

Eva Merz in conversation with Paul Anderson

The Coffee House, Huntly, Wednesday 10/12 2003, 2.15 pm – 3.20 pm

He is 33 and the most famous fiddler of his generation in Scotland. I have read about him in the papers, looked at his painted portrait in Aberdeen Art Gallery and I have heard him play in the Crown Bar in Huntly. He plays the fiddle like he has never done anything else. Wonderfully. Besides that I don't know much about fiddle music or Paul Anderson. Except that he is currently a Musician in Residence in Huntly. We meet in the Coffee House on The Square. I turn on my mini disc recorder and Anderson starts telling his story from the beginning. He is a very good storyteller too and I'm all-ears. Until, after half an hour, I realise that my recorder is on pause and nothing has been recorded. This is not supposed to happen. Ever. Anderson is pretty cool about it though. He suggests that we start over again. Gratefully I listen to a slightly shortened version of how it all started:

I'm really sorry about that... where are you from, again?

Okay! I'm from Tarland, which is also in Aberdeenshire. It's across country a wee bit, about 40 miles away from Huntly. It's in Deeside, an area called the Howe o' Cromar. I play on a fiddle that I found under my grandparent's spare bed in a tiny box bedroom, which we called the Glory Hole! There was all this junk under the bed, boxes with old postcards, Victorian things and things that my grandparents kept over the years. And then there was this old fiddle... I come from a farming family. My parents and my grandparents only stayed three quarter of a mile away from each other. My grandfather was the dairy manager for the MacRobert Farms. Later my father became the dairy farmer and got the chance to take on the business himself, which he has been doing for the past 20 years. When I was young my brother and sister and me would spend every other day at my grandparents' house and on the farm. It was kind of a carefree childhood. We just ran wild really! We were nae particularly well off - I mean, the kind of toys kids have nowadays - I was just happy when I found a stick to play with!

Were you helping out on the farm too?

Oh aye. But it wisna so that we did a whole day of work or anything. When we grew older we got tied into the work in a bigger scale. But when we were kids we were nae really working. We would help shifting cows, maybe giving help to drive them, feeding and stuff like that. Naething too much. Mair because you wanted to be there, be like your father, ken?

Yeah. So you would describe it as a happy childhood?

Aye, very happy. So...

Back to the fiddle!

Back to the fiddle, aye. I was about five I think, when I found the fiddle under the bed and I would get it oot at every possible opportunity.

Could you play on it – did it have strings?

It had strings, but it wisna in tune. I was hearing the rhythm of some tune I had in my head and was sawing the rhythm oot - total rubbish of course! But I thought I was doing great. None of my grandparents played. My Granny got the fiddle because her brother and sister played. So when she got married she wanted a fiddle in the house and she got it from a great uncle. He got it from an alcoholic guy in a pub, who was desperate to sell it to get money to buy mair drink. So he sold it for ten shillings. By the time of the Second World War ten shillings was quite a reasonable amount of money for folk to spend on something that would have been classed as a luxury item. So the fiddle had been there ever since and had never really been used. I suppose it had been tucked away under the bed and largely forgotten. When I was about nine I really started to play. I don't know why. I had maybe seen something on the telly or heard something on the radio that inspired me. And my folks had LPs of some of the great fiddle players, like Hector MacAndrew and Angus Cameron. So I had a notion that I wanted to play and told my Granny. So they got the fiddle set up and that's how I started. And it's the same fiddle I play now. It's a French fiddle, made by Colin Mezin of Paris in 1893.

You play traditional fiddle music, right? And I know that you compose your own music. Do you play purely one style or...?

You would probably say that I play the North East Style. There are various different regional styles in Scotland. You can almost hear it in the music, the same thing as you hear in folk's regional accents. A local person from the Isle of Skye is ginna have quite a musical accent, whereas somebody from the North East, that speaks real broad Doric, has got a much stronger accent. And the music from here is similar to that. It's got a lot of accent and a lot of character. Style wise it's probably the most extreme use of bowing technique of all the different areas in Scotland.

So it's a matter of personality, character and temperament?

Yep.

It goes way down into the instrument. Amazing! The fiddle is especially attached to the history and traditions in Scotland?

Aye. The fiddle has been here since it was basically developed. It came across and...

Where did it come from?

Italy. Violin, fiddle... same thing, just different style of music. The fiddle was a relatively cheap instrument to make. A local craftsman could make a fiddle, ken? Just after the turn of the 18th to the 19th century you could buy a fiddle relatively cheap. A chap called Sandy Milne, who's been dead for a couple of years now - he actually came from Tarland, and was one of the driving forces behind the *Banchory Strathspey and Reel Society* for many years. He bought his first fiddle for the price of eight rabbits.

Rabbits?

Rabbits!

Rabbits – how much was that?

I have nae idea, but that's quite cheap. Rabbits are quite abundant!! The fiddle has got a lot of versatility as an instrument. It's got a lot of scope note wise and can put a lot of emphasis on the rhythm, which is important in Scottish music. Mair so than something quite related, like Irish music. We have got, as you would expect, quite a lot in common and yet there are huge differences in the style and character. And in Scottish music it comes from the bowing. That's where you get the real character, attack and the strong rhythm. So that's why the fiddle became instantly very popular. It was easy to play existing traditional music on it and good for dancing too. When they banned playing the bagpipes in Scotland after the Jacobite Rebellion, a lot of the pipers turned to playing the fiddle. Today the fiddle and bagpipe are regarded as being the two national instruments. Prior to the fiddle it was the harp. The clan chiefs would have harpers and pipers in their service. Then, when the fiddle came to the country, they would have fiddlers as well. Niel Gow, who is regarded as the father of Scottish fiddle music, was actually fiddler to the Duke of Atholl. One of the main reasons so much of the auld fiddle music survived is the aristocracy. They were the wealth and the power in Scotland. They would have big dances and they would employ fiddlers to write music for them. Traditional music was being kept alive by them. The Church of Scotland at that time was very Calvinistic and quite strong. They would condemn folk for playing the fiddle, seeing it as music for the devil. But it was like they dinna care about that! These fiddlers would still have played for barn dances and weddings and so on. But it was the aristocrats that paid them to write music and play for them.

That's really interesting! So you are from a farming family on the country, and you still live there?

I only stay a mile away from where I was brought up. It's a place that I've got a real attachment to. My family on both sides has always lived very locally. My grandfather's grandfather was one of 12 brothers from Strathdon, which is only 15 minutes in a car away from Tarland. My Granny's maiden name is Cromar. And Tarland is in the Howe o' Cromar. My Mum came from Aboyne and some of her grandparents came from Finzean, which is very close as well. So I have deep family roots to that area. And the music kind of reinforces that. One of the greatest traditional Scottish fiddlers was Peter Milne; he taught James Scott Skinner how to play Scottish fiddle music. And he came from Tarland! He has got a memorial stone in the village.

You started playing the fiddle for real when you were nine?

I had a teacher at school, Andy Linklater, from the age of nine and until I left when I was 17. I did my higher in music. It was classical music. Never something I was very enthusiastic about as a player. I love listening to it, but it was the Scottish music I found that I had a feel for. I was never a great academic at school. Probably purely by luck I discovered something I could do very, very

well. I learned quickly and started winning competitions at the age of ten. And then you're in the paper and it's a completely different way of life.

It was a great encouragement?

Oh aye, it was. It gives you a real sense of worth, ken what I mean? Sometimes folk feel a bit displaced, dinna ken their place in the world and feel a bit lost, constantly looking for something to make them happy. Within six months I was able to play along with the *Banchory Strathspey and Reel Society*. And soon after that I started getting a private tutor in traditional Scottish fiddle music. His name is Douglas Lawrence. He was, and still is regarded as, the best traditional player of his era and his teacher was Hector MacAndrew, who in his time was regarded as being the finest traditional fiddle player. And he was taught by his grandfather, who was taught by the last pupil of Niel Gow. And he is regarded as the Godfather of Scottish fiddle music. He is the Man! A national figure, looked up to as being a real developer of the style, bringing it to a new level. He was born prior to the Jacobite Rebellion. He played for Bonnie Prince Charlie at Blair Castle, and actually joined his army for a period. He marched to Stirling and decided he had enough by that time and went home, which is lucky because he survived! That year he won a fiddle competition in Perth, which was open to fiddlers from all over Scotland. The judge, who was a blind man, put Niel Gow first, and said that he would recognise him playing out of 100 fiddlers. He was famed for his bowing technique and his strength of character in the music. So I feel privileged. I do feel that a definite thread comes down. I'm nae trying to blow my trumpet, but I'm doing quite well and I'm regarded as being a good exponent of the traditional Scottish style. I feel that it is something that I have to pass on to my pupils as well. Some of them are now winning competitions and you can begin to see them blossom as players. They have a long way to go, but they are getting there!

I can see that your roots are very deep in the traditional music and its history. Is that your greatest motive power in your playing?

Mainly I love it! I feel it is part of me; it's like my singing voice, really. That's a big difference from somebody that is just an average player, somebody that uses the instrument as a tool. It's mair than just concentrating on the notes...

It's like an extension of the body?

Aye, it's an unconscious thought for me to play. I don't have to think for the notes to come out.

When did you first know that you were that kind of musician, that great?

Quite... eehhh... It ebbs and floods with the time. You have periods when you loose faith, and feel, "Aahhh, I would rather go and play football with my friends". But I found quite early that I was good. And I learned really quickly. I have often had folk saying that I could have been playing in a classical orchestra. But why would I want to be sitting as one of the orchestra when I can be the soloist?

You never made a really hard choice did you, whether you should be an artist or carry on with the family farm – it seems like it came natural for you?

It was actually quite hard. It was mair a concern about what my folks were ginna say. They were obviously ginna need somebody else to do the work that I used to do. So it was a sense of letting your family doon. That was mair of a problem than actually deciding to do it. But once I got the courage to say that I liked to have a go at it they were mair worried about me making a living of it. At the same time they were being very supportive and encouraging me. When I was young they would drive me around to competitions. And they are quite proud of what I have done as a player. They still come to my concerts locally. They love the music. That's partly why I started, cause they love that music, anyway.

We actually only have a few more minutes left...

Well, you can do some mair another time...

Is that all right?

Aye, I can meet you next week.

Battlehill Lodge, Huntly, Wednesday 17/12 2003, 2.30 – 4 pm

Paul and I meet again in Claudia Zeiske's big old kitchen. He has got some time before he is away to Aberdeen to see the new Lord of the Rings film.

I have been thinking about how funny it is that we meet here. I have also been in a residence in Huntly. But what we do is totally different. I really like the idea of me speaking to this famous traditional fiddler. That's all because of Deveron Arts and the public money they get to pay us. You told me that this is the first grant you ever got?

Aye. I don't claim money on social security or dole money or anything. If you can't make enough yourself you just make the best of it really. Maybe it's an attitude from a rural farming family; you have to work hard for what you get. With regards to this grant, it has allowed me to do something different, which I never had the opportunity to do before. It's a challenge. And I find the community at large are really taken to the idea. I have nae experience with previous artists. But certainly I find that everyone is really willing to contribute with personal stories and bits and pieces of the history of Huntly. In my case, playing traditional Scottish music, it's something quite common to the people here. It's nae foreign to them. And of course, with my accent, I just sound like one of the locals. With somebody from a different country people tend to be a wee bit mair guarded and they take a wee while to open up, ken. I don't find that. I just start speaking to folk and it's great. I've spent a lot of time in Huntly in the past and I have known quite a lot of Huntly folk for a long time. So it's like working in the neighbouring village almost.

You come to Huntly two days a week?

Yes, basically. I mean I could have stayed in Huntly all the time. But, with regards to writing music, I find the peace and quiet in my own environment. Being in Huntly is good just to absorb the atmosphere and do my research. But at home is the easiest place to concentrate. And when I'm away from Huntly I have to draw on my imagination and inspiration. I often find it's the case that it comes because you have to focus mair and rely on what you remember. But I did write a tune in Huntly Castle and I found it quite good being in there! It's actually one of the better tunes – well, that's up to people to decide. But to me it's the most evocative piece. You get a real feel for the castle. It's quite a haunted and eerie place. Being a ruin it's splendid looking, very grand and elegant. You wonder about the history and what's been going on inside it. There's a lot of stories that the place could tell. I love it there! I have been doon there a few times after I wrote the piece. It's a good place to get a sense of Huntly. I suppose it's nearly 1000 years old. Nae quite, but it's getting there. Certainly folk have been living in Strathbogie for much, much longer, 1000s and 1000s of years. It's oot there!!

All the ghosts! Being in Huntly - what difference does it make compared to how you usually work?

With regards to writing music, I usually don't need a reason. I just decide that I quite fancy writing a tune, "Oh, that's something worth writing for". It's usually about people I've met, places I've been, and events that have taken place. I'm just in the middle of getting a book published, a collection of music. It should be oot within a month and a half. Fingers crossed...

What's that book called?

It's called "The Cromar Collection". With regards to "The Strathbogie Collection" I'm doing in Huntly, I would like to think of something similar to that. That's the main thing about getting the grant. The point of my residency is to write a collection of music. It's something that will be left after me. Hopefully local musicians or musicians wherever can get a taste of Huntly just by playing the music. And it would be nice to think that maybe it could be on sale in America. It might be of interest to fiddlers there, or for tourists who want something to take home. I would like to record all the music onto a CD as well, which I imagine will be commercially worth doing. But the main thing is that it's made me focus on something particular and look oot the various interesting points about a place, its people, the character and the history. There's quite a broad range of stuff. I didn't want to just write about history, ken? There are tunes about folk that are still alive and there are Huntly institutions.

There's the Gordon Schools, Dean's of Huntly...

And the Crown Bar and Huntly FC! I've actually written 32 tunes. Now I feel I've done that and there's nae pressure. I can feel relaxed and we'll see what happens with the inspiration bit!

When you write these compositions, do you write first and then play it or how do you do it?

A bit of both actually. It depends on how complicated the rhythm is. Sometimes I need to check and get my fiddle oot to reference the notes. But quite often it's fine the first time I write it. Tunes that are rhythmically harder need that I sit doon with the instrument and work through the piece.

Do you ever go back and change things?

Sometimes I do. There can be some mistakes. Especially if I haven't used my fiddle; then I find something that doesn't work well and I'll change details. But, on the whole, once I've done it and played it through a couple of times I'll just leave it. When you start tinkering you get away from the original inspiration.

It's gotta be...

Spontaneous!

Yeah. How come you call the collection Strathbogie? I know that Huntly once was called Strathbogie, so it's going back in history...

Well, it could be the Huntly Collection, but it's just to make it cover the district around Huntly, which is called Strathbogie.

What is Strath?

It's a Scottish word for a valley.

Now I understand why you call it Strathbogie. For a moment I thought you were being romantic!

There is an element of the historical side. In the music I play I have a sense for that, ken? I'm trying to cover the entire scope of Huntly. At one time it was the Earl of Strathbogie, who was fighting for the wrong side against King Robert The Bruce, I think. Then the land was granted to the Gordons. They came from Huntly doon in Berwick on Tweed, in the South of Scotland. It's England now, but it used to be the biggest port in Scotland. But it kept getting nicked!

So Strathbogie was given to the Gordons?

Aye, and they started building up the castle to reinforce their new Earldom, I suppose. And then the town sort of sprang up in a true sense at that time. I think... I don't want to go too deep into the history because I might get some details wrong!

I've heard that it took many years before the locals would start calling the town Huntly.

Aye! Oh, I can imagine the stubborn locals! He, he!

This whole idea about getting a public grant, people's tax money... I guess you want to give something back to the people?

Aye. I've taken some of the mair advanced local young fiddlers once a week. So they are getting tutoring for free. And also, this Friday I will play at the third ceilidh, which is open to the public. I have played little spots at the school concert and there was a Doric Poetry Festival. So folk don't have to pay, which they would if they were going to a concert. Unless they happen to stumble across me playing in a bar somewhere! So I feel that I have put as much as I can into it. And I made a real effort to write good music. I didn't just rattle off some rubbish. I want to leave something that stands up through time. And I'm really pleased with the stuff I've come up with. The pipe band is playing a couple of tunes that I wrote for them and some of the young fiddlers are playing some other tunes. And once the music is published, obviously anybody can play them. I mean I've got enough faith in my music. I will be playing some of these on my own and use them in my programme when I'm performing. I would like to think that the music is created for Huntly and that folk from here will appreciate it. I dinna like to say that I'm proud of things, but I do feel proud of this! I aimed to do about 25 tunes. In my other collection there's 100 tunes and that's ten years of work! So that's a lot of stuff to write in a short space of time. But I'm conscious aboot nae writing just for the sake of writing and nae feeling a spark of something unique coming. You don't want to repeat things, ken what I mean?

Aye!

Ha, ha! If I was to write nae mair tunes in the next month and a half I would still be happy with what I've written already.

Of course you wouldn't put out some rubbish just to get it over with. You spend time in Huntly, you meet people, you play for them, you teach and you write music. It could be seen as an awful lot of work and a pressure...

It's just my personality, I guess. Some folk would maybe choke up under the pressure, which I find sometimes gives me the real focus. The sense of having to do it blocks oot any other distractions. And I find that the longer I've been composing the easier it is to get into the frame of mind for it. You kind of open up the channels and let the creative flow come oot! I draw on my experience and by that I get the feel and style from past music without copying it. It's true to the tradition, if you like.

What do you live from when you don't have a grant? I know, you told me last time but...

It was probably the stuff that was left out! He, he! Right. Mostly concerts; I do a lot of concerts. I have actually got an agent in London. Although, to be honest, he hasn't got me that much work! He's not like a manager who tells me what to do. If I get folk asking me to do a concert, I will just say that I'm free but they have to talk to my agent about the fee. So there has been some stuff like that, for instance the Edinburgh Festival this year. Also there's a certain amount of teaching, I have been teaching in Huntly for the last 6 years. It's all right. Also I still do a wee bit of work on the farm and help my folk out.

And they pay you?

Oh aye! Well, aye... I have to pay the rent!

What's the teaching like?

It's quite hard work, to be honest. You need to be listening the whole time. You need to be analysing what they are doing wrong and be able to tell them how to correct it. I find it quite tiring. So I wouldn't want to do it every day. But I do enjoy it. And some of my pupils are winning competitions themselves now, which I find mair satisfying than when I was winning competitions on my own. You can see that you've passed something on and they've listened. And you can see them become players with their own style. I mean you don't want them as clones. Everybody has to put their personal voice into the music. You give them the traditional essence of the music and then you allow them to do their own thing.

Do you ever tell anybody to just forget about it?

No, I've never done that. They usually get fed up themselves! But if they're keen I'm happy to help.

You both play as a soloist and in different orchestras and bands?

I used to play with the *Banchory Strathspey and Reel Society* a lot. That was quite a big part of my life for a certain period. I've nae played with them for quite a few years now because I've been too busy doing my own thing. They are an amateur orchestra, you would say. But they've been to America, Canada, France, and Germany, travelling about quite a bit. That's where I got my earliest experience. After a certain point I became one of the soloists, doing a few sets during concerts, like many others. They've given a lot of young players a platform to go and perform. I've played with various bands for dances and things like that, and I've played with a band from Shetland called *Rock, Salt and Nails*. It's like a folk-rock, quite high-energy type of thing, which is quite different from my real passion. But it's good as well, and it means playing with an electric fiddle. I missed the last tour because I was in Huntly! But I will be playing at *Celtic Connections* (Glasgow Festival) with them. I find that the longer I do my solo work, the busier I get. It suits me because it's what I really love doing.

How many CDs have you published?

The new one, called *Granite*, will be my sixth. Although the first one was just a cassette. I did that in 1991. I would say that my playing has changed a wee bit since then!!

Can one buy your CDs in music shops?

Oh aye. And I sell a lot at concerts too. Same old story; the better known you are the easier it is to sell your stuff. HMV are taking 700 copies of the new CD, which for a fiddle record is quite a lot and certainly mair than I've ever had them take. Deveron Arts has made a big difference in the last wee while. I was certainly surprised about the interest from the media, the newspapers and TV. It all means that I can help to promote traditional Scottish Fiddle Music in the way I feel that it should be played. It's nae that it should be a museum piece and that you can't touch it or change it. That's ridiculous. Everybody would just be banging drums and playing bones, ken? If that was the case nothing would develop. I just feel that there's a certain unique character. And if it isn't being taken care of it will be lost. Then all you have is folk researching old records and things because there's naebody playing it. Well that's my opinion anyway!

You have played in America?

I haven't been to America for a few years now, but I might be going to New York next year and maybe up the East Coast. I have got a contact there now. The first time I went was in 1992. It was with a Scottish Cabaret Show, I suppose you would call it. It was traditional Scottish music; there was dancing and singing and narration. For instance they did the life of Robert Burns. It was kind of a Scottish ballet!

Was it kitschy or?

It was a bit nasty actually! Ha, ha, ha! That side of it was... But they had a pipe band there, the *City of St. Andrew's Pipe Band*. I have kept in touch with them and they are still friends. The tour was called *The Gathering of the Clans*. In the programme I was referred to as the *Clan Fiddler*! I did my solo spots and also played in the band, backing the singers and the dancers. The Americans loved it! In Scotland there was a traditional programme called *The White Heather Club* in the 60s. This was a wee bit like that. And I suppose it was a wee bit like shortbread box, loads of tartan and singing about heather covered hills and I suppose just pandering to the Americans' notion of what Scotland is like. Which is okay, I mean, it was a brilliant tour. We did 53 concerts in ten weeks. We were in 29 states and zigzagged across. We went to Palm Springs, over to Pasadena, San José, Ventura, Carmel. We went through New Mexico, to El Paso and up through Oklahoma and Nebraska, then up to Chicago and back down. We were in Detroit, went up to Boston, to Main and Vermont and then back to the deep South, through Virginia, West Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and finished up in Florida. That was quite a thing. At the average concert there would be 2,000 folk. The biggest one had about 10,000!

I was there a couple of times after that. I did some solo stuff. It was based around the Highland Games in New Hampshire. They had about 80,000 folk over a weekend! It's just amazing how the Americans think it should be done! It's quite amusing actually. But they are so passionate about it. I suppose because they've had such a short history in America so folk want to have some sense of where they come from. I suppose it's the same for folk who are Irish or German or even Danish.

Your portrait in Aberdeen Art Gallery. It must be quite special to be portrayed at such a young age?

It's a bit funny. I dinna really think about it. But it was an amazing thing when they did the launch and "There's my picture, it's as big as me"! It's just very strange. The idea originally came from a chap called Ian McKenzie Smith, who is the President of the Royal Scottish Academy. And he's from Aberdeen. He loves traditional fiddle music and he's got my CDs. There's these portraits of the great fiddlers of the past, like Niel Gow and James Scott Skinner. I might be wrong, but I don't think there's been anybody since. So he wanted to continue a tradition of great fiddle players being captured and hung in an art gallery! Well, he thought I was the person, rather than somebody who's maybe cracking on a bit, sort of in their twilight. He wanted someone still in the prime of their career. You kind of reach your best at about 40 and then you level out. You're probably emotionally mair mature and mair experienced, but your body disna respond!

Who's the painter?

It's a woman called Jennifer McRae. She studied at Gray's School of Art. She also did Aberdeen's Lord Provost. She painted some studies and did a lot of drawings to get to know my face and my hands. There's the big portrait in Aberdeen and then there's one in The National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh as well. But I'm nae convinced it's there because I've never seen it!!

What do you think about the painting?

I think it's a brilliant painting, a good job. But there are certain mair personal things and I think my eyes are a wee bit dead, which is maybe just me standing there getting painted, looking a bit bored! Apart from that I think she caught me quite well. A certain generation in my family would have liked me in my kilt, although the kilt is in the background. It's maybe mair a notion of this old portrait of Niel Gow painted by Sir Henry Raeburn. Ken, great artist, "Nice, we wanted one of them"! But she's got a style and you can tell it's Jennifer's painting.

And she's contemporary! Talking about contemporary - what kind of music do you listen to?

A lot of different stuff actually. I like a lot of rock music; some old albums that I still dig out, but haven't listened to for ages, are Van Halen, Thin Lizzy, Queen, a lot of stuff. I really like the Darkness just now. It's a new English band, kind of heavy rock. You would probably like it. The singer is like David Lee Roth, ken? It's a bit nostalgic because it's the sort of stuff I listened to when I was in my teens! Metallica. Big Country was a band I really liked, Scottish band. Loads of stuff, Rainbow, Kiss I liked! Ha, ha, ha!

They are all 20-year-old bands!

But some of them are still going; that shows you that they've got power. I like AC/DC! I like punk stuff as well. I like Travis. I'm nae into rap, little bits and some of Eminem's stuff is okay. I think you get folk who stand out in any genre. I love Johnny Cash. I'm nae into jazz but at the same

time I can appreciate folk that are really great, like Miles Davis. But Pop Idol stuff I turn off right away. It just sticks in my throat. I mean, like these boy and girl bands; they all sound the same and you canna say there's anything unique about it.

People want to be stars...

It's just about being famous for the sake of being famous. Like Big Brother. And the trouble is that they all think they have a right to be stars, "I should be famous"! I mean, to an extent you need the media as an artist. But at the same time the media is perpetuating it to a point where it's completely ridiculous. Another thing that really annoys me is some of the young presenters on the telly and their lack of professionalism. It's just like anybody that's got a bit of personality and can speak without making fools of them selves are good enough. They can rattle off and what really gets me is the sarcasm and nasty humour. It's putting folk doon. I find it really disgusting. Who are they to be criticising somebody that's nae good-looking or too fat? They're just sitting there, mouthing off. It's horrible! Someone who started out in something stupid becomes a face on the telly and that's all. It makes it much harder for folk who've genuinely worked to be good. It's just a symptom of a lot of things that are wrong nowadays.

And the worst part is that people want it and it sells.

Come home from work and sit in front of the telly and let the pish wash over you!

Depressing!

That's why I keep doing what I do!

Oh it's late... But we can't finish like this!

Ha, ha! No that's nae a good way to finish an interview, "Just let the pish wash right over you!"

I hope you're nae ginna put that doon!