

Max Reinhardt

THE HEAVER INTERVIEW

CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPOSER AND WORLD MUSIC AFICIONADO MAX REINHARDT TALKS PERFECT PLAYLISTS, PARTY GUESTS AND BLISSFUL DAYS OFF IN TOOTING.

Do you tap into your inner child to create music for Oily Cart?

It is not so much that, but more about bringing my enthusiasm whether visual, musical or narrative, and being very enthusiastic about that. It's the same whoever my audience is.

You're also a DJ. Are you quite rock and roll?

I've been a club DJ since the eighties; that can be rock and roll. Now I am better known for presenting Late Junction on Radio 3, which is more laid back.

Do you ever get stage fright? Yes, but I also do it for that excitement.

If you could see any artist perform (dead or alive!), who would it be? Django Reinhardt. Not that I'm related.

What's your idea of musical heaven? One of the best things I have seen in my life were the early seventies gigs by Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band. Or more recently, Konono No. 1, which is a Congolese band who play huge thumb pianos.

And musical hell? The X Factor.

What's your perfectly blissful way to spend the day in SW London? I quite like the little greasy spoon cafés. And writing on Tooting Bec Common. When you've been knocking your head against the computer all day, getting out with the dog really works.

What's your most frequently occurring thought? Deadlines!

What keeps you sane? Variety. It's not just the spice of life; it's what life is about.

If you could be a fly on the wall, who would you spy on? Whoever is in Downing Street. That would be good wouldn't it?

And finally, what's SW London's best kept secret?

The Tram and Social pub (46-48 Mitcham Road, SW17; www.antic-ltd.com). And another secret: there was a pauper's farm on Tooting Bec. Even Dickens wrote about it. *Oily Cart*, www.oilycart.org.uk ■

We're planning a celebration and want to create the ultimate playlist. Any advice?

Get a jukebox so people can choose what they want, then you can give the money to charity. I'd choose Nigerian musician Fella Kuti, Ragga and Eastern European gypsy music.

Who would be on your dream dinner-party guest list? Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath on a good day, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, whether he was drunk or not.

If you could travel back to any musical era, what would it be?

I'd travel the world in the early 1900s, and learn about blues, jazz, Paris avant garde and tango. It would be nice to have a guitar or harmonica and join in when they'd allow me to!

What keeps me sane?
Variety. It's not just the spice of life; it's what life is about.

Opposite: Max backstage at Battersea Arts Centre.

Max Reinhardt doesn't just love music, he lives it. The artist has dedicated three decades to funky beats and classical hits as a club DJ, festival curator and broadcaster on BBC Radio 3. With his encyclopedic knowledge and boundless love of music, Max helped to set up Oily Cart theatre in 1981 to conceive shows especially for kids, many with complex learning difficulties. A bow with many strings, he was also the musical director of TV favourite Playdays, organised London's longest running world music night, and has mastered the keyboard, ukulele, accordion and harmonica. This is one south-west Londoner who definitely dances to his own tune...

What have been the best moments of your career? My all time favourite was Oily Cart's aerial show Something in the Air. It was amazing, the notion that this rig brought the audience up in the air to be with the aerialists. And to see the audience really occupied and sharing the moment with the performers was wonderful. Another highlight was doing a gig in Sofia that combined Afrobeat with Bulgarian singing; the crowd went wild.

And the most surreal moment? Being dressed as an alien in a kids' special school whilst being watched by an Arts Council officer sitting in the corner!



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