**Yank the Chain**

Our initial approach to this residency was to think broadly about what resources were at our disposal and about how that could match up to what we needed, how we could be as maximal as possible with any opportunity we’re given. We basically thought that spending our artist fee on a package holiday to the Costa Del Sol would be more inspirational for our work at that time than going to stay in rural Cambridgeshire.

We collaborated previously on a radio project, Got 2 B Radio, broadcast between 2015-19, which looked at British culture, politics, current events in erratic and zoomed in ways, which was as much about a swapping of subjective interests for enjoyment as it was anything else. Through writing, music, sampling and collage we covered multiple protests, moments within popular culture and personal obsessions we’d had with subcultural and mainstream anomalies and figures.

The Costa Del Sol is a place where there is a ‘hyper’ idea of british-ness; caricature brit-abroad identity, an ex-pat community rumoured to be one of ‘the criminal underworld’ (a subculture in itself) related to the trade of amphetamines and birth of EDM, and most crucially: it is affordable, we could get more for our money than in Cambridgeshire. In our work we explore what it means to collaborate, and in this instance, we wanted to explore what it means to push a residency to some sort of limit. The tug of war between institutional and non-institutional ways of working is a constant dilemma for both of us and we’ve asked ourselves to what extent we want our work to be framed by or be within an institution. We addressed this with two distinct stages of the residency; we went to the Costa Del Sol and then we went to Wysing to consolidate what it was we were working on.

Prior to going away in 2021, the mood in the UK and amongst our peers was that art felt quite redundant, people were questioning its relevance. Writing the lyrics to each track was done in a languishing state of mind which echoed this mood-: obviously it was a pandemic and everything had just gone, you know, really *wrong*, and then Ruth was like let’s just fucking go on holiday and get a really good deal and then the writing went from being an exploration of what it is to languish, from being another institutional critique that you sort of can’t be arsed to even *do* anymore, and commenting on the disgusting and (sort-of) understandable apathy of the general public, us included in that, and wondering do we, in some way want to sell out? Do we just want to get a big house in the country, not that we could afford that, and moving from that feeling, to really wanting to escape, even momentarily, and then imagining and making a sort of strange version of a filmic clichéd road-trip, embarked upon by friends, a reality.

Within the bracket of examining languishing and then escapism as a trajectory of emotion, we’re also referencing music from the 2000’s which involves a bit of a post-punk hangover, electroclash and ultimately a deadpan mode of delivery. A very dry, anti – not anti-stylistic because it’s very stylised – almost like a nowave minimal sound and aesthetic. Looking at this now, it seems like in the lead up to (and at the time of) the millennium a lot of dance music, electronic music, and pop culture, culture in general was really maximal, positive, drawing on all sorts of things from around the world and was extremely hopeful and then as we got into the 2000’s it was like there was a *crash* of hope and people were like ‘oh no, nothing’s changed’, and went back to these retro-aesthetics, stripped things down, and returned to a really niche kind of exclusive idea of style.

In terms of the recent economic history of the UK, obviously the late 90’s was this big boom of excess, we’ve then got (pre the 2008 recession) this palpable societal awareness that everything is going to slowly go to shit, and then the financial crash happens and everything does go to shit and we’ve both been making art and music in a time where either everything has gone to shit that very moment in terms of seismic shifts in the social fabric of our existence on a personal and societal level, or in a time where we have a very recent memory of everything going to shit, because everything has gone to shit so many times on this accelerated loop in the last decade, maybe a bit more than a decade, meaning that a deadpan, sarcastic, bored vibe is something that we are very comfortable with, so it felt interesting to reference a time when that really had come into play, both in art and in music.

For Yank the Chain, we combined our individual research threads: escapist feminist films (Emily), which typically end in tragedy or at the very least don’t attempt to eliminate misogyny in the plotlines, going on holiday with a friend and documenting it was very interesting from that perspective, and longterm research into hedonism and subcultures (Ruth). Torremolinos, where we stayed, is absolutely a site of hedonism, escapism and leisure.

Perhaps the most crucial thing this work explores via its process, is the importance of genuine friendship in the arts, and the importance of a bit of attitude and organisation in the face of hostile environments and individualism. Which brings us to what we’ve produced:

* Yank the chain – 3 track E.P:
*Music to Kill Yourself To*
*Anti-Work*
*Stuck in the Toilet*
* *Off the Record* VIDEO
* A lot of great conversations, playlists, ingenious ideas we didn’t go with in the end and anecdotes we will not be sharing on this occasion.

Lyrics

1. *Music to Kill Yourself* *To*

Wishing for steamy windows
noticing that the shadows
cast from buildings
are now darker than the night sky
on the sagging
skyline
and with all the rubbish out there I wonder why the top
layer of the ground doesn’t just cave in

The world has looked sick for a long time
Sick street lamp orange mixed with computer generated
dark grey
compliments a widespread feeling of a sticky,
overheated
stasis.
We watch the climate crisis unfold on-screen,
a contradiction very typical of the current state of
affairs
we now live inside a society which feels speculative
and sadly
I have to admit that self mythologising hasn’t worked out
that well so far

and ever since I noticed that the outside was so
dangerously ill
and I realised binging binge watch after watch wasn’t
going to teach me anything I didn’t already know
I thought I should probably go
and connect some other way
and now I spend all my time listening to
Something To Talk About
and *you*
You said *anything but that*
Blindingly obvious
but it’s definitely not ten years ago,
is it.
Sense of possibility minus fucking five I’d say
and that song *it’s only four degrees*
that we used to wail to
has turned terrifyingly into two

***(Elastica lyrics)***
**Keeping a brave face**
**in circumstances**
**is impossible**
**cannot describe**
**so many**
**decisions**
**it’s impossible**

in addition the immediate circle has turned into anywhere
within walking distance
kill the bill / yank the chain / stamp on the ceiling and
throw shit out the window
is your advice
and I don’t know if it is mine anymore.
Overcome and overturn and four emphatic hearts
whilst tenuous protest powers are rapidly stripped back
and statues topple into the river
and there isn’t a free party for miles
but a rather damp set of decks somewhere on the outskirts
of somewhere
Run the generator please
lets get fucking moving
don’t turn into a gamer
why has the focus become buying houses?
really?
is my next question –
I thought you thought ownership was evil
unless it was in some way collective
but who am I fucking kidding?

I always knew a lot of ideals would dissipate in favour of
some kind of
something else
and that is called moving up
and moving on
and maybe I want moving up
and moving on to be me too
Or maybe fucking not.

and now I spend all my time listening to
Something To Talk About
and *you*
You said *anything but that*
Music to kill yourself to
Blindingly obvious
but it’s definitely not ten years ago,
is it.

***(Elastica lyrics)***
**Keeping a brave face**
**in circumstances**
**is impossible**
**cannot describe**
**so many**
**decisions**
**it’s impossible to know**
**which is the proper order**

**The best position to be in**
**Take advantage**
**Or so it seems**
**The way it goes**

***Anti-Work***

**Chorus:**

**What do you do?**
**well I mean it’s complex**
**People ask me**
**how can I be useful to them?**

**It’s a red flag**
**Don’t ever tell them the truth**
**It depends on what you mean by ‘do’ anyway**

**I am always working**
**Also doing nothing**
**Am I wasting my time?**

This job feels like being inside of
a permanent break up
It’s creepy
like, yes,
you *are* evil but
you *aren’t that bad*
sometimes
you can even be
quite kind
Hannah Arendt coined
that one a long
time ago
I only know that she coined it
because I read it on an infographic
about whistleblowing
Kill me now

Only joking
I’m inherently anti-work
I think
To be anti-work
and yet employed
you have to become
a really good liar

**Chorus:**

**What do you do?**
**Well, I mean it’s complex**
**People asking how I can be useful to them**

**It’s a red flag**
**Don’t ever tell them the truth**
**It depends on**
**what's your definition of ‘do’?**

**Making always making**
**Decisions I’m regretting**
**I can’t make up my mind**

This country feels like the many facets of
an abusive relationship
*very* demoralizing
like, yes,
You *are* evil but
you *aren’t that bad*
Occasionally
you can even be
slightly funny
Even though you gaslight me
all day
Without a shred
Of remorse
Because you are such fucking
heinous egomaniacs
Kill me now
Only joking
I’m inherently anti-hierarchy
I think
To live under conservatism
and have cordial relations with 99% of people
you have to become
a really good liar

***3. Stuck in the Toilet***

Glad it’s not the 90s
Beer sponsorships and heroin
I’m playing the lottery again

Carved out so much space for
imagination
Then filled it all up with entertainment

And I’m living life like it’s a road movie
And I’m not really sure that’s what I want it to be

**I’m stuck in the toilet again**
**Having such a laugh**
**(Oh Oh)**

Typical maudlin
Navel gazing crap
I’d rather be (insert new phrase here)

This languishing theme
of boredom and bad pay
We use words that mean the wrong thing

I’m sitting by the window looking out
These are the observations
that I’m recording now

**I’m stuck in the toilet again**
**Having such a laugh**
**(Oh Oh)**

I was stuck in the toilet
I tried the lock but didn’t want to force it
People were hanging round for sex and drugs
The only people not having a good time was us

You were stuck in the toilet
I went upstairs and went and tried to sort it
So many people tried to lend a hand
No one spoke English didn’t understand

**I’m stuck in the toilet again**
**Having such a laugh**
**(Oh Oh)**

Panicking in the toilet
Until a guy came over and kicked the door in
And me and him became immediate friends
Then me and Ruth/Em were reunited again