

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Falling and Laughing

Grace Maxwell

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About the Book

An inspiring account of how a family survives when everyday life is blown apart without warning.

When musician Edwyn Collins, at the age of 45, suffers two devastating brain haemorrhages his doctors tell his partner Grace that if he survives, there will be little left of him. When he regains consciousness he can barely move or talk. He has aphasia – an inability to use or understand language – leaving him unable to communicate with his anxious family.

Yet Grace and their son Will refuse to give up hope that the Edwyn they know is coming back. Through gruelling therapy Edwyn fights to reinhabit his body and relearn almost everything he knew.

FALLING & LAUGHING

THE RESTORATION OF
EDWYN COLLINS

GRACE MAXWELL



EBURY
PRESS

To John Kennedy – ‘Put it in the book!’



PROLOGUE • AUGUST 200

ON OUR USUAL drive from Northwick Park Hospital to Harrow town centre for supper, Edwyn stuns me by bursting into song.

‘I’m searching for the truth
I’m searching for the truth
Some sweet day we’ll get there in the end
Some sweet day we’ll get there in the end.’

A song which has sprung from nowhere, he sings it over and over as I transfer him to his wheelchair and push him to our regular haunt. Our choices are limited by the chair, and the unlovely pedestrianised shopping centre location, but Nandos has tasty free-range chicken and good access. Edwyn is in full celebratory voice all the way there, and all the way back. After six indescribably weird months, he’s due to leave hospital for good in two days, so I christen it his demob song. Back on the ward, he sings it to Mark, his last remaining room-mate. Soon the two of them are belting it out together.

Mark was here before Edwyn and will be there when we’ve gone. He remembers our first meeting. Edwyn was stuck on a phrase at that time (something that has been a feature of his speech and language affliction), but I can’t remember what it was. Mark does: ‘The possibilities are endless. The possibilities are endless ...’

I AM COMPOSED of my thoughts. Imagine it. Suddenly there are no more thoughts. Your brain doesn’t work properly. The damage is such that you barely know who you are, the nature of your existence. The loss of your intellect, your wit, doesn’t begin to describe it.

The way it was for Edwyn, for Edwyn and me, was deeper and stranger. Before we could even think about his cleverness, his fabulous sarcasm, his highly developed sense of the absurd (where the hell had gone? Were they coming back?), we had to wrestle with questions of simple identity.

It’s impossible to imagine what it felt like to be inside Edwyn’s brain as he struggled to return to awareness, to self-knowledge. He describes it thus: ‘I was peaceful and tranquil at first. No thoughts at all. Edwyn Collins, that’s me, I knew that. But everything else, it’s gone.’

Brain damage was an especial dread. For two years I would not even utter the words. I used an euphemism I could think of to avoid describing what had happened to Edwyn in these unthinkable

terms. Edwyn was much more courageous. His honesty had not deserted him, nor his bluntness. He confronted his new self unflinchingly. 'Brain damage, I think. I'm a moron.'



EARLY DAYS

EDWYN COLLINS IS Scottish and so am I, but we are also Londoners. I came to the big smoke from Scotland in 1980, escaping a Glasgow that seemed cliquish and defensive. There were a lot of west Scotland 'flat-earthers' around then: they thought you fell off the world at the end of the M8. When I return to Glasgow these days I can barely recognise it. There is a very different, self-confident atmosphere and I remember all the things about the city that I loved.

I met Edwyn for the first time in my living room in Willesden, in north-west London, on a Sunday evening in August, three months after my arrival in London. A friend from Glasgow called and asked if I could put two people up for a few days (on the floor). Edwyn was the singer in a band called Orange Juice who, together with my other guest, Alan Horne, had set up an indie label called Postcard Records of Scotland, primarily as a route to release Orange Juice records. Edwyn was tall, gangly and the most voluble of the two. Alan was a little shorter, a little rounder and had the spikier personality. They looked great, particularly Edwyn, dressed in an old-fashioned and out-of-step-with-the-time tweedy style crafted from market stalls and charity shops. Dapper and original. Neither of them drank or smoked. They had beautiful manners and a brilliant way with an anecdote. Stories and gossip, exaggerations and embellishments, a deadly eye for the absurd in every human sketch. The purpose of their mission to London was to drum up attention for the band and their fledgling label.

The sales approach for the first Orange Juice single, a song that Edwyn wrote when he was seventeen called 'Falling and Laughing', was to pack the boxes in the back of Alan's dad's Austin Maxi and travel the length and breadth of the UK, calling in at all the independent record stores they found listed in the back pages of music papers. (After one trip to London in the Maxi, the windscreen blew in just a few miles up the M1 on the way home. Rather than stop and bear the expense of getting it fixed, or maybe because they just didn't have the money, they drove all the way back to Glasgow with no windscreen. It was raining, and even hailing, at one point. *For four hundred miles.* Complete madness. Apparently, Edwyn was crouched on the floor in the back, sheltering from the weather, until Alan made him come up the front to suffer alongside him.)

Going for the direct, straight-to-the-counter sales approach for 'Falling and Laughing' would result in on the spot transactions of maybe two copies, ten copies or, in one spectacular success, a hundred. I think they had pressed 1,000 and were soon sold out. Today, it's a rarity of great price. Edwyn and I don't possess a single copy, like most of his records, which is common among musicians. You give them all away. It's traditional, and if you end up with none left for yourself, that's just the way it is. It doesn't matter a bit.



IN MY LIVING room on that Sunday in August, Edwyn and Alan made an arresting double act. It's very difficult to accurately describe at this distance of time the effect of their company. They were very young, very clever and very funny. They made a compelling, mesmerising impression. A journalist and DJ from Glasgow, Billy Sloan, who knew them at the time and who we are still in contact with, remembers the Postcard fraternity as being a right bunch of smartasses, very bright, but also intimidating. You took your life in your hands, somewhat, in attempting to interview them. While sarkiness was their stock in trade (Steven Daly, the erstwhile drummer and manager, reckons that they used the bulk of their energies in thinking up the next great put-down rather than concentrating on pushing the band and the label forward), they were terribly quick on the draw, deft and articulate, and could be disarmingly charming.

Much of what I write here concerns human fragility and even mortality, but, at this time, these two rather extraordinary boys represented the polar opposite, overflowing as they did with vitality and thrilling with the invincibility of youth and the knowledge that they were in the moment. They certainly knew their time was coming and were brimful of exuberance and self-confidence.

Edwyn has described to me how he would lie awake dreaming up schemes and plans to advance

the cause of his band and the label. Alan would be doing the same. Everybody stuck their oars in, as a result of which, in retrospect, Edwyn thinks the label may have suffered from a surfeit of ideas, which ultimately contributed to its downfall. In fact it existed for no more than two years, folding in late 1981. For the enduring fans of the music produced by this precocious label, the draw was not just the music but in the ideas, the debate even, behind them. The music business and the majority of the record buying public can't be doing with too cerebral an approach to pop music. But for the Postcard boys pop music was a deadly serious business, and they aired their often conflicting ideas with one another and the public, like any healthy art movement would.

Over the years as Edwyn's manager, I have been asked quite often for advice from bands and individuals about the best way to grab the attention of the music business and secure a record deal. My heart sinks, because I have no blueprint for approaching record companies, cap in hand. Having watched Edwyn and co. in action, it's a case of if you have to ask how it's done, it's probably not for you. Edwyn and his Postcard compadres made up their own version of the music business and were scathing about the proper one. Because they knew the conventional business would never invite them to their party, they snubbed it and convened their own, and it became the one that everybody wanted to come to.

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THAT MONDAY MORNING in August 1980, Edwyn and Alan were up with the lark. As I was getting ready to set off for work on my moped (I was a house manager in a theatre), they were on their way on foot, to walk the four miles to London's West End in order to lay siege to music papers and magazines. With no appointments in advance, they achieved all they set out to. I remember how dismissive they were of the scene they saw before them at each magazine office. Seas of hippies behind their desks. They also planned to waylay the influential radio DJ John Peel. Far from attempting to ingratiate themselves, Alan was keen to explain to him the error of his ways. The precise quote was, I believe, 'Wise up, old man ...'

It was all tremendous, mischievous fun; the hallmark of Orange Juice and Postcard Records. But the music was powerfully seductive too and made the label one of the most influential around for a long time. The records left their mark and still speak to young people today. A musical critique would be impossible here: suffice to say, the early work is rather wonderful.

Soon the Willesden pad was a stopping-over base for the rest of the band and others from the label when they came to London to play gigs or promote records. Edwyn and Alan had persuaded Aztec Camera to record for the label and Roddy Frame, the preposterously talented front-man, came to stay. He was seventeen years old, a proper prodigy as a musician and songwriter. I remember his excitement at acquiring his first posh vintage guitar on that trip and again, in true Postcard visit style, his beautiful manners. This may seem unusual behaviour for fledgling rock stars, but Postcard Records was all about going against the grain. Rock posturing was studiously avoided. TVs were never thrown from windows, drug taking was for old men and as for cavorting with groupies, perish the thought. There was not a moral standpoint, simply that it had been done to death. The Postcard men rejected all behaviour they considered clichéd, hackneyed, boring.

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I FIRST SAW Orange Juice play live at the famous Marquee Club in Wardour Street, in the autumn of

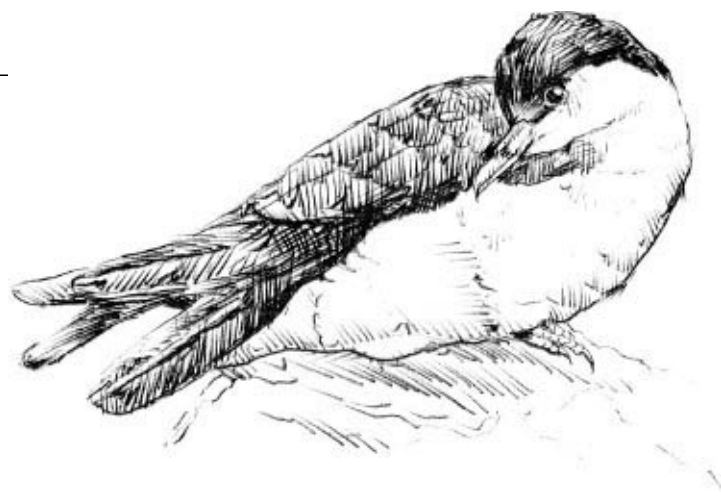
1980, supporting a band called The Associates. Edwyn told me, years later, that he was mildly surprised that night to see that in the period since we had last met, I'd transformed myself from hippy to a skinhead. I'd foolishly allowed myself to be lured into a hairdressing training session on South Molton Street on the promise of a free haircut. The guy I was assigned to had suggested a 'asymmetrical theme'. I had no clue what he was on about but, because I was clearly mad back then, I agreed. I ended up with a creation that was up and down like Gourock, as we say in Glasgow. A ludicrous 80s confection; a cross between the Human League and A Flock of Seagulls, with shaved bits, long bits and pointy bits. I lived with the hideousness for a week and then took the only course open to me, which was to have the whole lot shaved off. I was now a bleached-blond skinhead, a bit like Toyah in her young, fat face incarnation, as the punky star of Derek Jarman's film, *Jubilee* (unsurprisingly, this pre-dated the genesis of Edwyn's fancying me).

To see Edwyn's band play back then was a rare and wonderful thing. I'm probably not the best person to attempt to describe what they were like; there are lots of music writers who have made a much better job of it than I could. But the main thing for me was the absence of clichés. They couldn't play expertly, but they did play beautifully. The tunes were gorgeous. The words were clever and funny and self-effacing. They used to say they were 'anti-rock'. In the early days, Glasgow audiences used to chant 'Poofs! Poofs! Poofs!' at them. They liked that just fine. There was a campness in the delivery, deliberately affected to annoy the manly men of rock. James Kirk, who also sang, played guitar and wrote songs alongside Edwyn, was a particular wonder, the like of which I've never seen before or since. To go back in time and tape some of his occasional on-stage anecdotes would be a delight for me in my old age.

IN NOVEMBER 2008, the band members, Edwyn, James, Steven Daly and David McClymont were reunited for the first time in twenty-five years, to pick up an award, sponsored by the music therapy charity, Nordoff Robbins, in Glasgow recognising the impact they made on music at the time, and its reverberations down the years. James still makes music, David has lived and worked as a journalist in Melbourne for twenty years and Steven is a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair* in New York. All grown up, but they seemed to fall back into the same patterns with one another almost immediately. Accepting the award, James described a gig at Maryhill Town Hall in Glasgow where Edwyn played with his arm in a sling. He had been beaten up in Kelvingrove Park (Alan had been with him but had heroically run away!). At the gig, the audience kept shouting out for Showaddywaddy numbers and banging their pool cues on the stage in a menacing way. Orange Juice's sartorial flair and their outlandish kilter musical style was confusing the punters and they weren't best pleased. This was a full force no-nonsense (a Glasgow word for a guy who's up for a fight) reaction to the weird, un-Glasgowness of the band. The lads obliged with a blast of 'Standing in the corner in my new blue jeans' (from 'Hey Rock 'n' Roll'). James said Edwyn was the definition of grace under pressure that night, which rather neatly describes the original line-up of Orange Juice.

They excelled at stage patter, James and Edwyn. James' stories would be accompanied by Edwyn's convulsive laugh, a bizarre noise that those who have heard it in the flesh will agree defy description. As James told the story that November night, Edwyn stood beside him doing the laughing and for me, the years fell away.

TIME MOVES FAST and this version of Orange Juice burned very brightly for a short time before falling apart in a confusion of wounded egos and intemperate decision-making. Looking back on how short the actual time period was – maybe a year and a half – it scarcely seems enough time to have had such an impact. I wish I'd been their manager then. I would have tried very hard to prevent the original members from falling apart. In my arrogance, perhaps, I believe I could have been the sensible and impartial parental figure. I still think they are all brilliant people, dazzling originals.



EDWYN & GRAC

BY THE TIME Edwyn and I became good friends again in 1983, he was something of a pop star, although his band had been reduced to a nucleus of him and a drummer, Zeke Manyika. The signs weren't good. I was still working in a theatre as a house manager, something I'd done for years, both in Glasgow and London. I'd bumped into Edwyn from time to time over the intervening period, and followed the band's fortunes, but we really only became very friendly when he moved into my old house with the two photographers who had always lived there, and I was in my newly renovated, one-bedroom flat down the road in Kensal Green. For me, this was a thrilling time. After about ten house moves and millions of flatmates, I was finally on my own. I had been a member of a housing co-operative since I first came to London and it had finally provided me with my own place. Edwyn was a regular visitor and I became his confidante. I'd listen to his love life complications, feigning concern, while secretly finding his tribulations ridiculously adolescent. But on other subjects, he was a fascinating, instructive and hilarious companion. He had an interesting angle on everything and I learned so much from him.

In early 1984, Edwyn and Orange Juice were without a manager and he asked me if I wanted the job. Of course, I wasn't remotely qualified for the position, but the thought of self-employment was very appealing and I accepted. I think he may have been regretting his decision even as he was offering, but I gave him no opportunity to change his mind; after years of easy friendship Edwyn had developed a fancy for me and this was actually the true motivation for the job offer. He denied it for years, but I finally got him to admit his weakness. I hadn't set my cap at him, pop star or no. I was dimly aware that this might have been at the back of his mind, but I was happy to let events unfold as they may. I didn't see Edwyn and myself in that light. If it became a problem I assumed I'd get the sack. But I was deluded enough to think I'd be an excellent manager.

I sped through a crash course in the structure of the business life of Orange Juice, helped mainly by the terrific figure of Paul Rodwell, Edwyn's lawyer and a true gentleman. He was, sadly, a rose among thorns. It turned out, to my utter astonishment, that the music business was populated by misogynists and sexists. Men that were uncomfortable around women, basically. Coming from my well-illuminated, egalitarian theatre world, I think I had a skewed idea of the progress the world was making. I have never seen secretaries spoken to in the way they were in record companies. I was quite shocked.

Edwyn introduced me to the personnel at Polydor Records, where he had been representing himself for a short time. He would waltz in wearing a houndstooth overcoat, carrying a brolly and an old-fashioned, battered briefcase.

'Hello Edwyn! How are you today?' the girls in the outer office would ask.

‘I’m very well, thank you, my dear, and may I ask what you’ve been doing for my band Orange Juice today?’ Mass giggling all round.

One of the first meetings I attended as Orange Juice’s manager was with a fairly arrogant character who was in charge of international relations. He began to lecture Edwyn about his lack of touring activity abroad. Edwyn wasn’t mad keen on touring in those days, and Zeke was an illegal immigrant originally from Zimbabwe, who had overstayed his student visa by about six years and who no longer had a passport of any type.

‘The bottom line is, Edwyn, that unless you have a career abroad, you will end up with no career.’

‘Don’t fucking “bottom line” me, pal,’ Edwyn had snarled back. I listened wide eyed as he continued, starting to get more of an idea of what I had got myself into.

It’s amazing to recall how unperturbed I was as the depths of the problems with his record company unfolded. At this time, Edwyn was my job, not my family, and everything was funny. The next few months were like living in a daft sitcom – it was just what you would think being the manager of a pop star would be like. I was woefully inexperienced, but I was learning as I trailed around in the wake of my eccentric teacher. I even began tour managing at the back end of the year. The job of the tour manager is all-encompassing. Advance planning, musicians, crew, venue logistics, PA, lights, transport, hotels, catering, detailed itinerary, budgeting, accounting. Everyone on tour, especially musicians, can be needy and the buck stops with the tour manager. Later, for reasons of economy, I expanded my role to bus driver. I used to tell Edwyn that if we got really desperate, I’d become a long distance lorry driver. I enjoyed it.

I doubt Edwyn would have recommended a career as a driver for me, though. In the first year I worked for him we spent a lot of time together criss-crossing London in the ‘company car’, a second hand VW Golf. These journeys were hilarious. Edwyn would go into character (my favourite was Glaswegian hairdresser called ‘Angelo Morocco’) and keep up a running commentary. Probably because I was in fits, we had several bumps and scrapes. My favourite trick was reversing into parked cars.

‘You’ve just hit that car, you know.’

‘That doesn’t count. It’s just a touch. Everybody does that.’

Edwyn took to screaming ‘Touch!!!’ every time I did it after that.

One day I was delivering a lengthy lecture about car drivers and their disregard of motorcyclists. As I was in mid-flow we pulled up at traffic lights alongside a motorbike. The rider began knocking on Edwyn’s passenger window in an agitated fashion, pointing frantically towards the ground. It turned out I’d trapped his leg against the car. Perfect comedy timing.

Back at the record company, Polydor, relations were deteriorating. At one point, in high dudgeon over a perceived lack of interest in his forthcoming album, Edwyn asked me to convene a meeting with the head of the company. This gentleman was a tremendous character, terrifically old school, very courtly, with a penthouse apartment on the top floor of Polydor’s HQ. (He wasn’t long for the job as it turned out as he was soon transferred to a classical division, which I’m sure would have been a happy move.) But Edwyn had a sympathetic relationship with him and I had no trouble setting up the meeting.

I arrived first, and was greeted with great courtesy as AJ (his first name) enquired as to the reason for the meeting. I was able to fill him in a little before Edwyn blew in, fashionably late (his record back then was a whole four hours), tall and resplendent in a 1950s, camel-coloured, double-breasted Prince of Wales check suit with wide lapels and a turquoise sweater, topped off by his mad quiffed hairdo. I blinked at the sight of this vision of loveliness, but AJ rose graciously to meet him and w

got right down to business.

~~‘Now, Edwyn, Grace has been telling me about how aggrieved you’ve been feeling lately.’~~

‘AJ, I can sum up my feelings in one word.’ Edwyn raised his hand and brought it down on the table as he thundered dramatically, ‘Betrayed!’

Somehow, I maintained my composure. I will never know how.

By the end of November 1984 Edwyn had completed the last of four Orange Juice albums, which he called *The Third Album*. (More eccentric, or absurdist, behaviour. Or as Polydor would have put it: annoying.) He decided he wanted to advertise it on TV. This was never going to happen. Record companies don’t normally fork out for expensive television advertising even for groups they *like* and Polydor was no different. But we found a way ourselves. We funded a limited run on Channel 4 at Christmas time and I was cut some very nifty deals. We made the ad ourselves with the help of Channel 4 Films producer called Sarah Radcliffe, who did it for nothing because she liked Edwyn and she is a genuinely brilliant person. We had met her when she produced the last-ever Orange Juice video for a song called ‘What Presence?!’ that was directed by the famous British avant garde film director Derek Jarman. Working with Derek on the video was the greatest pleasure, the most ridiculous fun it is possible to have at work. Later, when I needed some advice about making the advert, I turned to Sarah, and she simply took over. How wonderful. It was directed by Nic and Luc Roeg, sons of the film director, Nicolas Roeg, and consisted of Edwyn holding a large fish, and introducing his new album. Cut to Zeke who intones, seriously: ‘Which includes the flop singles, ‘What Presence?!’ and ‘Lean Period’.’



All this as the word FLOP! flashed up on the screen continuously.

We never imagined it would help sales much. Edwyn was content to throw his own money at an elaborate wind-up of the record company. We were young and foolish and ever so slightly petty, and that had to be done.

So, that was that with Polydor, as you can imagine.

THE ENSUING TEN or so years were up and down for Edwyn on the career front. Strangely though, in retrospect, I can barely remember the periods of penury; when I was reluctant to answer the phone

open letters to find what fresh hell lurked inside. All the bad stuff was punctuated by adventure and enormous creativity. That's what I remember. Hurtling from one daft sketch to another. We invariably managed to find a way to survive each mini crisis, which in turn steels you for the next.

Edwyn moved into my little flat one item at a time. One day I turned around and all his worldly goods were there in their entirety, although I had no recollection of how they had arrived. I had formerly been a proto-minimalist: the fewer possessions, the easier to move, the less to clean up. My new flat had been spacious and empty, but, alas, those days were gone for good. As I surveyed piles of Edwyn's eclectic stuff, the battle lines for the next twenty years were drawn between the hoarder and the chucker.

I operated from the illustrious surroundings of our living room, conducting all business cross-legged on the floor. There was no room for a desk. If I was out, in order to maintain a semblance of professionalism, or more likely just for naughtiness' sake, Edwyn would pretend to be my cockney PA, Dave.

'Grace isn't available, this is Dave, her assistant. Well, I'm not really *orfarised* to make those decisions. But I'll pass it on to the organ grinder when she gets back.'

Later, when callers would revisit their conversations with Dave, I would struggle to hold it together. Eventually I started to behave as if my imaginary PA really existed.

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NOW A SOLO artist, we struggled to find a record company willing to support him. Edwyn's music still came as easily and naturally as it ever did, but he had made a fair few enemies in his time and we were up against it. We toured quite a bit, in the UK and around Europe, with me as tour manager and sometime bus driver. I only gave up after our son, William, was born, completing my last tour behind the wheel when I was six months pregnant. But eventually, in 1989, we were able to get Edwyn's career somewhat back on track when he was invited to record an album for a German label, Werk, at their superbly appointed studios in Cologne. Edwyn relocated to the city for three months, together with various members of his band and old friends, including our friend Roddy Frame, and the Orange Juice producer and famous reggae maestro, Dennis Bovell. These were wonderfully happy days, with Edwyn at his best, collaborating intensely with much-loved fellow musicians, with no animosity or rivalry. The result was just as he had hoped. I drove a transit van from London to Cologne at the end of the process, in order to transport the instruments back. I remember arriving in the dead of night with Edwyn and Tomgor the producer waiting up, dying to play me the fruits of their labours.

With this quite successful album called *Hope and Despair*, things started to take a turn for the better.

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By 1992, we were still living in my old flat in Kensal Green, still broke, but pretty happy. William had been born in 1990 and I always feel he brought us a lot of luck. Edwyn had begun to produce records for other bands and was hell-bent on acquiring a studio of his own. This was the only way he would be free to make records, without having to go cap in hand to a record company for permission to do so. We reckoned that the law of diminishing returns had come into effect as far as the record business was concerned. With each approach to the powers that be, there seemed to be an increasing reluctance to involve themselves with Edwyn's recording career. In short, we couldn't get

arrested, and we were quite weary of the dance. I was thirty-four years old, Edwyn thirty-two, and didn't seem very dignified at our time of life to go begging to idiots for the right to record. We were great at doing things on a shoestring, had had lots of practise in recent years, and were determined to find a way to plough our own furrow, unencumbered by the expectations of what Edwyn used to sarkily refer to as 'The Industry of Human Happiness'.

Bit by bit, Edwyn had been acquiring pieces of vintage recording equipment, centred around the Neve console, or mixing desk, from 1969 (with the famous 1064 and 1073 modules – he's always bragging about them), picked up for a song from the defunct Goldcrest Film Studios in London's Soho. As tedious as it may sound to outsiders, acquiring and learning about this old gear had virtually become the Meaning of Life to Edwyn. Next to his baby son, that is.

A vintage equipment dealer and producer named Mark Thompson, whom Edwyn met in 1993, had helped him find the adored mixing desk. Together they set up home in a converted coach house at Alexandra Palace, pooling equipment and splitting the rent. The birthing process was long and fraught, and, for us, set against a financial background that was, frankly, farcical. Looking back, I have no clue how we survived this period of keeping the studio going, and living on thin air. I do recall doing the sums at one stage and Edwyn asking me how much longer we could survive. 'Until two months ago. Press on.'

A RECORDING STUDIO is a complicated technical environment which requires very specific specialist skills to put together. At its hub is a recording console, or desk, which receives the music from the microphones, treats it, colours it, manipulates it, with the help of umpteen other bits of gear we call 'outboard', and transfers it to tape. Or that's how it used to work. Nowadays it will go to a computer hard drive. (Edwyn still swears by tape). The specialist guys who cable this lot together are, in my experience, a strange bunch who inhabit a parallel universe and are impossible to tie down to budgets or timescales. But where there is a will there is a way. And when it all comes together, you need a gifted engineer to operate it.

And this was when the beautiful thing that is Sebastian Lewsley came into Edwyn's life. They had met a year or so back, when Edwyn spent time at a studio in Chiswick called Sonnet. Seb was nineteen and the studio owner had been ruthlessly exploiting his youth, enthusiasm and talent, although Seb did learn a lot in the process. It was a very funny place, frequented by old lags of the music industry, such as Shakin' Stevens, the bloke from Sailor, and the brilliant Anthony Newley, providing Seb with a rich seam of comedy that he mines to this day. Edwyn and Seb are wont to slip into character, as Jackson Gold and Denny Lorimar, two old-school music producers, bitter old dinosaurs, boring for Britain. This pair, based as they are on real-life weirdos that have been part of Edwyn and Seb's past, have made an indelible impression on every client who has passed through our studio in the last fourteen years or so. Nobody escapes; all are sucked into the sad world of Jackson and Denny. People have come to speak of them as if they really exist.

In 1999, Channel 4 commissioned a sit-com based on the pair's imagined exploits. Six episodes and a one-hour special were made. The storylines, risible as they were, were sketched out in advance but the dialogue was entirely improvised. A huge cast of characters, composed entirely of friends and colleagues, (for example, Jamal, our accountant, played Jamal, the accountant) rose magnificently to the challenge. It aired late at night, and was re-run, garnering Jackson and Denny a tiny but fanatic following. One day soon, it will resurface.

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