

## One & Other Project

*OK my name is Tim Jones and I am conducting this interview on behalf of the Wellcome Trust and the One and Other project. It's the 16th of August 2009 and the time is 4.45 p.m., if you could tell us your name, your age and where you come from.*

Right I am Alec James, I'm 55 and I live in a little village or just outside a little village Glandery (?) [incomp] hmm, which is near [incomp] in Pembrokeshire.

*Thank you very much, when was it you first found out about the One and Other project?*

I had heard about it, I listen to Radio 4 a lot and that's where I first heard about it and Then, hmm, on the Archers also because they had applied to go on it and out of curiosity I went on to the website and clicked and here I am. So, I'm feeling a little apprehensive but also looking forward to it because it's my chance to say 'hello world', I have staged performing arts in the past. I also make sculpture from papier mache and I do voluntary work for an organization called Span Arts Narberth (?) where we put on music, gigs, comedy nights, theatre, general workshops for children, craft workshops and so on and so forth, music workshops, singing workshops and I'm just interested in the arts in general; it brings out my creative side.

*And what is it you are going to be doing up on the plinth?*

Hmm, well I've had various ideas, I'm going to have an attempt at really lame comedy which is my own sort of style plus trying to get people together, hmm, which I call, I put under the title of friendship, getting people to actually trying to interact with each other and then finishing off with a bit, hopefully, with [getting] the crowd to sing.

*And what would you like them to sing if anything in particular?*

They will be singing a song which I, it's a traditional song, it's a bit mad, it was revived in the 70s by the fabulous Bingo Brothers and it's called *Once we have a Donkey* so hopefully it will go OK [chuckles]. Maybe a complete nutter chaos but it should be fun trying.

*OK can you tell us a bit about, you mentioned performing arts?*

Yeah, yes.

*Getting into the performing arts, how did you get into them?*

Well, it was a course at our local college and it was, I mean, I always wanted to act when I first appeared as the door nail in Alison Wonderland when I was, oh god, about 10, 9 or 10, and then I wanted to act; I did a few other things with school and then I sort of fell out of it completely and I noticed then, oh how old was I? It was over 10 years ago and there was a course at our local college and I went and did the course and ended up with distinction with all the subjects [chuckles] of all things, directing, producing, music, dance, hmm, and I managed to work it out of my system. Then a few years ago, actually following a car accident, I completely lost the plot and found I couldn't face anything and this is now my emergence from a deep dark place

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and the plinth is [sigh] well...

*Could you talk more about that change if you are happy to talk about it?*

Yeah it was a car accident and I just lost confidence completely, complete and utter confidence in myself. I was suffering from lack of self worth, hmm, and, you know I mean I don't want to dwell on it too much because I lived with it for so long that I want to now put it behind me and move forward and if this gives me an opening to something even if somebody says, 'arrg', you know he's a happy-ish chap, if something comes out of it great if not well it doesn't matter either but I like working with people, I do enjoy making people happy and making their lives worthwhile.

*And what is it you get up to with Span Arts, tell us what you do with them?*

Well I tend to help with the set-up of the gigs, hmm, as I say the main thing that I've been running is the comedy club which we run once a month so we set up the lights and the stage, the seating and the ambience of the whole place. Then sometimes I introduce it, other times I'm just there, you know it's a bit of PR with the audience as well, sort of making them welcome and making it a happier venture which 9 out of 10 it usually is and people go away after a really good night, yeah.

*How does it feel being part of the One and Other project with 2400 plinthers?*

[Chuckles] A bit like winning the lottery without the cash, without the begging letters and without the indignity of having to buy a ticket, no it's interesting, I suppose you know [siren can be heard in the background] in our circle, I suppose it is quite an historical event. It is very much 21st Century and my view on art is that there is just well, there are so many art forms to the point where what is art? It's such an individual thing but everybody can appreciate some kind of art, yeah, and I do a bit of painting and decorating as odd jobs and stuff like that but even there, whenever I do it I try to make an art from it even if it's digging a flower bed I'm gardening, you know, if you put a bit of creativity into it, it can be so much more than just the thing you are trying to achieve, I suppose it is putting a bit of love in anything you do and it becomes potentially an art form.

*And what is it you do for a living?*

At the moment I'm unemployed but I tend to, you know, I keep myself busy, I'm actually job hunting at the moment and you see although I did performing arts that would be nice to go into something on that side of things, hmm, but I also then a few years ago studied sustainable architecture so I'm very interested in low energy housing whether it be straw bale or timber building but, basically yes sustainable building, I think we could resolve the whole housing situation in this country overnight very cheaply with homes and buildings that not only look nice not only are they relatively cheap to construct but also give a wonderful ambience to those living in them and it might actually help get rid of some of the stresses and strains people suffer in modern day living.

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*What made you go for that?*

Because I believe in it, well, years and years ago I opened one of the first, well one of the first organic shops in Bristol back in when was it? Late 80s early 90s so that sort of step put it on the path of seeing life differently, seeing life, looking at, OK I put on my sort of profile on the One and Other website, they said you know you can make a comment and my comment is that we destroy everything; we need to create everything we want, in other words we destroy our clean air, we destroy our water, we destroy our food for the sake of television, fridges, cars, you know in other words we don't need a lot of things that we crave but while we are doing that we are destroying what we need to keep ourselves alive.

*What would you like, what changes would you like to see?*

Well it would be nice to initiate the change in our way of looking at how we live, hmm, I'm not saying the way we live, I still believe in happiness and contentment and the rest of it. But OK, to change the grid, people generally want, want, want and the more they have, the more they want and the more it takes them away from what do we really want. You know the three basic things we need in life are good food, clean water, clean air and social interaction so and any more it's just making people feel oh I'm better than the next person but none of us are better than anyone else we are all born naked and we will die naked we are born alone we die alone but in the meantime why don't we have a bit more love, a bit more understanding a bit more empathy with others.

*What impact would you like this project or your hour to have?*

Ah ah, it's pure entertainment, I'm, I'm using it as an excuse to say hi, this is Alec I'm back into the world.

*And, and, what emotions are you feeling before you go up?*

I'm absolutely terrified, but funnily enough having walked around the Square now I'm not feeling so bad about it than I have done today because, I mean, I would probably be more nervous standing on stage at home, standing in front of people I know than being up here in London where you can be anyone you like, you know this is the thing about London although you know I'd like to get away from time to time because in London I can be anonymous just for, but then it gets to a point when the noise gets to me and the rushing around, the inconsiderate nature of it all because people just [have] blinker[s] doing their thing, hmm, but it does me good because when I go home it makes me appreciate the sea side and the hills the grass and the trees and the you know, the sort of the quietness of it all.

*And what things would you say are most important to you at the moment in your life?*

Hmm, oh god, looking for love, that sounds desperate doesn't it, no I'm single at the moment it would be nice to find, hmm, a good companion to see me through the rest of my days I suppose.

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*And what hopes and fears do you have for the future?*

Well, hopes that, impossible hopes that maybe humanity will see the futility of war and aggression, hmm, and fears you said, did you say? Fears that everything goes wrong I mean, I... I don't really have any fears however I have had fears of us drying ourselves you know the human race is sort of heading, heading to mutual destruction which is kind of, it would be sad.

*So what are your closing comments of being part of this project in London in 2009?*

Well good luck to anyone who is involved whether it will be participants of whether it will be the people working in the project, yes I wish you all well, have a happy life.

*Thank you very much.*  
OK.

**END OF RECORDING.**