

**[TRACK 1]**

EVA:

Hello, I'm Eva and today I'm interviewing Sid Jones. So Sid, how long have you owned Muse Music?

SID JONES:

I opened the shop in September 1997 so that makes it over twelve years.

EVA:

Have you worked in music shops previously?

SJ:

Yes I helped out in a shop in Halifax for ten years called Groove Records, which was one of the major independent shops in the North of England at the time, but always had a hankering to do it for myself.

EVA:

What stuff did you sell?

SJ:

Well initially when I first started helping out there it was really meant to be a temporary thing until they got somebody permanent and I ended up staying there ten years, and the music at the time wasn't on CD it was records in those days, but this was 1980's. CD had you know only just been launched in a very small way and most things you couldn't buy on a CD, you had to purchase a tape or a record, usually an LP or a single, and the stock was mainly across the board pop music, some rock, quite a lot of what's euphemistically called independent rock, indie label stuff, but after helping out there for about a year or so I noticed that the stuff that was really selling well was the heavy metal and the guitar orientated things, and the rock things, so I suggested that the owners concentrated on that and we built it up into a rock specialist shop, at least the upstairs part. The downstairs part was more chart orientated with all the singles and so on.

EVA:

Have you ever had any interesting experiences there?

SJ:

Many. I've met lots of nice people and also some pretty weird ones as well. If you've read the book 'High Fidelity' then you'll know the kind of people that frequent record shops cos all that – even though that book's fictional, it's based on what's reality. Record shops tend to attract eccentrics. Nice eccentrics are fine – some of them are...the kind of people you don't want to meet. One of my favourite stories was a guy who appeared to be absolutely straight as a die, he used to be a regular customer, he used to come in every week, buy music off me, and he bought this album, which I played him some before he bought it and he said 'that's fantastic, I'll buy that' and the following week he brought it back, and he said 'I've got to bring this record' oh this would be a CD, this would be about 1990, early nineties, he said 'I've got to bring this back' I said 'is it faulty?' he said 'no' and I said 'well is it – you listened to it in the shop and you seemed to like it then. Have you gone off it or

something?’ he said ‘no I like it, it’s a great record’ I said ‘well why are you bringing it back?’ he said ‘I can’t play it’ I said ‘what you mean, your CD player won’t play it?’ he said ‘no it’s not that, it plays fine, it’s just that I daren’t play it’ I said ‘what do you mean by that?’ he said ‘every time I put it on things start moving around in the house on their own’...that’s a vague example of the kind of strange behaviour that you get occasionally. He just took something else instead and he seemed happy. He kept on coming in the shop and buying stuff and never mentioned it again.

EVA:

Do you still get a lot of people buying records then?

SJ:

Well LPs are an acquired taste by today’s standards but there are people who prefer them. There are people who won’t have a CD, they don’t like them, they just want vinyl only. I think it cuts down your options down a lot if you just want vinyl only, but there you go.

EVA:

What music do you listen to yourself?

SJ:

Oh I think the older I get the more I listen to. I like progressive rock, I like psychedelia, I like intelligently constructed music. I began by listening to classical music and then graduated on to Jimi Hendrix and Pink Floyd and Black Sabbath and various things, late sixties early seventies. I loved all the punk movement when that came along in the late seventies. There’s always great music around. Every era offers great music – it’s hard to pin down exactly what I like, but if it was ‘Desert Island Discs’ time it would be Pink Floyd every time.

EVA:

So would you recommend CD over vinyl?

SJ:

I can’t say yes or no because some people prefer.....what record companies should do is manufacture vinyl and CD in the same package in a twelve inch LP size pack with the record and the disc in there so you can play your CD in your car or download it, whatever you want to do with it and you’ve still got the vinyl there to play on your turntable, that’s the answer in my opinion, and keep the price down of course.

EVA:

What was your first introduction to music?

SJ:

Oh probably TV theme music I’d imagine. I remember theme music from...when I was very young and you know, watching TV programmes – things like ‘Watch With Mother’ and that kind of thing that used to be on BBC TV in the fifties, and I always remember the theme music to ‘Flash Gordon’ cos that was what got me interested in science fiction and all the other things that I like as well as music.

EVA:  
What's in your CD player at the moment?

SJ:  
At home? Oh goodness me. Fleetwood Mac I think is what we were listening to last night, and The Alan Parsons Project as well.

EVA:  
Do you play any instruments yourself?

SJ:  
I'm a lapsed bass player. I also have a sitar which needs desperate repairs doing to it, and I've noodled around on keyboards and things. I have tried playing six string and I'm just not good enough. That's why I ended up playing the tool of ignorance as Blacky Lowless would call it – a bass.

EVA:  
A sitar – what's a sitar?

SJ:  
It's an Indian instrument which is multi-stringed. It's got about eighteen strings on it. It's made out of a gourd with a...a dried out melon gourd with a fret board on it and the frets are curved so you can bend the strings round and it gives it its distinctive sound.

EVA:  
What sort of music would that be found in?

SJ:  
Well, try Ravi Shankar and George Harrison popularised it for the western world with 'The Beatles' of course. He was one of the first people to use a sitar in pop music. 'Norwegian Wood'....

EVA:  
I hear you're also very into your comics.

SJ:  
Oh yes.

EVA:  
Now how many comics would you say you own?

SJ:  
Oh I don't know, I've never counted 'em, never counted 'em – a lot!

EVA:  
With your music knowledge, do you ever get asked to do DJ sets?

SJ:  
Well I used to DJ some years ago and occasionally people do ask me to do it but I

really can't be bothered any more I'm afraid, but if somebody asked me to do a radio show I might be tempted, but not hospital radio.

EVA:

In this day and age, how do you compete with these multi-national stores?

SJ:

Well I don't do I? You can't compete with multi-national set ups, you've just got to do – you've got to plough along the furrow and do what you do, and be independent and offer something different to what the big store offers. You'll not get wealthy doing that but it's the only way I know. I couldn't work for a corporate organisation.

EVA:

Why would you say that buying a CD or vinyl is better than downloading?

SJ:

Well I don't think it necessarily is better – it depends on the person who wants the music. If you want a piece of music which is disposable which a lot of pop music is and you just want to listen to it you know for a few days and then discard it, then downloading's probably a good idea, but if you take your music seriously and you want to build a collection which you can keep on re-visiting for the rest of your life then you're better off with the hard copies. Most serious music collectors use that method.

EVA:

Do you use computers yourself?

SJ:

No.

EVA:

Would you say that record shops are dieing out?

SJ:

Well they are aren't they? There's a book about it. It's called 'Last Shop Standing' by Graham Jones and it's a cracking read. It's very amusing and....and I'm in it [laughing] as one of the last shops standing.

EVA:

So what's your secret? How do you survive?

SJ:

Just do what I do. I just try to offer something a bit different, and it's just the old-fashioned way of doing things, something which seems to be a dieing art.

EVA:

If you didn't do this, what would you do?

SJ:

Well that's something that I haven't had to think about for a long time. I really don't

know...probably dee-jaying I would imagine, or run a comic shop [laughing].

EVA:  
Are you a fan of films?

SJ:  
Yeah.

EVA:  
What films?

SJ:  
I like...I like a lot of old films. The black and whites and classics and...horror, science fiction, adventure stuff, I like a lot of different movies, I like a lot of art movies, like Jean Coteau and that kind of thing as well.

EVA:  
What would you say is your all time favourite film?

SJ:  
Probably 'The Big Sleep'. The Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall version, not the Robert Mitchum one.

EVA:  
And what's that about?

SJ:  
Oh that's a leading question. You have to see it really. It's basically, it's a kind of a film-noire detective film, but it's multi-levelled – the more you watch it, the more there is to see and hear and understand about it.

EVA:  
What advice would you give to someone wanting to set up their own shop?

SJ:  
Oh it depends what kind of shop you want to start. If you're gonna start a record shop I would probably say don't because you wouldn't like the money and you wouldn't like the hours! [laughing] I'd say if you want to work for yourself then do what you know – there's no point in setting up a business, whether it's a shop or anything else where you don't have a feel for it, you've got to do something that you like doing and something that you know about, and that's the only way you'll be successful.

EVA:  
So I'm guessing that you're not in this for the money at all.

SJ:  
No, I've never made a lot of money out of it. I make a reasonable living but it doesn't pay vast amounts of money.

EVA:

So why Hebden Bridge?

SJ:  
Cos I live here.

EVA:  
How long have you lived here?

SJ:  
All my life just about, with the exception of three years in Devon when I was between the ages of about ten and thirteen.

EVA:  
How has Hebden Bridge changed?

SJ:  
It's changed in many ways. It's a lot more cosmopolitan than it was when I was young. It's probably more of a good place to live than it used to be in the 1950's; it was a down-at-heel town – it was suffering from a lack of investment I guess. One of the ways in which Hebden Bridge has changed is that it's become, thanks to our lovely local council, it's become rather more 'twee' than it used to be and that's in my opinion a bad thing – I think that part of the character of the town has been erased by the development that's gone on here, particularly the pedestrianisation of the George's Square area which a lot of people seem to like but I don't particularly. Also the traffic system is ludicrous.

EVA:  
*Would you say you get more business now or when you first started the shop?*

SJ:  
Oh I got more business when I first opened the shop. There's definitely less business at the moment, but that's possibly because of the economic downturn which is happening at the moment.

EVA:  
*If you could recommend any two CDs to take away today, what would they be?*

SJ:  
...it depends what you like. Oh God I hate questions like that, it means I've got to narrow things down. I can't really answer that; it depends what you've got and what you like.

EVA:  
*Well what would you say is your most purchased CD?*

SJ:  
Well the one that I've sold most of is by a group called 'Arium' called 'Into The Electric Castle'. The irony is that I can't get it now because EMI have bought the label up and EMI are pigs to deal with for a small shop, so I can't stock it any more, but I got a phone call from a guy from the band a couple of weeks ago and he thanked

me for selling so many copies of it. Mr Lucasson himself phone me.

EVA:

*Do you get to meet a lot of bands then?*

SJ:

Not usually no, no. A lot of people don't tell you who they are anyway. I mean apparently a lot of people do come in the shop and purchase things and talk to me but they don't tell me who they are, and I'm not likely to recognise them because I don't know what they look like, a lot of these people, and you look at a photograph on a record sleeve and you see them in the real world and they look different anyway.

EVA:

*Where do you source your CD stock?*

SJ:

Oh from wholesalers everywhere, from different suppliers, like any shop does. I mean I don't do secondhand; I don't rely on people bringing things into the shop secondhand, I have to buy my stock from official distributors.

EVA:

*What local bands have impressed you now and over the years?*

SJ:

The best local band I've heard in many many years were called 'The Blues Revelator' and they were just absolutely great, so unique and nothing quite like them, just great, and I sold a lot of copies of their CD as well when they were around.

EVA:

*So do you any other strange stories from the shop?*

SJ:

Yeah, there's one that stands out in my mind. It one afternoon and there were a lot of skinheads in Halifax at the time, and a lot of them came trampling up the stairs, the shop was upstairs you see where I worked, and it was a Saturday afternoon, they all came trampling up the stairs, up the narrow staircase, making as much noise as possible with their boots, and then they launched into this kind of chaos for ten minutes where they picked record sleeves out and threw them around and stuffed them back in the wrong places, and generally made nuisances of themselves. There were some customers in the shop and the customers disappeared because they were a very intimidating bunch of people, and after this ten minutes of this trying to wreck the place they all stamped down the stairs again in unison and then I heard one set of footsteps coming back up the stairs, and it was one of them who had actually come back to talk to me, and he came straight up to the counter and he said 'you'll remember me next time because I've got 'fuck off' tattooed on the back of me head' and he turned round and showed me and then disappeared again!

EVA:

*So have you had any interesting experiences in Muse Music?*

SJ:

There was one particular instance a few years ago. This actually wasn't me, it was a

friend of mine who was covering for me in the shop while I was out doing something else, and apparently this guy came into the shop and asked if he could go into the back room of the shop, i.e. behind the counter, to change his socks and this idiotic assistant that was helping me out let him; it's something I wouldn't have tolerated it at all – this is my space back here, and I don't mean that in a computer way.

EVA:

*Do you know why he needed to change his socks?*

SJ:

I haven't the faintest idea – probably cos he was demented I would have thought.

EVA:

*Why the name Muse Music anyway?*

SJ:

Ah I was wondering if you'd ask that one. I racked my brain for many years, well many months, trying to think of the right name, and it just popped into my brain. It's alliterative and also it's easy to remember, and I think it's Greek mythology which contains the legend of the muses, I think there were nine muses and each of the muses represented an art, so there was the muse of dance, there was the muse of sculpture, the muse of music etc so it just seemed to be you know an appropriate name, good logo as well.

EVA:

*What do you think of typical pop music of today?*

SJ:

Well I don't hear much of it. The little bit that I do hear sounds really contrived and rather uninspiring and tuneless.

EVA:

*If you had to pick an era, what would you say is the best era for music?*

SJ:

I think the period between 1966 and 1976 is probably the most productive time and the most interesting time, when people were pushing boundaries and playing music that hadn't been even thought of before. There's a staggering amount of material there which most people have never heard, even now, and most of it's available, most of it's there for people to investigate if they wish to do so.

EVA:

*So how long have you been involved in music altogether?*

SJ:

Well all my life. Do you mean on a professional basis?

EVA:

*Yes.*

SJ:  
Well for over twenty years.

EVA:  
*And have you enjoyed all those twenty years?*

SJ:  
Most of it.

EVA:  
*Thank you very much Sid.*

SJ:  
You've been a delightful interviewer Eva. Thank you for your time, and thank you to Mr Creedy for recording this.

**[END OF TRACK 1]**