd listen to someone like Dylan or the Stones and their interviews were always fascinating in those days because from my understanding they were always talking about other influences on them, or the good ones were talking about music being passed on sort of thing. So all that just was really his cup of tea, because it meant that you could research it, you know, you could follow it through, then you could place things amongst that scenario without even being a musician. But he was such a great listener to music, that he was just into listening to what he got something out of, and just thought it was the most magical thing, and couldn't believe that everyone didn't wanna hear the best, they just wanted to hear something to get them by. And so, I guess 'cos he respected it he didnt want to see it just turn into average muck!

When he was really little he had, like in his babyhood, he had serious ear infections and had a really troubled early life because of these crazy ear infections. And I was always thought, it's a bit obvious, but I always thought that because he had such terror with his ears when he was young, it sort of spoiled his childhood in a lot of ways, but later on when he found all this beauty through his ears it was kind of like a nice little, ah, mirror sort of thing.

MUSIC: Nina Simone - Don't Explain (Don't Explain)

Paddy Lakey:

Michael played cricket and football to a level which was very high. I mean he was a bit of a bastard in some ways, because he could've done a lot of things very, very well. He was one of those people who basically was gifted I believe. Michael was sharp, good at football, good at cricket, not that good at playing musical instruments mind you, but I don't think that matters.

Greg Geyer:

He tried to play the sax, he tried to play trumpet I think, picked up a few instruments but they just soon became just art objects because he didnt really have the patience to follow the time-honoured course that we learn from A going through to Z. Well that's my opinion, he might've tried really hard secretly and just been hopeless, I dont know!

Barry Palmer:

He got up on stage with me and jammed a few times pretending to play saxophone, that was fantastic, he had a beautiful saxophone and he'd jump up and make these great noises and hide behind the idea that it was a dedication to Coltrane or someone of that ilk. But no, he never played, but he was always on my back about playing, he was a harsh critic sometimes, I gotta say.

LP: Did he ever actually get involved in any of your projects?

BP: No! But he, I kept on saying to him, or he kept on saying to me actually that he had this music and he would like to do it with me 'cos he didn't trust himself with anybody else. He was a shy person, but he never played it to me.

I remember once he had a bet with Chris Wilson, Chris and I were in the same band together, Crown of Thorns when we started that. Chris had at that point won a bet with Mick, because the bet was five years earlier that Chris would release his first record before Mick released his book. And Mick actually bet that he would. And we all know that the manuscript is out there somewhere in whatever shape or form. You know, I watched Mick from the time I was young, write. And Chris and I would talk about his writing and y'know every now and again he'd show me bits and pieces.

Chris Wilson:

And I remember Mick getting up with a saxophone, but I don't think it was something that he pursued. I think he saw himself in a different way to that really. He offered information to people that would inspire them and in that way he was an artist.

MUSIC: Chris Wilson & Crown of Thorns - String of Pearls - (Gnawing on the Bones of Elvis)

Chris Wilson:

My name's Chris Wilson, I'm a musician, I started playing in a semi-professional way in Melbourne probably around 1978-79, and I was playing in a band called the Soul Twisters. Most of the members of that band came from around the Sunbury area. It was ah Barry Palmer and Craig Palmer, and a friend of all of those people was Mick Geyer, and I remember Mick became sort of the spiritual adviser to the band in a way, through his friendship with the Palmer brothers. And he had rather exacting standards of what he expected from a band and what made for good music. I was taken around to Mick's flat one night after a gig and he played me a lot of blues stuff that I'd never heard before and it was the beginning of a sort of musical education that I had through him.

We would have these sessions around Barry Palmer's kitchen table that sometimes became so passionate, they spilled over into violence. You know we would debate issues like, 'Can women sing Rockabilly?', and it would turn into these punch-ons you know, we would be like half-cut, all of us. But at the heart of it was this ongoing debate over what was good and what was bad, and we were just young men, we weren't all mad, but it was like going to school, it was like a University tutorial. And it wasn't Mick at the heart of it, but he certainly stoked the fires, you know. And we'd listen to music and drink and talk and fight, and I had been to dinners that were civilized and the conversation was always good, but I'd been to drinking sessions that were more like all in brawls.

Barry Palmer:

In all these big moments in my life Mick was there! I'd fallen in love with music and started playing guitar and my eighteenth birthday turned up and there was a Fender Telecaster there for me for my eighteenth birthday. And I said to my mum 'how the hell would you know what to buy?' this is like the most incredible present! And Mick comes through the door, he goes 'Whaddya reckon? Your mum? What are you talking about?!' So there's Mick with the guitar, he pushed me towards music all the time. My thing was always, why don't you bloody play if you're so interested in it!

And I kept playing and then, once again I started playing in a band and Mick was still living at

Sunbury at the time, I think he might've been overseas but he'd got back, but his world was already far larger than anybody else's world I knew. And our world was small, it was like 2 kilometres. But my daggy little band started playing in the hall and Mick kept on pushing me and saying, 'no you can't play in the hall you gotta play in front of people'. So he'd get the Ute, his Dad's Ute, and pack us all into the back and take us around to all these country fairs and we'd play, and I don't know if he was a responsible guardian but he was a great fun one! We played the Romsey Potato Festival, with Mick that was great, he was our manager on the day, he got us an extra couple of beers!!

LP: And a couple of potatoes!

BP: And a couple of baked potatoes. No, seriously, we got our baked potatoes. So he did all that for me and then he's the one that kept on pushing me, 'Come on you can do more than that, go and play in the city'. And my first ever show was the Tiger Lounge I think we supported Paul Kelly, terrifying thing, I was begging him 'don't make me do this, just let me go home' and was like 'no way, that's it, you're staying, you're going on stage'. So he's the one that kind of laid the stones down, the pathway for me, and he made my trek into the city a lot easier and he's the one who started throwing me towards these other musicians that were in the city and that I should go and hang out with and start playing with. When I joined Harem Scarem that was via Mick. At the time, every single week in the E.G., the band you had to go and see was Harem Scarem, and Mick said 'look, they're looking for a guitarist, I've already told em you're great!' Ha ha! 'So you gotta go and try out' and then I went and tried out ... that world. He left me no choice.

MUSIC: Harem Scarem - Miracle Mile (Miracle Mile 7")

Chris Wilson:

He had a bit of input into Harem Scarem. We did a single called Miracle Mile. He's on the cover of that record, he's standing on the top of a statue with a bugle (laughs). I think he's on the back as well. You know, he put his threepence (worth) in there.



Peter Jones:

I met Mick through Chris Wilson & Barry Palmer from the Soul Twisters, and they came to play in Harem Scarem, I played in Harem Scarem. Mick was friends of theirs from Sunbury, he started coming to gigs and I met him at gigs, he was like a real music fan.

I was learning music at the time, but Mick was like another teacher really, like there's the academic teachers I was learning from at the VCA, but then there was also, I see Mick as like he was the street teacher, of the real music. He was always really encouraging which was really good as a young musician to have someone like that and sometimes you'd feel insulted by maybe some of the things Mick had said, but it just took a fair while to work out that what Mick was actually trying to do was encourage you but in a way. He may have said something that offended you but it was just a kick in the arse, his way for you to sort of wake up and get better, move forward, don't just sort of sit where you are stagnant.

Another thing that I didn't know about Mick and I only found out at his funeral, he was a football player and he ran these football teams and it was the same there, he was just encouraging people he just wanted them to get better, and he wanted everybody to take part and he wanted people to have fun, and that's what he was for a lot of musicians too I think, he wanted everybody to take part and he wanted everyone to get better, and not settle for mediocrity.

MUSIC: Chris Wilson & Crown of Thorns - Bring it On Home (Gnawing on the Bones of Elvis)

LISA:

Harmonica player and singer Chris Wilson's history includes the Soul Twisters, Harem Scarem, Crown of Thorns and as a guest on heaps of albums.

Chris Wilson:

If it wasn't for him I would have never made my first record, 'cos we were down in Fitzroy Street one day and were sitting under that big tree on the corner of Fitzroy Street and Beaconsfield Parade, and I'd made a bet with him that I could make a record before he wrote a book. He had these collected interviews, they were fabulous you know, he really just had to compile them, but I made this bet that I could make a record before he made the book and the winner had to take the other one out to dinner. So, then we both went up to Greville St in Prahran and I bought a guitar and a chord book and wrote these songs in competition with him. He never finished his book you know, but I made this record, made an EP and it was because of him and that bet that I did it.

MUSIC: Chris Wilson & Crown of Thorns - Bring it On Home to Me (Gnawing on the Bones of Elvis)

Chris Wilson:

I've got an idea about what he was looking for in his music and his literature, but it's hard to put into words. It had to be, extremely honest - it had to speak to us all, you know, if you know what I mean.

He was very astute politically, he knew the issues of the day, so he was a very interesting human being and a very likeable person. I more than liked him, I loved him.

Barry Palmer:

Mick loved being the fly in the ointment. He'd love to say something that would get the room moving, and another great moment I have of Mick, and it was quite pivotal for me, 'cos it was the first time I'd ever seen anybody openly buck the system. I went out, he invited me, around to his place for dinner, and Mr Geyer had the head of the whole Salesian College where we went to school, the rector the head priest, and every time the priest said something that was straight away conventional wisdom, conventional Catholic wisdom anyway, Mick would take him to task. For me, that was a profound moment in my life, because I thought, well y'know the priest mightn't like what Mick was saying, but what he can't question is the integrity of what Mick's on about. And I think that's probably something I saw Mick do over and over again in all my long acquaintance with Mick. Just that 'dont hide behind bullshit'.

LP: But the courage to challenge.

BP: And the thing about it was is that a lot of people do that, and they do it in a way thats more about them 'cos theyre just baiting people, doing it to get off. But Mick was genuine, he really didn't like what the guy was saying, and was willing to speak up to the guy. And he was only young y'know...very young.

MUSIC: Hunters & Collectors - Hear No Evil (Head Above Water)

Barry Palmer:

Most times Mick would astound me with his original take on something, and always surprise me, and I think for me when he said 'go and join The Hunters' that was like a shock, I thought he'd say 'no you stay down in the inner city, keep working on music that's about YOU and not anybody else'. 'Cos that was always his thing to me, you're writing your own songs, well he heard me sing, but he thought that was opportunity for me to go and do something larger, and give it a go. He said y'know just quit in three weeks if you dont like it, was great. I think that was a life changing thing, of course I got to travel around the world and Mick was the first

person who told me, when I go there I've gotta go and see this, go to that place, gotta go see that. So my first overseas trip I spent nearly every waking hour with Mick's itinerary. 'Yes Mick I'm at the Louvre, it's fantastic, you're absolutely right. It's great' Ha!

MUSIC: Scientists - Frantic Romantic (Pissed on Another Planet)

Paddy Lakey:

We saw each other a lot, probably for about 5 years after we left school, after we left Year 12 matriculation. Then Michael went overseas, travelled extensively and Michael became far more involved in Melbourne. I got married, regular working, 3 kids, different lifestyle. Michael, God bless him, never established that sort of lifestyle and that's fine, but that's the way Michael lived, but at that point we tended to go our certain directions. I didn't have the time, the money or the enthusiasm to follow music the way I would've liked to. Michael kept it up remorselessly to his last days and it was something which he did out of, I mean it was the mainstream of his life in some ways I think. If you took that away Michael would have been bereft, desolate, bare.

MUSIC: Scientists - Frantic Romantic (Pissed on Another Planet)

Ian Stanistreet:

My name's Ian Stanistreet, I've been involved with PBS in its early days mainly. I was volunteer at the station from 1980 and I was it's first employee as Station Manager from February 1982 to Feb 1988. I first met Mick a little earlier than my involvement with PBS. We met, either through friends or at a record store called Black Swan Records in Ballarat.

Mick certainly influenced me. I'd always had an extremely strong interest in music, and I really remember a conversation that we had in Ballarat, which was a turning point in developing a wider appreciation of music. In the course of an afternoon, and probably with a few beers in hand, and no doubt with Mick sitting back and expounding with a cigarette in hand, as he was want to do, he took me to task for criticising, would you believe, Bing Crosby on the one hand and the Sex Pistols on the other.

MUSIC: Bing Crosby - Now You Has Jazz (High Society - Original Soundtrack)
Sex Pistols - God Save the Queen (Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols)

Ian Stanistreet:

At the time, Bing Crosby represented to me the music of my parent's generation and I wasn't interested and I said something relatively disparaging about Bing Crosby and he took me to task about that. And then we got onto the Sex Pistols and I remember him playing me their first LP and just having to sit down and listen to it and explain to me why he felt it was really a valid piece of music. And until that time I'd really just rejected punk and thought well that's something I'm not really interested in. It's far too aggressive. And it was quite a revelation for me to sit there and have him explain to me what he thought was worthwhile about it, and talk about it's cultural purpose in a broader sense. And it all just clicked and I thought well that's all very right and valid and maybe I need to assess my own prejudices in relation to these other forms of music that I had.

MUSIC: Bing Crosby - Now You Has Jazz (High Society - Original Soundtrack)
Sex Pistols - God Save the Queen (Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols)

Chris Wilson:

I was like a lot of kids from the suburbs, the first sort of blues-ish music we heard was the Rolling Stones and then you worked back, y'know. I remember in particular he had a Junior Wells record that he played me the first night I met him. I remember him showing me videos of Lightnin' Hopkins and stuff like that which I've never seen since. I don't know where the hell he got them.

MUSIC: Lightnin' Hopkins - Baby Please Don't Go (The Very Best of Lightnin' Hopkins)

Chris Wilson:

At one stage he went overseas, but he had a huge vinyl record collection, and he left that collection at my parent's place for me to look after, and it was like walking into Aladdin's Cave. It was just the most extraordinary collection of high quality music that I'd ever run across. A lot of the stuff that he owned I've never seen since, like there was some really esoteric jazz stuff there. So I spent the next 3 months just trawling through his record collection and I'm still looking for some of those albums today. I haven't seen them before or since.

MUSIC: Meters - Funky Miracle (70's Groove - Underground Funk)

Greg Geyer:

Just to give you an idea of the music he was seeing in the mid '70's when he was in Seattle, and he's written me this letter, it's about the Stones concert and the Meters were supporting them. "On July 18 the Stones played Seattle..." and it really, the letter only gets as far as the queue, because they spent all day in the queue on various substances and he doesn't actually talk about the concert itself, but just the excitement of the queue. He did get to the concert. He doesn't say what it was like, but he says the stage was excellent, it was one that looked like a star. But then since then he'd seen Eric Clapton and Santana, this in August 75, 60 hours after he'd seen the Stones.

MUSIC: Santana - Oye Como Va (Abraxas)

Greg Geyer:

Ah here we go: "Santana were good and surprisingly Eric Clapton was very good. Good concert. Going to see the Pointer Sisters in Vancouver next weekend. Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker play a blues festival on the 31st. Oscar Peterson play for free on September 1st, Fairport Convention plays here in the next couple of weeks. Musically busy, huh?" That gives you an idea. And the letter ends talking about the football, about Geelong, which he'd been keeping in touch with.

LP: So some of the sport thing remained.

GG: It did

LP: Yes

Chris Wilson:

He was famous for making mixed tape cassettes, that were sort of your homework for the next two or three months, and they'd be a compendium of rhythm and blues and jazz and reggae and ah any other sort of music that he thought was relevant to what you were doing. I used to really savour them, you know, they were just wonderful. You got the impression that every track had been thought out and programmed in a sequence that had a theme that ran through it you know. I was relatively musically naive by comparison to Mick and he was generous enough over periods of time, to teach me. He was really cultured in film and books and lent things to people all the time, he was extremely generous. I'd get newspaper articles or articles from magazines or videos of movies, European movies, that I really had no access or knowledge of.

Greg Geyer:

In my mind I connect in back to his character, how he was impressed with the BEST of the lot, not because of who they were but because of how they did these things and why was it that they could do it so much better than anyone else and when you look into it I suppose maybe you find that these people are really passionate about it. They've got their own really strong reason that motivates them. So he was never intimidated by big names because he was looking for what motivated them. And if they weren't motivated then they were phoney and empty and not worth talking about or to, see? So, that kind of attitude, you sort out people.

But I think he expected his musicians to be as intensive like the sporting guys had been, the

serious ones were really intense, and they just obsessed with all the details, and he expected his musicians I think to be the same, and I suppose they were the ones he made good relationships with over the longer term. That's what you have a place like PBS for, isn't it, to get these people together.

MUSIC: Birthday Party - Nick the Stripper (Prayers on Fire)

Ian Stanistreet:

When Mick moved to Melbourne, he became involved in PBS. He didn't do a lot of broadcasting as much as he did later on, in the sort of late 80s and 90s. In those times he was putting a lot of his creative energy into Waves magazine and he was the Editor of Waves around the mid 80's. During that time the magazine sort of developed from a very small A4, to a very significant magazine of about 50 pages which was distributed throughout Melbourne through newsagents and which also encompassed a kind of a pan-(what was then)-public broadcasting perspective, in the sense that it tried to involve the other community radio stations in Melbourne at that time. So although it was principally PBS's magazine, it also incorporated program information from 3CR and 3RRR and sometimes 3MBS.

It was Mick and his friends who really took that magazine through, and it was a perfect thing for Mick to do because he was a person who had very strong cultural interests in a number of different areas, music being just one of them. He was also interested in art, and in writing and so producing the magazine brought all these things together for him. He could follow through his interest in interviewing musicians and then write up the piece for the magazine. So he was working across different mediums at that stage.

Greg Geyer:

And I think his contributions to Waves magazine was a way of writing a book without putting it into one cover - one set of covers.

Chris Wilson:

It was an extremely high quality magazine and the interviews in it were just fascinating. As far as he was concerned he was at the helm, but it was a co-operative effort and he called in big favours from his friends: "I want you to do this, I want you to do that", and I wrote an article about Little Walter, the great blues harmonica player. He was always a very demanding critic, and so, if you wrote something, often you would tend to ask yourself, does this pass the sort of standards Mick would throw up?

MUSIC: Little Walter - Rollin' & Tumblin' (Chicago Blues)

Ian Stanistreet:

It's just amazing if you read those issues or look back on them now. I mean they are great as a documentary of the station and it's development but it also reflects a lot of Mick's personality and his interests in the breadth of the coverage in the magazine. It covered film, and it covered art, and it had a really eclectic approach to music, which of course is quite appropriate to PBS. You know, you'd look at an issue and it would have articles about people as diverse as Michael Leunig and T-Bone Burnett and Elvis Costello and Joe Camilleri and the Black Sorrows and Little Walter and Nick Cave and Mick Harvey and X all in the same issue, and it might have some sort of more academic piece on video and television. But throughout that he was also running a bit of an agenda which was prodding, I felt, community broadcasters and public broadcasters as they were then known just to be a bit more active and aggressive and challenging in their views. He felt that we had a great opportunity, because we had so much freedom in what we could do - that we had a responsibility to take that a bit further and develop the potential of grass roots media more than really was probably being actually done at that time. He saw the potential and he wanted it to be pushed to its limits. And it was recognised at the time as being the best publication of its kind and by a community radio station and it won national awards. We didn't even have a computer at that stage so it was a pretty arduous process which of course might have mitigated against all the creativity involved

if there hadn't been people like Mick who had such strong interests and strong drives.

Cameron Paine:

G'day. I'm Cameron Paine. Mick Geyer .. interesting bloke, I've been giving a bit of thought to when I met him, early 80s is probably best I can get. Mick was editing the then PBS magazine and one of the things I was doing for PBS at the time was providing some fairly meagre information technology resources, and we put in a, what we will laughingly refer to as a desktop publishing system for producing the magazine and there was some reason why I was called in to assist him to do something and we worked through that problem and I guess, as they say, the rest is history. We became good mates and over the years on and off spent a lot of time together.

Ian Stanistreet:

I vividly recall Mick waltzing in one day when he was producing the issue that had a detailed interview with Michael Leunig and he came in and he had the artwork for the cover in his hands and he just had this huge smile on his face, that Michael Leunig had actually done this artwork for Waves, that was a really nice memory of Mick.

I remember him so many times just wafting into the station through the front door, with a jacket on and he's got a book in one pocket and something else in the other, he's got a cigarette in one hand and a scarf around his neck and he'd just sort of rock along the corridor and the first person he meets he's into conversation with. What I remember a lot about Mick is just how easy it was to engage other people and to quickly slip into conversations about things that mattered, rather than the things that don't. And he was always very challenging, you know, he wouldn't let you get away with anything. He was always, in a very acceptable way, trying to just gently suggest that there are other points of view, and that you're not really thinking, that there may be a lot more to it than just the way you thought about things before.

MUSIC: Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds - From Her To Eternity (Best of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds)

LISA:

Musician and long-time Nick Cave collaborator, Mick Harvey

Mick Harvey:

Essentially I met Mick sometime in the mid to late eighties, I can't even remember exactly when but it was probably in conjunction with PBS in some way or some kind of interview that he was doing about something. I seem to remember he conducted a very long interview with me, which is very typical of Mick because he liked to talk at great length, and study the minute detail of any subject, and that's what we did all afternoon. And I think we didn't even complete the interview in that sitting.

Cameron Paine:

Mick loved to interview people. I think initially that passion came out of providing material for the magazine, but Mick also loved the sound of his own voice, and so he would talk with people for hours. And it wasn't a question and answer session, it was more a rambling conversation. He loved to try and capture it all on tape and then he'd go through and pick the bits that were of interest for whatever the project was out of it.

I do remember one occasion when he got very, very excited, I think it was probably the first or maybe the second time that Hank Rollins came to Melbourne to play. Mick rang me up and said "I'm going to interview Hank. Can you come and give me a hand?" That struck me as being a little odd, but I said 'yeah, okay, whatever'. So I brought a couple of mics and a tape recorder and several hours of cassette tape and we used every bit of the cassette tape though that I'd brought along. And I realised why Mick wanted me there. It was probably something he could have coped with himself, but because he already must have had an idea of how wide ranging the conversation was going to be, he figured that there would be multiple tape

changes during the process. So I suspect I was sort of the safety net to make sure the wheels kept rolling so he could get on with his conversation. And I'd have to say, I've done many interviews from a production point of view in my time at PBS, and this was the most amazing thing that I was ever a witness to. They struck up an instant rapport. I don't believe they'd ever met before. Perhaps they'd corresponded, but they certainly struck up an instant rapport and talked about... just all sorts of stuff.

MUSIC: Black Flag - Wound Up (Live 84)

LISA:

Since fronting Black Flag and the Rollins Band, Henry Rollins has ventured into acting, writing, publishing and uncompromising spoken word performances.

Henry Rollins:

I met Mick in the beginning of 1989. It was my first tour of Australia with my band, and we finished the string of shows in Melbourne so I was in the area, and I think Mick interviewed me for a magazine. And he was this articulate, fascinating guy, and for some reason he found me interesting and we got onto all kinds of topics that maybe a guy in a rock band doesn't always get into.

MUSIC: Albert Ayler - Masonic Inborn Pt.1 (Masonic Inborn)

Henry Rollins:

So we were talking about be-bop jazz and Coltrane and Albert Ayler and Sun Ra, and American literature, all this stuff I'm very interested in. So we became friends over a mutual interest in foreign film, cool books, jazz - stuff like that, and we kept in touch. He was an amazing interviewer. When you have his attention, like when he's asking you questions, it's a rare thing I found, that Mick Geyer really needed to know anything from anyone. So for one short moment he actually needed information from me, 'cos every other time I was with him it was quite the opposite where he was the great giver of unbelievable amounts of cool information. I can not remember honestly the substance of the direct questions, it was more the discussion and the general Mick-ness of Mick Geyer which really made me remember him, I said, 'wow that guy was really cool!' And the next time I came through in 1990, I had days off where I didn't have to drive to the show until sound check time, and so I would spend the afternoons with Mick, and he played me 'Coltrane in Japan', a great live album, and he was just this constant source of "Have you checked this out? Have you ever read this? Have you heard this?".

MUSIC: John Coltrane - Introduction (Concert in Japan)

Henry Rollins:

And I would just peruse his bookshelves and listen to the music and kind of make notes of all these cool cultural bits of information he was laying on me that he just seemed to have, just this amazing hard-drive in his mind of all this stuff. And as the years went on, I would start booking a day or two off in Melbourne so Mick and I could just hang out. If he was in town, if he was in the country, we would get together in the morning and go somewhere and hit some book and record stores, have lunch, walk around some more and just talk about everything we had heard, seen, read or somehow digested since the last time we got together. And the conversation would just kind of pick up where it'd left off, and I called it the conversation that never ends, 'cos it went on for decades, through the late eighties, into the nineties, and into up until 2003.

MUSIC: John Coltrane - Crescent (Crescent)

LISA:

Henry Rollins, ending this first of four programs documentaries paying tribute to Mick Geyer. Our next program looks further at Mick's PBS years, his radio style and his infectious

enthusiasm for music, with examples of his radio shows and in-depth interviews.

Thanks to the many people involved in this project, including Sophie Best, Levels Audio Post in Los Angeles, Greg Geyer and Graeme Osborne for material from their archives, and to Nick Cave for use of the video interview he recorded with Mick.

Mick Geyer: Music Guru was produced for PBS-FM by Moira Drew with Garry Havrillay, Bill Runting, Jenni Crowley and me, Lisa Palermo. •



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