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[Episode 56: Bang Said the Gun](#) (January 2016)

Transcript edited by David Turner – 18/01/2017

Host: David Turner – **DT**

Guests: [Dan Cockrill](#) – **DC** & [Rob Auton](#) – **RA**

Conversation:

DT: Hello. My name is David Turner and this is another Lunar Poetry Short. Today I'm joined by Dan Cockrill and Rob Auton. Hello.

DC: Hello.

RA: Hello.

DT: They are both from [Bang Said The Gun](#). We're going to start with a bit of background about 'Bang' and since Dan is the co-founder along with [Martin Galton](#), we're going to let him have that honour.

DC: So it was the late 90s I suppose when I started to do my first poetry gigs. I think my first poetry was in 95 in Brighton and Martin saw me do a gig down in a cave in Brighton and he decided, oh he wants to do that as well. So we thought we'd set a night really, but the nights we were going to during that time were... didn't really suit what we were doing.

So we getting a bit frustrated so the night we proposed to set up was a night that sort of smashed poetry and entertainment together. But it took a long way in coming because it... I think the first gigs were in '97, '98. That original line up.

DT: Were they based in pubs?

DC: In pubs, above pubs, London pubs. So we did The Wheatsheaf, just off Tottenham Court Road we did... Was you? You wasn't? No I can't remember... There was a few other pubs but we kept... Oh, The Old Coffeehouse in Soho, we were there.

DC: But we kept getting chucked out or there was problems with the management who didn't want poetry nights I mean. And no one came literally, no one came. And we'd have like, five performers and two people sitting in the audience. It was pretty frustrating.

So it was on and off, on and off. And then I suppose, 2008 all that time after we found The Roebuck, upstairs at [The Roebuck](#) and it was the first time the manager had said, yeah go and do what you want to do up there.

Whereas before there was things... we couldn't move chairs or we couldn't do this... And he gave us a free rein. But even those early days. I can't remember when you came on board Rob but was you at the start? When we were doing stuff at The Roebuck? Once again, no one came really, we just had...

I remember one time there was a football tournament on and there was two people in the audience and the chefs had... We could hear the radio or TV in the kitchen with the football on. And one of the members of the audience got up and went into the kitchen to watch the football. And I just thought, this is it man, this is the end. This is bleak.

DT: Was it? What do you think? Was that just a lack of understanding of what poetry gigs could be in general or was it that people just didn't quite understand what you were trying to do?

RA: People just didn't... I don't know. I think, if you say to the vast majority of the general public do you want to come to a poetry night there will say no.

DT: Yeah.

RA: So I'm not speaking for Dan or Martin but I can only imagine their thing was, let's make a poetry night that the general public would want to come to it because it's entertaining and it's not, crap.

DC: I think what we got frustrated with, we'd be at a poetry gig and it would be full of poets, rustling papers, waiting to go on stage. And we wanted to get away from that.

DT: So to give it a bit of context. What were most poetry nights like in the mid 90s? When you were first thinking that you needed to set something else up?

DC: They were in a room where the lighting was bright. You know, strip lighting. There was nothing set up on stage. There was no mics. The chairs were just laid out in lines. Everybody knew each other in the gig because they would be coming, you know... It was like their little community thing. Yeah.

We... I loved poetry. I love poetry and I'd go to these things and I'd want to leave within half an hour. So that was the point. And there is a place for those... You, know they're not bad in what they do, it's just that I didn't want to be there. So that was the reason for us doing some else really.

DT: There are two particular phrases that spring to mind when I think about Bang and they are two that appear on your posters a lot. The first is, "poetry not ponce" and the second is, "poetry for people that hate poetry." And I just wondered if you could both maybe say it about what those phrases mean to each of you.

RA: Well I've always been kind of at odds with the phrase of "poet" and "poetry" and I've never ever called myself a poet or anything like that. I think, for me it was just I was working with Martin in an advertising company and was finding it very difficult and started filling up a notebook with "writing". That had an idea at their core and...

Martin said, oh I'm starting a poetry night and I said, ah I've got some writing that I could read out, you know and then... So it's always just been "writing" so I think "poetry not ponce" is kind of... I find it very difficult when sometimes you go to a night and people might say, "that's not poetry", I don't think anyone should say to someone else whether something is poetry or not.

DT: Yeah, these phrases that appear on your posters a lot, were they sort of the original ideas behind Bang in general?

DC: They come from Martin. Martin's the guy behind those, he's brilliant at... We knew we had to brand the night, that's what we did different from most poetry nights that were going on that time. We branded it. We put a little picture, so as soon as people saw the poster they recognised it was our night.

DC: No one had really done that before and Martin, that's his great skill, he's worked in advertising all his life so he understood this is how we'd do it. So he came up with the

phrases, we spoke about what it was. We was like, "oh it's a poetry night for people who don't like poetry". That's it, like that's his phrase, he got it out there and "poetry not ponce" it was like, oh it's not academic. It is, it's in keeping with what the beat poets were doing, it is... You don't have to study it. You don't have to a degree to come to our night to get it.

DT: Who were some of the first poets you were booking for the night?

DC: We struggled to get anyone really but the first poet turned it around... And we were once a month, six... So we'd been once a week - six years. But we were in 2000... So we started that in 2009, 10. But we were once a month before that and the first poet that came down and we persuaded him... Because we had no money and so we persuaded [Elvis Mcgonagall](#) to come and it was the first one where the roof came off the night.

And it was it was full up, the energy in the room was incredible and he was on stage and he was on stage going, this is what a poetry gig is supposed to be like. So he loved it, the audience loved it. And all of a sudden after all those nights of no one turning up we or I thought this is getting close to what we imagined it would be.

It's never reached where me and Rob and Martin have spoken about where we'd want it, but it... At that night, that was the first time it kind of... Where I thought, yeah this is it. And then all of a sudden, he went straight from that gig to Norwich to do a gig. He was on the bill with [John Osborne](#) and [Luke Wright](#) and he just said oh this is a good gig. So all of a sudden people wanted to come but before that we couldn't go anyone, they didn't want to come.

DT: Why do you two think that Bang remains probably the only regular night in London that encourages the audience to have a good time? You know, because it still remains different doesn't it?

DC: Around the country that's not the case, it's been copied. But, I'm not sure, actually I think the energy of those early gigs... [Boomerang](#) have got it and Boxed-in. I think there are gigs around that have this... They've got that energy that we started to have in those early days.

But I don't know if there's any... Spoken word has taken over, you know and we're to blame for that a bit as well but it's getting... You know, the scene is swamped with it now really it's a bit like... Well we were about variety. You know, you could stick a paper bag over your head and say a poem or you could go... Or Andrew Motion could come up and read a poem so we was about variety. That variety, yeah, that's lacking I would say.

DT: I do agree that a lot of nights, similarly try and be energetic and not stale like a lot of other poetry nights. Though, I don't think many nights are as proactive as Bang with trying to get the audience to have a good time as well. And I think that's a really difference.

DC: That came down to Rob to really, go on you say what happened. I know what happened but you say what you think.

RA: I think it's a bit like music gigs, isn't it. I just know that my favourite music gigs are when you're dancing and everyone... The audience and the performers are in it together. Like, The Flaming Lips are a massive example of that.

DC: That's it. I remember one night we were at Bang and we were just speaking about a Flaming Lips gig, which me and Rob loved, and we were like, "ah we should make it like a Flaming Lips gig." Or try to, with no budget. And that was the thing really.

RA: Their gigs are just the most inclusive thing ever. So with all the massive balloons and, not we have balloons at Bang but there's... It's just, when it's 50/50 between the audience and the performers and trying to make a thing together that exists only in that one night you know. So people can go away from it and think, "oh yeah we were part of that." Not like, I had someone reading about me for twenty minutes and I've been sat here for an hour and a half now and like...

DC: We didn't... You make the audience work in a different way so if I go to an academic gig I have to work to take out of it what I want. Whereas we were making the audience work in a different way, like you're part of the show. So when they meet us half way, that's when it really happens. We're not putting the emphasis all on the performers to go right you've got to do a blinding gig otherwise this isn't going to work. You could have all... There's been nights where you can have all the performers really hit a bum note but it's still a brilliant night because all the 'glue' works. [**RA:** Yeah.] And that's very important.

RA: Having, I mean the... Making the shakers, like milk cartons full of chickpeas is quite a simple thing for people to shake. You know, the people have like a rattle instead of applauding. That seemed to make... I mean we did a gig The Bull and Gate, was it? In Kentish Town? [**DC:** Yeah] It was like, "oh Bang is doing The Bull and Gate in Kentish Town".

RA: It's a massive room and there was, yeah there was five of us putting the night on and then there was two audience members. But we still did it and because the two audience members had two shakers each. It sounded like there was a lot more people in the room and those two people were having a great time. So that is kind of... I mean some of the solo gigs that I've done, like there's been two people there but as long as you go and give it a hundred percent then...

DT: Yeah. I was talking to [James Harris](#) and [Dan Simpson](#) last night. They're both... Dan's a poet as well but both are involved with stand-up comedy. They we're talking about how silence can be really contagious in an audience and if you get... You only need five or six people in an audience to not laugh and that will spread.

And in normal poetry settings, if you've got too much light people feel very vulnerable and very exposed. [**RA:** Yeah.] I've always felt that when I come to the bang there's an anonymity behind the shaking, behind the shaking. Because there's so much noise people aren't embarrassed to laugh. You know, people aren't embarrassed about being the first one to laugh or the first one to cheer. Because there's already so much... You know, you're all being... You're all embarrassing yourselves as the hosts, you know.

DC: We did, the amazing thing we did was train the audience to listen really well and be loud at the right moments and that was... You can sense when more than half the audience are new because you're almost, it takes five or ten minutes to get them in line to say, "oh, look this is how you do it." And they get it and then they...

But the point of it being intimate... It was about being at the best house party that you've ever been to. [**RA:** Yes.] So you come up the stairs and you feel, "come in, have a drink." It was about making everyone feel welcome whoever you are. You know, welcome them at the door, give them glow-sticks. So they didn't come in thinking, "oh, what am I supposed to do." It's just like, you can do what you want.

DT: Is it sometimes hard to encourage people that would consider themselves purely page poets to come and read? Are people a bit intimidated by the audience?

DC: Yeah, because they don't know what to expect but I think when they come and do it they love it. So you know we... Also those people have to have a big personality so I think when Andrew Motion did... The thing about him is he's a really good performer. So if you've got a page poet who isn't such a good performer to do it then maybe that would be more difficult. But he's very engaging.

DT: I thought [Helen Mort](#) did a great job. [**DC:** Yeah] Last time she read because she came on after some really funny people that had obviously worked a lot on the comedic side of their set as well. But she came on...

DC: Yeah, and she would have been... She's a great performer as well I think. Are there any... Have we had any straight, straight, I mean page poets? [**RA:** I don't think so.] You know, who would need a lectern to read from. I don't know.

RA: No. I think though, once you step on stage you're a performer whether you're a page poet or whatever.

DC: And it wouldn't matter on our stage, that's the thing, you could be... Your first gig or your...

DT: No, I don't think anyone would be left to flounder on the stage. I just mean that it might just be intimidating to take the step up on the stage.

DC: I think [Roger McGough](#) was really nervous was when he came. He was super nervous about it because there's that expectation which you know people... People who haven't even been to the gig think it's something else.

DT: So Bang's had a bit of a break. Was it October last year?

DC: I don't know. It was summer wasn't it?

RA: Yeah, was it May?

DT: Sorry, did you stop before Edinburgh [Fringe Festival]?

DC: We stopped before Edinburgh and we was supposed to come back in September as we didn't. So we were supposed to come back in September then it got moved back to January, yeah.

DT: So you'll no longer be at The Roebuck. You're moving to [Bloomsbury Theatre](#) now and that starts on the 28th of January and it's going to be once a month now is it?

DC: Yeah, once a month instead of weekly.

DT: So I suppose why... First of all, why have you moved to a theatre space? Maybe explain the physical space that you're going to be occupying at The Bloomsbury as well whether...

RA: It's in the studio [**DC:** at the moment] because the main space is not available at the moment because of all the roof problems.

DC: Yeah, they've got asbestos but we've got the main space in October. But we are in the studio space.

RA: Which is how many seats?

DC: Seventy seats, intimate little room which suits us brilliantly.

RA: But there's like, there are a lot of lights and there's going to be a technician and we've never done that before. I've always... There's been one spotlight and you know whether that makes it better I don't know. But it means that we can have like strobe lighting and stuff. Does strobe lighting make poetry better?

DC: Makes it much better yeah. I think, though, the reasons we moved... There's many reasons why we've move but Bang, I don't think Bang was going to continue to exist if we had stayed above the pub. Because everyone knows... If anyone who has put on one gig knows the effort it takes to put that one gig on.

We were doing it once a week and so to book the acts to set up our room which is a lot of set up and a lot of takedown. So even though the gig was two hours it's a four... You know, it's an hour set up, an hour breakdown, a two-hour gig. A day to book all the acts for that month. We suddenly... We'd grown up, we'd suddenly got really busy. You know I had kids, Martin was working really hard. You were getting on with your solo work.

It just became impossible to keep that level of anarchy above a pub without... We were doing all the press ourselves and we looked around didn't we to see if we could get help. Then you came up with the answer really. Avalon came in didn't they? To represent us and they could do the press, they could get us gig. They gave us a tech-team. So all the things that we were struggling with, of the admin were taken off our hands. So that was one of the main reasons for moving.

But also, things like Rob was doing all the music and the sound. And all that made it really personal and brilliant because of all the mistakes... And especially when I was doing it with Rob we had a great understanding of when things were coming in and out so the show got really tight. It just in the end, you know... What I always said to Rob and Rob always said to me was that I wished I was in the audience watching this. But when you're doing your work for all that time you never get a chance to watch it.

DT: I suppose it'll be nice to eliminate like little annoyances like turning up to the venue and someone's stolen the HDMI cable to the projector and stuff like that.

DC: Yeah, all that stuff. And when you've got someone to take care of that for you it's just stress free.

DT: It means you've got time to spend on the bits you wanted to be involved with in the first place doesn't it.

DC: We can turn up and concentrate on the show and do the show.

RA: Yeah, and try and enjoy it I think and put a shift in and try and be a... Because I always loved it at The Roebuck. I think just towards the end of last year it was like, just becoming difficult because the audience...

DC: It changed, the audience changed.

RA: It really changed and there was a lot of... It's just hard when you've been doing it for... How many years?

DC: It was six years weekly.

RA: Six years weekly, like.

DC: It's a lot of shows. [**RA:** Yeah.] And we'd grown up so the audience had changed and the young people that came in those first, in those first weeks had gone off and done and started doing their own shows. So that, all that group that put the energy in there from the audience have all gone. And we started getting middle-class people coming to the pub whereas before it was a whole mix. It was an older generation of people.

DT: Had The Roebuck changed in that time? The pub must have changed.

DC: The pub had got well known for being a really nice pub to go and have food and drink in I suppose and Michael had done a brilliant job, the manager.

RA: I think, we didn't have a massive amount of press exposure but even just like a few little articles I think helped. It changed from people coming to the night and thinking, "oh I'm excited to see what happens, let's have a good night". And like, we all worked together audience and performers and people who organised it to create something. Whereas I think

towards the back end it was more of like the audience were turning up and saying, "I've heard this is meant to be good."

DC: Expectations had changed.

RA: Yeah, they did. It really did.

DC: You know it gets mentioned on Radio 1, "oh, this is the best gig in England." People turn up and go, go on then prove it. And that wasn't the case before, we were all in it together. I'd stopped doing the comparing, I wasn't turning up to the night because I had babysitting duties and things. We were all tired and I think we were feeling it.

DT: A point I've made a lot of people that are looking to put on nights and trying to, I don't know, raise the status of spoken word and poetry gigs in general. Is that if you're trying to follow the model of comedy nights and [music] gigs you are then facing audience that might not be really that bothered whether... About your feelings as a host, you know and if you're shit they're going to tell. Or they might just walk or talk over the performers and stuff and once you start charging a decent ticket price and getting that kind of press coverage you've got to be producing something good regularly.

DC: It's got to be good every time! We did try to do that.

DT: Yeah, that's not to say that you failed to do that because it's hard to keep something running.

DC: We tried to... That's it, we tried to be professional and do the best gig every week and really bring it, even if you felt like you didn't want to be there. It was dragging it through to say, look let's make this, let's keep this energy.

DT: So is the structure of the night going to change?

DC: We've just brought back... It's the same we've got... Because the format works really well. We've taken it to Edinburgh, we've taken it to other places, other festivals and we know.

DT: It's more of a question for, like maybe people have been used to coming to The Roebuck.

DC: We got rid of 'the golden gun' but we're bringing 'the golden gun' back because that was missed. So that's, the open-mic is back.

RA: Yeah, and that was something that people really liked wasn't it.

DT: I didn't like it.

RA: Didn't you?

DT: No, because I lost twice! And I'd rather not talk about it!

DC: I remember your performance though. I was there when you did that and it was great!

DT: Sorry, no carry on... Yeah, but it's good that you're bringing back an open-mic element to it.

DC: And we, you know we were speaking before we started the interview. We we're talking about open-mics and the difficulties of them. The reason... We didn't have an open-mic when we started. But the reason we put an open-mic in those early days was to get an audience in, because no one was coming. I think I mentioned that at the start, we didn't have an.

So, we put ten spots on the open-mic. We had the tequila shot open-mic spot where you'd down a tequila and you'd do your poem and it was brilliant. So, Martin would turn up on stage with a big frying pan of tequila and it was fantastic.

RA: So, you'd get a free shot.

DC: So we realised actually that to make it a bit of a show, people really enjoyed that. And then we moved... Because we wanted it to be the main bit we moved the open-mic to the end and it got a lot of complaints didn't it. Because what we found was the open-micers would turn up and then halftime would come and they'd all leave and we'd lose our audience. So we were like, oh we'll move it to the end. But we did make it a... It was the highlight of the show.

RA: Yeah it was, yeah. When it clicks.

DT: I suppose it's also part of making the audience feel part of the show as well.

DC: Yeah, so it really worked. So we never intended on keeping the open-mic but actually it ended up being the.

RA: Some of my favourite moments were when... Yeah people would like, someone would sign up to the open-mic and like be reading for the first time ever. And they'd bring like seven or eight mates and like they were... Their friends are behind them and it's really magic.

Like some of the open-mic nights where you go and like see people doing it for the first time and then people who... They'd never thought that they'd do it and they... I think that was a good thing or is a good thing about Bang is like, people don't feel intimidated by the word poetry. They're like, "oh yeah I can. If I do feel this way about something I can write some lines about it. They don't have to rhyme it doesn't have to follow any kind of form. It can, but it doesn't have to."

You've got to get your insides out and that is like... And say it and say it how you mean it and give it heart and soul and just seeing that happen for... And then it's like it's a bug, I mean the first time I ever did a gig was at Martin's fireworks party in his back garden. And then Dan said do you want to come and read some at Bang and like just got the bug of going, "wow, it's kind of addictive!"

DC: I remember it because you read. I remember laughing a lot because you read three at the first Bang, you read three poems. Martin turned me and said, "oh, make sure he only reads one next time!" [RA: Yeah.] And now look at you.

DT: Let's go back to the phrase "poetry not ponce", theatre spaces can be a bit poncey can't they so how... Is there anything that you're mindful of avoiding after moving to The Bloomsbury?

DC: Well, we don't know how it's going to work out, but we're going to try very hard to bring that anarchy into that space. There's certain things that have changed. Obviously ticket prices change, so that's going to get rid of a certain type of person who might want to come because they might not be able to afford it.

We're keeping the doors open, the bar's right next door to the theatre space so people can come and go whilst the people on stage reading. So yeah, hopefully we're going to break down those barriers between, what you're allowed to do and what you're not allowed to do in a theatre space.

DT: I mean, that is one problem with theatre spaces in general is the cost and it is very exclusive, isn't it towards [DC: Yeah]... But it's, I suppose it's the compromise you have to come to.

DC: I just hope there's enough, you know... Bang wouldn't have continued at the pub and I just hope there's enough other nights on out there that are doing what we were doing, you know five, six, seven years ago - that people can go to. They don't have to come to Bang but if they want to... We 're only doing Bang once a month. People were coming regularly to bang and it was what? Seven, eight quid.

DT: I suppose that's one thing. People perhaps who can't afford at least, you know you've got a one off ticket price of... What's the first gig costing?

DC: Concessions £12.50, then £15.

DT: So, fifteen quid against thirty-two pound if you wanted to go every night of the month, you know. So it does give people a chance to maybe put a couple of quid away and go to one gig a month rather than.

DC: And instead of coming, yeah, twice a month you just come once.

RA: Yeah I think it's... Hopefully it'll reach a new audience of people. I mean, January, I couldn't believe it but all the tickets have been sold. And that just goes to show that, I think

there are going to be new people who may have never been to a spoken word gig but go to a lot of, maybe stuff at The Bloomsbury Theatre. So I think it's kind of our job now to say this is what a spoken word can be. And it's exciting really to see what the audience is like. And it's going to be a challenge but that's a good thing right?

DT: Yeah. And on that note, I mean is the move to a theatre space a move just for Bang in itself or do you feel like you're trying to elevate poetry in general in London?

RA: Not really. I don't think that's our job, is it.

DT: Sorry, not to take the lead but just to play some part in...

DC: It's a weird one. I think people think we did... Just because we led on certain things... I remember when we done the films for Channel 4, there wasn't any poetry films around really, we certainly... There was a few, wasn't there, that we looked at and we were like... It just so happened that we made fifteen in a short space of time. But now lots of people make them.

Poetry's become popular in a... Not because of what we were doing, it's just that we were there at the point when it was going up. we had our own ambitions to do stuff to make a living out of it really. We didn't think we were changing anything.

It's just that when we were trying to do TV we were breaking doors down to do it and now I think those doors are open a little bit. Or when we were doing The Roebuck, you know there were certain things that were easier because we could do exactly what we wanted. But it was harder because we were trying to bring the audience in. I don't know, what's the question again?

DT: Whether you made any conscious effort to play a part in trying to raise poetry in London from the established sort of venues and take it to a wider audience? It may not have even crossed your mind.

DC: Do you know what, early on we might have been as arrogant to think, "yeah we're going to do that". I don't think we I don't think we could do that.

RA: It's difficult isn't it, because I don't think there is any promised land of being like... It's, you know that goalposts are always... Goals are always moving. And if someone had said, "oh you're going to do Bang at The Bloomsbury Theatre" I'd be like, that's good and it's a new challenge but I guess now it's like... What do we want to do? We want to do the studio gigs, try to make it as brilliant as possible, so then it goes into the... Next year goes into a big space and then it can be like a whacking great big party every month and that will have a lot of exposure. There'll be more people in there. But I think at the core of it is just like turning up and trying to grab people by the scruff of the neck and be like, "we're alive, come on.

DC: Shake them out of this virtual world that has everyone sitting on their Facebook.

DT: Partly, that question is borne of hearing a lot of people lamenting the fact that not enough people... That poetry audiences aren't as big as they'd like them to be and that, somehow the status needs to be raised. But I never understand what people want it raised to. Because if you're saying you want it raised to the point of a Flaming Lips gig, surely you should just go to a Flaming Lips gig? If what you want is a concert experience, then go to a concert. If what you want is a theatre experience the go to the theatre.

DC: You've got to be careful what you wish for [**DT:** Exactly] because you know comedy isn't as rich just because it's got a bigger audience now. It was better when it wasn't successful, in a way. You know, because of the variety.

DC: And I think that's what I... I'm worried about. Or, I'm not worried about it at all, poetry's taken care of itself, forever. You know, it doesn't need us to look after it, but it is a shame at this period in time that there is one style happening. A lot of one style and I'm not saying there aren't other things happening but it is swamped with that and when people say I like poetry and they've never been to a poetry gig they're not talking about poetry they're talking about [George The Poet](#), [Kate Tempest](#). They're talking about maybe hearing [Holly McNish](#) on Radio 4. They're talking about these other things that aren't necessarily poetry.

They are poetry, but they're not the variety that I would like. I'd like to go and watch a gig with an array of people doing... That's just them doing what they do. But there's a lot of copying of like, "okay, there's that one-man show". So when we did... You'd know about one-man shows in Edinburgh, from when you started doing them, to now. There's now hundreds but there used to be like what twenty or thirty maybe going on the now there's hundreds of one-man shows.

People are choosing... You know, "oh poetry belongs in a book", so that's why books... Poetry belongs wherever you want it, if you want to put it on a wall. If you want put it in an art gallery. If you want to put it in a book. If you want to do a one-man show, that's all fine.

DT: Can I bury mine in the garden?

DC: You can bury it in the garden, you can do all of that stuff and that's the point. But if everyone's doing a one-man show you have to question... You think well, what were they thinking? Why did they think that was the best vehicle for their poetry? Could they have done something else with it? You know, that's my thing really.

RA: Yeah.

DT: So time's ticking on a bit, I think we'll just wrap up with what you're both up to individually in the future and we'll start with Rob.

RA: I'm writing a new book called Take Hair. Hair.

DC: Take Hair or Take Care?

RA: Take Hair.

DC: Yeah.

RA: Take Hair.

DC: Yeah, I get it.

RA: Because people keep saying to me, "take hair.

DC: How are you spelling that?

RA: H... Take and then H-A-I-R.

DC: Yeah.

RA: And I don't know if it'll work or not. Take Hair. Does it work?

DC: What are those [Michael Rosen](#) books where they're called...

RA: Take Care?

DC: I can't remember what they're called but when you go and ask for something.

RA: Has he got a book called Take Care?

DC: No he's got a... He's got kids books that when you ask for them it sounds like you're asking... He's got one called you know, 'have got this book?' or something. So when you go and ask for it and like, " have you got this book?" and their like, "yeah, what book?". That sort of thing. No, that's it, it's called "Have You Got This Book?"

RA: So I'm doing that, I'm writing new ones with [Burning Eye](#).

DT: Yeah.

RA: And I'm also writing a new show about sleep called The Sleep Show. And I'm going to do previews of that and then I'm doing a tour of my water show, last year's show. I've got gigs at the Soho [Theatre] and things like that.

DT: And if people want to follow what you're up to, are you on Twitter?

RA: Yeah I'm on [Twitter](#) and Hotmail. I'm on Hotmail! I'm finding it hard though.

DT: I did expect you to be on Yahoo actually.

RA: Did you? Why?

DT: I don't know, it just suits you more.

RA: You think I'm more Yahoo?

DC: You have a letter... You send a letter.

RA: Yes I do! I've got a newsletter.

DC: You have a newsletter which is great.

RA: Though it's not really about news. I think it's the thing I enjoy doing the most which is... Start writing at a keyboard and just don't stop, for a long time and then send it out to people.

DC: It sounds awful but it is good.

RA: It's just like trying to see where it goes.

DT: I can't believe I've lived without it!

RA: You can do it on Mailchimp.

DC: You need to sign up.

RA: If you go to www.robauton.co.uk Auton, A-u-t-o-n dot co dot uk and sign up to the mailing list. I'm due to send one actually, the last one was in December. You know, it's a chance for me to talk about things in the supermarket.

A lot of people are going to the supermarket and there's a lot of funny stuff that happens in a supermarket. Like, I don't think it was in the last newsletter, not to give anything away... It'll be in the new newsletter. You know, Kellogg's Cornflakes had a special box with Father Christmas on the front. Did you see that?

DT: No.

RA: Well it was like an old illustration of Father Christmas and there was this lady and she had a basket and she had the Kellogg's Cornflakes box with Father Christmas. And this little girl, I don't know if it was her kid or not but she just got the Cornflakes box and started hugging it and saying, "Santa, Santa" and it made my day.

You know, there's just, just so much magic everywhere. I think that, the thing, like just walking along I mean... Yeah we were walking here and there was a lady behind us saying she shot Jimmy Cliff.

DC: I think I'd shot Jimmy Cliff.

DT: Yeah she was accusing Dan of shooting Jimmy Cliff.

RA: Oh, she said you'd shot Jimmy Cliff?

DC: Luckily we had to come down this road because I didn't fancy her following me down the street going, "you shot Jimmy Cliff" and everyone getting the idea!

RA: Just stuff like that.

DT: It's pretty standard that behaviour on Old Kent Road. Talking of supermarkets have you seen the grumpy cat fans in the Sainsbury's in Brockley? It's back now, they got rid of it but it just sits on top of the freezer.

DC: Oh, I saw that!

DT: It's really lairy and they can't get rid of it! Yeah, it's a really grumpy thing, so yeah check that out. The grumpy cat of Brockley. So yeah, Rob I'll put the links in the description of this audio. [RA: Please do]. Then you can find Rob's stuff and I'll forward tweets of yours.

DC: I think website worth looking at anyway. I like Rob's website. Your 'what people have said about you' page... What do you call it on your page?

RA: Praise and criticism.

DC: Yeah it's brilliant, it is very good. That's worth a read in itself.

RA: I've had quite a lot of [**DC:** Criticism!] Yeah, criticism. Like, praise and criticism... Like what people... if I get a review in Edinburgh... The bad ones are always kind of... I don't look forward to reading them but sometimes some of the stuff that people say is just like.

Yeah there's a lot of bad stuff, I mean Vanessa Feltz was the one where she... I was speaking to her on radio and she was like, "ah, that's just sad". So now I've got the quote that is, "That's just sad - Vanessa Feltz.

DT: Dan, what are you up to?

DC: Nothing as good as that really. No, I've got a [book](#) coming out with Magnum photographer Mark Power which... I had a gallery show in 2010 of the work so it was sculpture's, it was a sort of an experiment of how you put word and images together. And we've finally got the money to make the book so that's going to come out this year and it's got loads of fold-outs and posters and the sculptures in there.

So it's concrete poetry really, so that's really exciting that that's going to happen. So I think it's going to be, by the time it goes to print in Italy and stuff it's going to be most likely March or April time before it happens. But the 'dummy' is done and it's all mocked up and it looks like that's... So that's really exciting because I've waited a long time to see it so hopefully it's out there.

I'm doing a project with Rob's best mate [Damien Weighill](#). Where it came out of... I'd done a project with [Tony Husband](#)...

RA: I don't know if he's my best mate.

DC: He's a good mate?

RA: He is a good mate yeah. I've never had a best mate I don't think I'm that kind of person.

DC: He went to your birthday party.

RA: Yeah, he went to my birthday party.

DC: Or did you go to his birthday party?

RA: Both.

DT: Do you deliberately not have best friends?

RA: I just never got into it.

DT: So everyone's on an equal footing or have you just done away with the idea?

RA: I just don't think people like me enough.

DC: Well you know what's happened? Since I've been doing a project with him, I'm much better Friend of than you are.

RA: He's a very good friend yeah, a very good old friend. But you know it's difficult to have friends.

DC: Yeah anyway, so I'm doing a project with him. It came off that I'd done a project with Tony Husband where I'd send him a poem and Tony Husband, the cartoonist would do a cartoon of it. But I sort of... Damien Weighill is a... Would you call him an illustrator an artist? [**RA:** Definitely.] An illustrator, he does these amazing drawings anyway, so I'm doing a sort of connected book with him through Burning Eye most probably where I send him a poem and he sends back an equivalent as a drawing. Then I do a poem from that drawing. So about eight or nine illustrations in so we're doing that. And I'm writing one by myself as well which I'm collecting the poems together but that might be another year off really I suppose.

DT: In your shed?

DC: Yes, in my posh shed. So I moved house because I had boys so we moved house and yeah I'm lucky that I've got a posh shed.

DT: I've been following with a lot of interest your shed developments.

DC: I've been doing 'shelfies'.

RA: There are some good books on those shelves, yeah.

DC: Those 'shelfies', I'm going re-do them all and I'm quite excited by the.

DT: That's vanity, isn't it?

DC: A 'shelfie'?

DT: No, re-doing them! Re-posing your 'shelfies'? You've fucking changed Cockrill!

DC: You know, because they might move around. There was a decision made maybe five or six years ago when I just said, when do you get a chance to put stuff in one place. And yeah, mostly all my favourite writers would have had a place to go and sit and I never had that. Everything was done round the kitchen table with, you know, kids screaming or and... And it's hard isn't it?

DT: No, joking aside it is important to have somewhere to go and work.

DC: I made a decision to get my own space and shelves... It's the first time I've had all my books in one place. Not scattered around the house. Our last house, all my books were in the kids bedrooms. So instead of them having kids books they had like John Berger books on their shelves. "Can you read this one daddy?", yeah! So that's brilliant, really exciting.

DT: You had [Paul Birtill's](#) collection. What is it called?

DC: [Terrifying Ordeal](#).

DT: That's it, Terrifying Ordeal, that book is fantastic.

RA: He was one of the first people at Bang as well. I remember that night.

DC: I saw him at Brixton, that was the first time I saw him, at The Windmill there. I think me and Martin... Was you there?

RA: I don't think so.

DC: So me and Martin done a gig as Bang I think... I used to have a bass player who used to play along with me. We played The Windmill pub and Paul Birtill was there. It must have been late 90s maybe early 2000s but I saw him and everyone was speaking over top of him in this gig and I just watched amazed, he was amazing.

DT: Yeah he's fantastic, people should check him out. That's B-i-r-t-i-l-l, Terrifying Ordeal. I read one of his poems on our Christmas special, it's brilliant.

DC: Yeah I like, there's one about him saving the world but he can't even be bothered to take the rubbish out, it's too good. Yeah it's great.

DT: So Bang Said The Gun starts up again on the 28th of January, that's sold-out but I suppose if people are desperate to go maybe they can contact the theatre and get on the reserve list.

DC: But you can also book all the tickets in advance so all the tickets for February, March, April, May are up.

DT: Yes. You've got all the acts booked but so people know what's going on.

DC: We haven't got all the acts booked actually we're just... We are...

DT: You're just taking the money!

DC: Yeah! This month we've got [Harry Baker](#) and [Salena Godden](#). Next, we've had a couple of pull-outs for February but we think we've got a really good line-up. If all the shows sell out, in October we've got the big one which is five-hundred seats in the main space so which will be people that we haven't had before who we want that are A-listers I suppose.

DT: I look forward to my call, thank you.

DC: I'll get in touch with your agent.

RA: Shout out to [Laurie Bolger](#) who is hosting the first one.

DC: Rob and Laurie are now the hosts.

RA: We're going to be hosting it and [Peter Hayhoe](#) who has done loads of work.

DT: The Prince of Penge.

DC: Or the poet laureate of Penge who does all the booking and all that hard work in the background which is yeah amazing. Shout to Martin Galton.

DT: Yeah Martin.

DC: And all the people that have supported it.

DT: I don't know if you remember but at the start I said "Lunar Poetry Short" so we should stop.

DC: We've gone way over!

RA: The first half is a bit dry though.

DC: Yeah. Cut that.

DT: I'll just put in the last seven minutes or so.

DC: Yeah. By the way see you all at The Bloomsbury.

End of transcript.