

AM: You have so much that you have collected here in your studio. Is there anything left on your wish-list?

PB: Well, I used to have a Joseph Cornell box, which I was doing a swap for, but I didn't achieve my part of the swap so it went back and I regret that. And I had some beautiful David Hockney drawings and two HC Westerman sculptures, so there are things that have come and gone – but then, with the proceeds from their sale, I was able to buy this studio. As someone once said to me: 'Peter, you never own anything; you curate it for a little while' – and almost everything moves on.

One thing that I just received – actually, it arrived about an hour before you – was a big butterfly print from Damien Hirst. I had given a piece of work to the Red charity auction that he did with Bono in New York, and he gave everyone a print to say thank you.

AM: That's so nice. Those butterfly prints are beautiful.

PB: I have always felt that artists ought to give something back. I am very grateful for the older artists who talked to me and were kind – not all artists are, you know. I was taken to a gallery in the 1980s by a writer called Gordon Burn and introduced to Gavin Turk, Tracey Emin, Damien Hirst and that whole group. I befriended them and now I'm still friends with most of them and collect them a little bit. I have a big collection of Colin Self, but I couldn't afford to collect Damien.

What about you; what do you collect?

AM: Well, there is this artist named Brad Kahlhamer – I heard about him because someone sent me an image of this painting he had done with the title 'The Kills' written underneath, and I just had to find out if it was referring to us. It turns out it was, and he sent me a huge print of his work, which I really like. He wants to collaborate on something but we need to find the time.

The only other thing that I really badly want is a painting by musician and abstract expressionist Don Van Vliet – I love his work.

PB: But that would be attainable wouldn't it? I mean, he's still alive, isn't he?

AM: It's like seven or ten thousand dollars!

JH: I'm not really in the game financially to get excited about the kind of art that I'd actually like to buy. Jake Chapman gave me some sketches though – he did one for my birthday, for which he drew on a £20 note. But being typically Jake, he had written 'Happy Birthday Jamie Cunt Face' on it.

PB: For me, my dream piece is a small Jasper Johns table sculpture in silver. It's one of the most exquisite, beautiful things I've seen – and of course, I would like the Cornell box back again.

You know, I like listening to music while I work. I love the Beach Boys, Van Dyke Parks, Talking Heads and classical music too. But it is interesting listening to your latest album *Midnight Boom*, because the only influence I could pick up on is Shirley Alice, who recorded clapping in her songs.

AM: Our first album, *Keep on Your Mean Side* (2003), was kind of our Velvet Underground effort, and our second, *No Wow* (2005), was

our Suicide record, or the experimental band Cabaret Voltaire. And then this last record – well, I think so many guitar bands now have become really retro and everything seems to gravitate back to the 1960s. I wanted this one to represent a snapshot of now.

So we didn't listen to any music for inspiration when we were in the studio. I found I was looking at old movies instead. I discovered this documentary film called *Pizza, Pizza, Daddy-O*; I think it was set in 1967. It shows these inner-city school girls from LA singing all these playground songs with clapping. Well, they were in the vein of playground songs, but the lyrics were very twisted because they are singing about their environment and problems like domestic violence.

PB: Malcolm McLaren recorded clapping songs too, didn't he, with some kids in New York?

JH: Oh, did he? I love it, because these songs come from nursery rhymes so they are really primitive, stripped-back and simple. The melodies are really uplifting, especially with the clapping and all the rhythms.

PB: I hope that you don't ever let anybody do your covers for you – it wouldn't be appropriate; it would be a terrible mistake.

JH: It just wouldn't work, collaborating with somebody else. It's terrible – I'm a bit of a libertarian in life, but I'm definitely fascist when it comes to being in the studio.

PB: So you both sing and play the guitar. Who plays the drums?

AM: Usually, we use a recording of the drums, or a percussion drumming machine. We've worked out every way possible of having a back beat.

JH: When we started off, we always presumed we would get a drummer, but we were so obsessed with writing songs and working together that, you know, three weeks, a month, three months went by and we'd written all these songs together. By then, we'd worked out all the ways of filling in the gaps of not having these other musicians, so we just carried on like that.

PB: What is that sound at the beginning of the new album? It sounds like a double bass, but even deeper.

JH: That is a guitar played through an octave pedal as low as it will go. When you just have a guitar and vocal, you don't get that low bass sound.

AM: In a way, it challenges the conventional way you use a guitar. And anyway, I can't play bass because my hands are too small.

PB: When are you playing next?

JH: We're playing in Paris on Wednesday, and we've got a tour of the UK in September or October.

AM: You must come and see us!

JH: What about you, what are you up to?

PB: I've just finished a portrait of Ricky Hatton – he's a lovely man; my wife and I went for dinner at the Ivy with him. I am illustrating Dylan Thomas' radio play *Under Milk Wood*, which I've been working on for 10 years; I've just designed a big rug for the Rug Company, and I'm even doing some jewellery. I think I'm running into a kind of swan song of my career – a big crescendo; there's lots to do! □

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JAMIE HINCE