

25 YEARS OF REAL WORLD RECORDS

Real World 25

3CD BOX

CAT NO: CDRW203

BARCODE: 884108002513



How, then, to condense a quarter century? How to represent a record label that blazed trails, opened doors and introduced the world to a whole new world of music? It was never going to be easy, or definitive. But with Real World 25 – a celebratory 3CD set boasting big names, hidden gems and tracks chosen by listeners – we’re giving it a go.

“We’ve always been vibrant, alive and kicking,” says Peter Gabriel of Real World Records, the label he launched in 1989, a few years after establishing the WOMAD (World of Music Arts and Dance) Festival. *“We worked hard to create an environment where the artists felt respected and supported, so that they were able to deliver extraordinary performances.”*

The magic was there from the off: an old mill building, transformed into state-of-the-art studios, on the edge of a pond fringed with bulrushes, in landscaped gardens bordered by a river, in the village of Box in the southwest of England.

Nearby, the ancient standing stones of Avebury and Stonehenge. About the grounds, in cottages built from wood and warm Bath stone, a team of music enthusiasts with vision and know how.

Into this place of freedom and possibility, this mix of the handmade and the high-tech, came musicians from elsewhere. Says Gabriel: *“I was thinking about this sort of music when we designed the studios”* – where a large interactive space called The Big Room puts artists on a par with engineers and producers – *“and eventually Thomas Brooman, WOMAD’s former artistic director, convinced me of the need to try a label.”*

Armed with a philosophy that variously involved openness, interconnectedness and the right to fail, Real World Records was born. Its first release, *Passion*, Peter Gabriel’s soundtrack to the Martin Scorsese film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, duly won a Grammy. *Passion’s* follow up, *Passion - Sources*, gave a platform to the world class but lesser known artists who’d inspired the soundtrack. Albums by Sufi devotional singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan; Tabu Ley Rochereau, the Congolese vocalist and bandleader; and the popular Orquesta Revé, a *son-changui* outfit from Cuba, followed.

“We started out as a label driven by Peter’s passion for music other than rock and pop,” says label manager Amanda Jones. *“In the Eighties it was a big revelation for him to discover he could be as excited about a pipa player from China or a singer from Pakistan as he was about a blues guitarist from America.”*

Real World Records had no agenda. Perhaps the closest it came to a template was the maverick aesthetic of BBC DJ John Peel, who would follow a track by The Fall with a song by a Siberian throat singer – along with that of its unconventional elder sibling, the WOMAD Festival.

“We just knew we wanted to work with music that has real passion, atmosphere and grooves,” says Gabriel. *“Music that would touch those open enough to listen.”*

In exploring the relationship between Western producers and non-Western artists, Real World Records set a precedent. Nowhere was this more in evidence than during the three extraordinary Recording Weeks that took place in the summers of 1991, 1992 and 1995, when artists from all over the world converged on the village of Box to collaborate, create and investigate.

“It was a giant playpen, a bring-your-own studio party,” remembers Gabriel with a smile. *“We were curators of this sort of living mass.”*

While the likes of Tanzanian singer-guitarist Remmy Ongala, Sardinian vocal quartet Tenores di Bitti and Afro-Colombian singer Totó la Momposina, recorded entire albums, myriad collaborations went on elsewhere.

Big Blue Ball, a compilation built from all three Recording Weeks, features contributions by several artists who would make albums for Real World Records: Congolese soukous star Papa Wemba. American singer-songwriter Joseph Arthur. Tanzanian vocalist Hukwe Zawose. Irish *sean nos* singer Iarla O’Lionaird - the voice of the phenomenal Afro Celt Sound System.

With more than one million albums sold, Afro Celt Sound System is one of the most successful world fusion acts, ever. The Blind Boys of Alabama have racked up three quarters of a million albums; other RWR bestsellers include Kenyan artist Ayub Ogada, Ugandan musician Geoffrey Oryema, South Indian singer Sheila Chandra and Mercury-nominated East London minimalists, Portico Quartet.

Such commercial heavyweight releases enabled releases by lesser-known artists: Afro-Brazilian diva Daudé, say, or Senegalese vocal duo Pape & Cheikh. Real World Records has released more than 200 albums to date. Each one still sounds freshly pressed. Every artist still feels relevant and compelling.

“Looking back we realise how lucky we were to be working with so many extraordinary artists from all over the world,” says Gabriel. *“We have a rich, vibrant and varied catalogue of authentic and soulful music.”*

Today, with much traditional music accessible in a click, Real World Records has adapted accordingly. The drive to discover and record quality music – music that is entertaining, exciting, obscure - is the same as it ever was; the commitment to

getting it out there is just as fierce: *“Whether it’s on vinyl, download, digital, cross-platform mobile apps,”* says Jones, *“or beaming in from outer space.”*

Or by magic. Real World has always had that.

Real World 25 has it, too.

THE 3CD BOX

Condensing 25 years of history onto three CDs was always going to be an impossible task; we knew we would only ever skim the surface of the extensive range of wonderful music we have been so lucky to encounter. But here goes:

CD1 brings together tracks that have been significant highlights or 'classic' points in the label's history.

CD2 delves deeper into the catalogue, shining a light on some tracks that beg rediscovery; the buried treasures.

CD3 is the listeners' choice – we asked people to choose their favourite Real World track.

REAL WORLD 25 CD1

01 Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (Pakistan)
Mustt Mustt
From the album Mustt Mustt

02 Maryam Mursal (Somalia)
Kufilaw
From the album The Journey

03 Joi (UK)
Fingers
From the album One and One is One

04 Little Axe (USA)
If I Had My Way
From the album Stone Cold Ohio

05 The Blind Boys of Alabama (USA)
Run on for a Long Time
From the album Spirit of the Century

06 Peter Gabriel (UK)
The Feeling Begins
From the album Passion

07 Ayub Ogada (Kenya)
Kothbiro
From the album En Mana Kuoyo

08 Jocelyn Pook (UK)
Dionysus
From the album Untold Things

09 Hukwe Zawose (Tanzania)
Sisitizo La Amani Duniani
From the album Chibite

10 Remmy Ongala & Orchestre Super Matimila (Tanzania)
Kipenda Roho
From the album Songs for the Poor Man

11 Adrian Sherwood (UK)
No Dog Jazz
From the album Never Trust a Hippy

12 Dub Colossus (Ethiopia/UK)
Guragigna
From the album Addis Through the Looking Glass

13 Totó La Momposina y Sus Tambores (Colombia)
La Sombra Negra
From the album La Candela Viva

14 The Imagined Village (UK)
Cold Haily Rainy Night
From the album The Imagined Village

15 Iarla Ó Lionáird (Ireland)
Glistening Fields
From the album Foxlight

16 Lama Gyurme and Jean-Philippe Rykiel (Bhutan/France)
Offering Chant (Unplugged)
From the album Rain of Blessings: Vajra Chants

REAL WORLD 25 CD2

01 Pape & Cheikh (Senegal)
Mariama
From the album Mariama

02 Daúde (Brazil)
Muito Quente
From the album Neguinha Te Amo

03 Los De Abajo (Mexico)
Resistencia
From the album LDA V The Lunatics

04 Toumast (Niger/France)
Innulamane
From the album Ishumar

05 Farafina (Burkina Faso)
Dounounia

From the album Faso Denou

06 Djivan Gasparyan & Michael Brook (Armenia/Canada)
Take My Heart
From the album Black Rock

07 Joji Hirota (Japan)
Kokiriko Melody
From the album The Gate

08 Mara! With Martenitsa Choir (Bulgaria/Australia)
To My First Love
From the album Sezoni

09 Tom Kerstens' G Plus Ensemble (UK/Holland)
Utopia
From the album Utopia

10 Mamer (China)
Mountain Wind
From the album Eagle

11 Värttinä (Finland)
Valhe/The Lie
From the album Miero

12 Tenores Di Bitti (Sardinia)
T'amo
From the album S'amore 'E Mama

13 Thomas Mapfumo (Zimbabwe)
Marudzi Nemarudzi (Different Races)
From the album Rise Up

14 The Ananda Shankar Experience & State of Bengal (India/UK)
Streets of Calcutta (live)
From the album Walking On

15 Syrjana (Syria/UK/Ireland)
Al Araby
From the album The Road to Damascus
Written and arranged by Abdullah Chhadeh, Bernard O'Neill, Dubulah

16 Guo Yue
White Kite
From the album *Music, Food and Love*

17 The Creole Choir of Cuba (Cuba)
Fey Oh Di Nou
From the album Santiman

REAL WORLD 25 CD3

01 Joseph Arthur (USA)
In the Sun
From the album Come to Where I'm From

02 Daby Touré (Mauritania)

Iris

From the album Diam

03 Sevara Nazarkhan (Uzbekistan)

Yol Bolsin

From the album Yol Bolsin

04 Afro Celt Sound System (UK/Ireland/Senegal)

Release

From the album Capture / Volume 2: Release ??

05 Portico Quartet (UK)

Line

From the album Isla

06 Yungchen Lhamo (Tibet)

Happiness Is...

From the album Coming Home

07 Spiro (UK)

The City and the Stars

From the album Kaleidophonica

08 Martyn Bennett (Scotland)

Move

From the album Grit

09 Juju (UK/Gambia)

Night Walk

In Trance

10 Charlie Winston (England)

In Your Hands

From the album Hobo

11 Big Blue Ball (International)

altus silva

From the album Big Blue Ball

12 Geoffrey Oryema (Uganda)

Land of Anaka

From the album Exile

13 Sheila Chandra (UK/India)

Ever So Lonely/Eyes/Ocean

14 Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook (Canada/Pakistan)

Sweet Pain

From the album Night Song

15 Papa Wemba (Democratic Republic of Congo)

Awa Y'okeyi

From the album Molokai

REAL WORLD TALES...

from musicians, producers, designers, artists, and managers

Jean-Michel Reusser, producer

It's about 15 years ago but this is how it happened (at least in my memory)... I was working at Real World Studios, mixing an album with Hector Zazou. We had dinner with Peter one evening and I told him about the totally unexpected success of *Songs Of Awakening*, the first album of Lama Gyurme & Jean-Philippe Rykiel, released 4 years before. I had a DAT copy of a concert we'd recently done in Madrid and played him a few excerpts including an astonishing piano/vocal version of a new piece called "Offering Chant". His reaction was immediate, he offered me a deal for a second album, granting us carte blanche but for one condition: a piano/vocal version of this prayer should be included in the album. It was an effortless and humbling exchange, I offered the song, he offered a deal. It remains until today one of the most unbelievable events of my entire career. I remember calling Jean-Philippe afterwards and saying "We have a deal, let's start working as soon as I am back". It took a long year to complete the album (recorded in France and in Spain) known as *Rain Of Blessings*, and released by Real World Records in February 2000.

Joji Hirota, musician

One day, probably the first day of Real World Recording Week, when I was relaxing in the Green Room with Guo Yue, Peter Gabriel came in and he said to me "Hello, I'm Peter." I didn't recognize him as I'd never met him before, and there are so many Peters and Johns around. So I didn't introduce myself properly, I said just "Hi." After he left, Guo Yue said to me "He is Peter!!" When I saw Peter again, and he said to me: "Hello I'm Peter Gabriel", I greeted and saluted this time with big respect. I thought that Peter is a really nice and warm person, and I continue to admire and respect his work and personality.

John Hollis, producer & manager

It was December 1987. The studios hadn't yet fully opened, the newly built facility was a tempting new space. WOMAD were touring The Drummers of Burundi. Thomas Brooman and I thought it would be good to record them and a deal, with the help of their French concert agent Yorrick Benoist, was duly done at the Cross Hands hotel on the A46 near Chipping Sodbury.

The next day we entered Real World with 20 Burundi drummers and set up in the Wooden Room. The control room was a couple of floors up connected by video link. We could see the group drumming and dancing on the screen and were waiting for the sound to come through. Dave Bottrill engineered the session; I shall never forget the shared delight in that room as he punched the tracks through one by one on the desk and a sonic firework display commenced. Dave was jumping up and down with glee as a succession of pounding drums came firing through in a dazzling array of thunderous rhythm. It was a beautiful moment and an awesome spectacle to behold!

Michael Brook, producer

One thing I learned about working with Nusrat was that he was very interested in experimenting and collaborating. I'm sort of embarrassed to say I hadn't anticipated that. Previously, Nusrat's experience of the recording studio had been one where a performance was captured and that was it; they could do an album every afternoon if they needed to. But when we did the first record, *Mustt Mustt*, Nusrat got to see how we could use the studio as a kind of instrument. By the time we recorded Night Song he was definitely much more comfortable with that and contributed to ways of creating music that could only be done in a recording studio.

One example was that he had some specific ideas about overdubbing and layering his voice, which is a beautiful part of a couple of songs. My impression is that he hadn't thought of recording that way previously. He was extremely open-minded and interested in those sorts of things.

It was scary the first time I worked with Nusrat, and I'm sure it was for him, we had no idea how it was going to work out; it could be that there would be misunderstandings or cultural clashes. With *Mustt Mustt*, we would record long takes of performances and then edit them down into 5 or 6-minute pieces. I had no idea what he was saying when he was singing, and I would edit based purely on the musical effect of the vocals. Again, embarrassingly naïve in retrospect, those words had meaning that was pretty important, and I was just blindly chopping and butchering them. This actually created some genuine grief for him in Pakistan as the words were of a spiritual nature and I had totally mangled them into gobbledygook. To be fair, we had sent him a cassette of the album, but it either never arrived, or arrived too late for him to give me feedback. He was incredibly gracious about the whole thing. I think that the fact that mistakes were made is in some ways a positive indicator showing that we were both outside of our comfort area and taking risks.

With Hukwe Zawose, were there any illustrative moments? Well, I suppose, the big one was when they took their pants (trousers) off. Making the Hukwe record was technically quite daunting because they had around 20 instruments, and each instrument is in a unique key, but seldom is that key on the piano; it's like it's in between the notes on the piano. Every time we switched songs we had to retune everything, so it was a very slow and laborious process. About three or four days in, we started working on a new piece and then both Charles and Hukwe just took their pants off. And Richard Evans and I were like, 'Whoa, what's this part of the proceedings?' And then it turned out that these particular mbiras have a resonance hole that you control by pushing it against your bare leg: by pushing it and then taking it off your leg, you can create these dynamic sort of wahwah effects.

It was quite hard to communicate with Hukwe. Language was a barrier at times, but it didn't create friction, it just created a kind of bafflement, I think, probably on both sides. And the pants issue was certainly one of those moments.

Joseph Arthur, musician

Real World wants me to write a note about its significance to me. But the truth is that I could write a book on it - or at least the start of one. In many ways, my current life started there. I have magical memories of it, I have heartbreaking memories of it. So let's start with the magical ones.

For a start, I met Joe Strummer there. In hindsight he was like a rock-n-roll angel. His spirit and enthusiasm has stuck with me through the years. I remember playing him an early version of Daddy's on Prozac. And later he told me I was the real deal and that there are few real deals so don't ever let anyone tell you different. Advice I haven't always followed, advice I'm still trying to live up to.

This was in the mid-1990s and I was 25. And really green. A nerd. I smoked my first spliff with Strummer there. I didn't understand the concept of hash sprinkled on tobacco. In America, we smoke pure weed. Take a toke and pass it. He rolled this huge thing that I had no idea what it was and didn't have the gumption to ask. But after he (I thought rudely at the time) hit it way more than one time, he passed it to me. I smoked it without hesitation, emulating the number of tokes he took and got virtually no buzz from it. It was more of a communal cigarette than the deeply psychedelic smoke excursions we participated in in Ohio. Pure weed is better—but I digress. [I would delete this paragraph]

The occasion for all this was something called Recording Week where families from India and African musicians come together with the likes of Joe, Peter Gabriel, Karl Wallinger, Iggy Pop - hell even Johnny Depp was there with Kate Moss, along with a laundry list of extremely talented producers and engineers: Tchad Blake, Brian Eno, John Leckie, and Stephen Hague to name a few.

Saying I was way out of my depth is an understatement. Having come from a garbage, one-room apartment - which was also a whorehouse rampant with cockroaches -, working minimum wage, barely holding onto my sanity: I believe Peter Gabriel saved my life by bringing me there.

I remember hanging out on the sunlit lawn just outside the studio taking it all in and doing my best to act like I belonged there when Peter came up to me and said, "Me and Karl are working on a track upstairs and would like you to help us out on it." "Sure, you want me to play bass?" I replied nervously. (I was in my mind a bass player then only having been singing and writing songs for a few short years.) He said no, that he was thinking I could write lyrics and sing. And this in a nutshell explains the magic of Real World and Peter Gabriel for me. He saw something in me before I saw it in myself.

If Joe was a rock-n-roll angel, Peter was like a rock-n-roll father. He more than gave me my start: he gave me my confidence. He believed in me when no one else did and the world he welcomed me into was in fact real - though at the time it seemed like it was anything but.

Going back to the hash for a second. The first producer I worked with at real world was John Leckie. This was after everyone had left Recording Week. I stayed cause really that week changed me. I didn't really belong anywhere else anymore. Secret doors had opened and I found myself born into unbelievable rooms. Namely a room where my art and my music was being taken seriously by serious people. Funny thing about enthusiasm and belief is they spread. And tho belief is never really total cause in this world what can we really be sure of? But it's amazing how fast someone else's belief can grow in you especially of that person is a living legend.

Also laws of the jungle kick in. I wasn't exaggerating the dire existence I had before this moment and I also wasn't exaggerating its life-threatening effect. And so not only was this a musical dream come true, but it was my ticket to a better life. I thought I was good, but just not that good. Or, more accurately, deep down I knew I belonged, but I was young and deeply insecure.

So anyway, the week after Recording Week my belief had grown exponentially and my act of faking like I belonged was becoming more believable even to me. Others take you seriously and you start taking yourself that way until you actually become something worthy of that attention. Real World helped me grow and on many different levels. With growth comes growing pains and people there, including Peter, had to accept the swings of my damaged personality. And they miraculously did. Not that I was all bad. I could tell I was somehow breathing more life into the place. If for no other reason than their own good karma for helping a potentially talented kid in need. And in the least, I'm good for a laugh.

But that week following the Week, John Leckie, helped out by engineer Ben Findley, recorded almost every song I had at the time - solo acoustic with some light production on a few tracks. One that stands out was called "Papa," which I wrote on Joe's famous Telecaster watching him play with his little girl in the green sun of the lush Real World lawn.

By then I had acquired my own stash of this mysterious hash and learned how to role these ineffectual spliffs that seemed to be all the rage with the English cannabis culture One day I asked John if he even felt the effects when he smoked these things. He nodded affirmatively with a smile. I said, impatiently: "Well, I don't. Let's go down to the kitchen. I have an idea." So, down we went, taking a break from the song. It was night and we were in the kitchen alone. I took a pan and a half-stick of butter and heated it until the butter began to bubble. Adjusting the flame to low, I put the rest of my hash in the butter and watched as it melted into a brown goo. The whole kitchen smelled like a Bob Marley fairy tale. I proceeded to take a piece of bread and rip it in two, slathering on a helping of said brown goo onto each piece, handing John one. And without hesitation, we both ingested my awful creation.

Returning to work on the track upstairs, it wasn't long before things got weird. A ghost flew by. A voice scattered into moths in my brain. The song was stunning and moving and we turned it up loud and the speakers burst into flames. Neither of us moved. The fire wasn't real but it burned brightly and soon I said to John, I think I

need to go to bed. I overshot the need to get stoned. Fully hallucinating, I closed my eyes in one those great rooms they have there and the next time I opened them it was 6:00 pm the following evening. I shot up out of my bed and darted to the studio still with the minimum wage mentality that I might of lost my job due to extreme lateness (our normal time to begin was noon). When I arrived, John was there. I began apologizing profusely until he stopped me, saying, "I just got here myself!" We began to laugh and laugh a lot.

After a few days, my session with John and Ben was over. The label wanted to review the tracks and see if we should keep going with John as producer. I still had nowhere to really be and Real World was introduced to me as this kind of utopian village. It's hard to believe, but in some way I kind of assumed I could just keep staying there. I don't really know what was going through my head, but it wasn't until Owen (studio manager) or someone else told me that I couldn't actually stay there, reminding me that it was in fact a commercial institution. I finally left, but didn't go back to New York or Atlanta. From there I went to a friend's place in South London, a friend I had just met the week before. Graham had crashed the Real World Recording Week, piggy-backing off of Glastonbury, as Joe Strummer did. Some people from that festival had heard about what was happening at Real World and made it their destination after the festival. To keep the festival spirit growing and going by bringing it with them.

Graham and I were fast friends. I had followed a cute girl into the studio. She asked me to play on something and then suddenly there was Graham. Instant brother. Instant best friend. We remain close to this day. And have gone on countless tours together.

When Real World told me firmly, but nicely, that I had to go, Graham was my first call. He said come stay with us. We have a couch with your name on it. I jumped at the chance. He even picked me up at the train station. I was lost in London, but here's where the adventure of my adult life really began.

Sheila Chandra, singer, remembering the first Real World Recording Week...

I only just got myself invited to the first Real World recording week. I'd approached Real World a month before with the suggestion that I work with them and with WOMAD and they invited me along. I'd no idea what to expect.

It was nothing short of a musician's paradise. Glorious sunshine, too many studios to count and amazing sounds coming out of them all! You could meet other artists in Lulu's Café which had been set up for the week, and chat over a delicious lunch. You could stroll around listening to all the amazing tracks being created and watch people discussing, learning each other's musical language and collaborating. Real World had set up an extraordinary generous space for people to work together, and that generosity trickled down to the way everyone worked

Perhaps the best thing was the way in which other people's performances had the power to draw something out of you that you never knew you had to give. I've never been a 'leap in there straightaway' kind of improviser. I'm by nature a perfectionist and shy songwriter. But in the writing room one day, I heard a backing track which three drummers had laid down simultaneously.

These days, you almost never hear a track like that. Three styles of drumming on full kits recorded entirely 'live' instead of on a machine. It was exhilarating. Someone had added a couple of sets of chords which loosely delineated 'verse' and 'chorus' type structures. And Rupert Hine, the producer in charge of that session asked me if I'd like to lay a vocal over the top.

I said I'd work out which scale the chords suggested and that I'd need a drone. Someone said "Oh there's always a drone, floating around at Real World" and pushed up a fader. And there was I perfectly in tune drone, which I think was left over from the previous session, just waiting to be used.

I remember saying "Okay, I'll have a go, but I don't know if this will work" before the set the track running. All sorts of things run through your mind when you're going for a take. Often they're nervous distracting thoughts, but having to get a take right in front of strangers tends to concentrate the mind!

I'd just got off a plane from Kazakhstan via Moscow. I hadn't warmed up for days and my throat was completely dehydrated from all the flying. And, of course, I had no choice over the key as it was already set. I thought I'd start on the lower octave with my chosen scale (which was loosely based on the raga 'Kafi') and maybe work up to a few phrases in the octave higher towards the end, to give the track shape.

Well I sang the first phrase and realised that really wasn't going to work. It was too hard to distinguish my voice from the chords and the vocal had no 'excitement'. With a lurch in my stomach in the couple of beats I had to think, I realised I'd have to do the whole thing an octave up. I had no choice but to just 'throw' my voice at it.

I heard this sound come out – more like an adolescent boy than my own tone. To my surprise, all the right sorts of phrases came to mind, and all inspired by the sound the track was forcing me into producing. Sometimes, stepping out of your comfort zone is exactly what you need.

So if you've never been to one, how would I sum up the experience of a Real World Recording Week for a musician taking part? Terrifying. Exhilarating. Awe-inspiring.

Putting Real World's famed 'artist friendliness' to the test

Anyone will tell you that I'm not really 'housebroken' as an artist. I'm very much used to working independently on my own vision and in my own way. I approached Real World in 1991, and 10 years into my recording career, mainly because of their reputation for artist friendliness. I felt they'd allow me the freedom I needed to create properly.

I came to Real World from a tiny independent label formed just for me (Indipop), on which I'd made my first five solo albums. I was not used to having to consider a record company because Steve Coe, who ran Indipop, was my co-writer and produced for me as well.

Anyway, I think I really put Real World to the test with my first album for them. I'd decided it should be a solo voice and drone album so that I could give my first ever 'live' performances with the material, with WOMAD. And contrary to Real World's usual pattern – at that time they tended to bring artists over for a season of 'live' concerts with WOMAD and record them at the end of the summer when they were 'on form' – I was going to deliver my album at the start of the summer and promote it via my WOMAD concerts. In other words, I was recording it before they'd heard the material 'live'.

A solo voice and drone album is a hard concept to buy into for a label. Did I make it easy? No. I had absolutely nothing to play Real World – other than one track on a previous album, which had the same structure. But, I'd had a World Music hit around the world in 1982 with Monsoon's 'Ever So Lonely', and it made musical sense to make an album of 'live' material – so they very gamely said 'yes'.

My advance was to be paid 'in kind' as mixing time at Real World Studios. It was September 1991 and I said I was going to go away and write and record the album, and please could they book the mixing time in for the beginning of February? They agreed.

Well I went away. I was only in Somerset, and an hour south of Real World, but it must have seemed to them as if I'd promised an album and then fallen off the face of the earth. No friendly calls from me, no updates, just silence. Nothing.

Meanwhile, I was working hard. I wanted the album to be a fusion of vocal styles and cultures within a single melody line, and I just couldn't get it to work. For weeks, although I worked away, the concept just wasn't coming together. Finally I made the

technical breakthroughs I needed to write the songs, just in the nick of time. I had only a few weeks to finish the album, rehearse fiendishly difficult vocals and record it.

In mid-January, still working frantically to finish the recording, I called Real World to check that the mixing time at Real World Studios was still booked in. Well it wasn't. Somehow, it hadn't got confirmed – probably because I hadn't been in touch – and the time had been double-booked.

I was both furious and frantic. I'd been working 16 hours a day for months to ready the album for mixing, and if it didn't get mixed in February, it wouldn't be out in time for my 'live' season with WOMAD. All my desperate rushing to finish it would have been wasted.

Real World, quite reasonably, said there might be a way for them to find some studio time, but that they wanted to hear the rough tracks. I think they wanted to know if it'd be worth it to move heaven and earth to make the studio time happen.

Any other artist would have said 'yes'. I said 'no'. I wasn't being difficult. It was just that the vocals weren't edited. Those lovely performances on what would become 'Weaving My Ancestor's Voices' were in pieces on 1 inch tape, and divorced from their drones. I had nothing to play that would make any sense. So I told them that by the time I put the vocals together and the drones back in just to play them something, I might as well have mixed the album....

Real World went away and considered for a day or so. Then, bless them, they came back with a week in the big studio. A couple of days into the mixing I ran into Peter Gabriel at dinner at the studio and he asked if he could hear something. We'd only mixed 'The Enchantment', which although a creative track, doesn't showcase that way I slip between Western and Eastern vocal styles on the album. It's more of a structural fusion. I think Peter went away feeling a bit puzzled and thinking it was a nice track, but perhaps not what he'd been promised. Nevertheless, Real World left us to it.

I knew that Peter was scheduled to start mixing his own album ('Us') right after we finished. We worked right up to the wire and were putting down the final mix of 'Ever So Lonely/Eyes/Ocean' at 9:30 on the last the morning (having worked all) night as Peter's manager Mike Large came in to politely chase us out. Peter's engineers were already there ready to start clearing the studio ready for his mixing session at 10am.

Fortunately, Real World liked 'Weaving My Ancestors' Voices' and it became one of their best-selling albums. Later, I heard that Peter had delayed his mixing session for a week so that I could have the studio time – even though he and Real World had no idea if my album was going to be any good. How many rock stars do you know who would do that?

Nick Page (Dubulah), musician and producer (Dub Colossus, Samuel Yirga, Temple of Sound)

I remember arriving at Real World Recording Week for the first time in 1994 and being impressed by how serene the mill and gardens looked... No-one else in our music world was doing anything like the Recording Week, and I was deeply impressed by it.

I remember Tsedenia wanting to move into her accommodation permanently when we were recording Dub Colossus' first album at Real World, and Mimi Zenebe pointing out that four of her could fit in the big bath (she got on fully clothed to make her point).

My favourite memory though is of Mr Swan, or Sid the Swan, who gave "vicious" a new meaning, and had the most testosterone of any living creature I have ever met! He would attack his own reflection in the glass of the Big Room studio while we were mixing the Los de Abajo album (as Temple of Sound).

Spiro, musicians

We'd love to say we'd had the usual Spiro mishaps at Real World (Jase falling in the lake and getting entangled with the swan, that kind of thing) but we've been so well looked after, we've all stayed dry, the best of friends, and out of trouble with the police. The wildest we got was getting a bit carried away with the wine during the *Lightbox* sessions, but (a slightly out of focus) Simon Emmerson pulled us through. Weirdest moment was shooting the video for 'The City and the Stars' - a live composite, it was shot one by one, so we each spent the day in musical reverie on a totally empty stage - looked great when York had worked his magic though.

Jonathan Romney on Real World Recording Week 1994

On an August afternoon in Box, Wiltshire, there's a spot on the lawn where if you position yourself correctly, you can separate out the sounds arriving in perfect synch from five directions. The delicate acoustic plucking to your left is Moroccan sintir player Hassan Hakmoun sunk in colloquy with Spanish flamenco guitarist Juan Martin. From a little further away comes the textured throb of African tuned percussion as Burkino Faso group Farafina rev up on the lawn for visiting TV cameras. The distinctly urban rattle-and-shriek from the side is Simon Emmerson, formerly of Working Week who has locked himself into a ground floor office with a machine full of rhythm tracks and is peeling off an endless yardage of frenzied wah-wah guitar. The less distinct thudding and scraping from the top floor of that quaint gable cottage is Nigel Kennedy getting to grips with his new incarnation as a fusion fiddler. And dominating the mix with a litigious spirit they've been displaying all day, the flock of ducks who make up the permanent genius loci of Real World Studios.

Daniel Lanois , producer

It's rare that I have a chance to work with such a pure form as Farafina. Communication ... the important ingredient ... and so we keep everyone close together. Speak not too many words. Let the drum engine of Farafina – power on reserve – like an old Dodge Charger – take us for a long ride, moist air, something burning in the next village. My job is the one of a documenter – surveyor of performance. Richard (Evans) the engineer just holds on for dear life ' cause there's no turning back ... Eight hours later the dust settles and we are left with one side of a record.

Justin Adams, musician and producer

Sometime in 1991 I found myself in Surreal World - picture postcard English countryside, and a labyrinth of recording set-ups, with every nation's musical seer about to record some unlikely piece with more unlikely people. I remember Marie Boine Persen's unearthly voice, Hassan Hakmoun's athletic Gnawa trance, Joji Hirota's balletic drumming, and a moment where I was expected to sing in the company of some world-class singers - it's never been my strong point! Recording Week was a dizzying entrance to a Real World that has been a part of my life ever since - always encouraging, and always driven by the will to create something exceptional.

Alan James, manager, 9Bach & Spiro

The architecture and landscape is unsurpassed for creativity, I wish it really was the real world. Looking across the big desk to the mill pond a kingfisher, with an electric streak of blue, flashes by a curious swan. One doesn't know whether to switch or twitch

Charles Driebe, manager, The Blind Boys of Alabama

I recall staying at the cottage at Real World once and, due to the time change from the US, waking up very early. Deciding to stretch my legs, I walked out the front gate and encountered the marked footpath across the street. Walking for an hour or so as the English countryside awoke is an indelible memory!

Garry Mouat, designer, Assorted Images (who created the visual direction for Real World Records)

Peter had a very strong vision for the direction that the Real World label should take - for how the studios in Box could be central to recording musicians with state-of-the-art equipment, yet still preserve all of the ethnicity and the roots-level feel of the music. To put the music onto a world stage, but at the same time not compromise what it was that he himself appreciated and loved in that music. So that informed our brief - to build a graphic framework that represented Peter's vision. The fact that we were able to create something that has lasted this long, with that kind of resilience and longevity, it's great that it still does work. Fantastic.

Kevin Killen, producer & engineer

When we drove onto the property, one immediately was taken by the size and grandeur of the main mill building. Its Bath stone was radiant in the winter light but its scale resonated with me as I had trained as an audio engineer in an old converted grain warehouse in the Dublin docklands - a studio named Windmill Lane. My immediate thought was that this building would make an ideal studio environment. The thickness of the walls and the manner of its construction would afford it a rich resonance. Despite the fact that it was being used as a "spare car parts depot" and was cut up into lots of small rooms, you could still feel how naturally reverberant the rooms were.

We then walked around the rest of the property and we were astonished to discover another five buildings. Our excitement was slightly tempered when the first intercity train whizzed by us en route to London but we all enthusiastic about its potential.

My next visit to the site was almost 18 months later, at the conclusion of the *So* tour. I had recorded the final shows of the tour in Athens, Greece and we were utilizing the almost completed facility to mix the songs for the upcoming *POV* video release. The site had changed dramatically, a nexus of activity between all of the buildings. The biggest addition was of course The Big Room which was about 80% completed. Its iconic shape jutted out from the back of the mill building and was hugely impressive. The open floor plan for recording "within" the control room had been taken to a radically new but intuitive destination. We worked in Peter's Work Room upstairs which had a spectacular view of the surrounding valleys. The room was bathed in sunlight and had lots of unusual spaces and architectural details that distinguished the room and the overall site from your average studio environment.

Clearly embracing Peter's ethos, all of the recording spaces had unique layouts, all of them interconnected. It seemed like anything was possible in these rooms and one could not fail to make a spectacular recording here, such was the creative and supportive nature of the whole environment. From the beautiful accommodations to the spectacular food and the ever-helpful staff and assistants, it was remarkable that Peter and his team had assembled such a cast of characters. One was just surrounded by excellence, warmth and creativity. It quickly became a home for all of us who worked there on a regular basis.

David Rhodes and I produced a project for an artist called "Indio" in 1988, barely a year into the studio's life. The newly appointed assistant engineer - Richard Chappell had the misfortune to be on our project. Naturally we took advantage of his sheltered existence prior to joining the staff at Real World. We loved Dickie, as did everybody at the facility, but were not immune to carrying out a few practical jokes. There was a mechanical hoist that jutted out of Peter's Work Room on the third floor of the mill building which was supposed to be used for lifting heavy equipment into that space. One day, prior to lunch we convinced Dickie that we need to do a "load test" on the hoist. We dropped the hoist to the ground, fitted Dickie securely into the harness and lifted him about six feet off the ground. Then we left him dangling there as we saw Peter making his way across the car park to the dining room. Poor

Dickie was suspended there for about a minute before Peter caught sight of him and he broke out into a heavy laugh when he realized what was transpiring. David and I were literally in tears as we dropped Dickie safely to the ground. Needless to say, it became the subject of many a dining room conversation thereafter. As befits our indiscretion, Dickie managed to extract his own retribution before the album was completed.

Many of the projects that I completed there were recorded in The Big Room. To say that this space shattered the old concept of studio design, was an understatement. Despite its size, every musician just loved working there. It drew out the most imaginative performances from one and all. You could lose yourself in the music while simultaneously watch the weather roll over the valley. Time seemed to float in that room and it was not unusual for 10 -12 hours to literally speed by. But being wrapped in daylight really allowed your body to adjust accordingly and despite many a long day, I never had that drained feeling that was so common with "black box" studios.

To me Real World was my home away from home, an oasis in the crazy world that we inhabited. Some of my most enduring friendships began at or through Real World. It is a testament to all that is great in our business, and somehow it manages to do it with a uniqueness all of its own.

Russell Mills, artist (whose work features on album covers *Mustt Mustt*, *Love Songs* and *Devotional Songs*)

I'd long admired Peter, not only for his own wonderful music and the underlying ethos of Real World, but also for his humanitarian and political stances. And of course I'd been aware of Real World through the fabulously diverse albums that its label released. From a distance I'd always perceived Peter as being a kindred spirit in so many ways. I felt there was a connection on so many levels.

I was first introduced to Peter in about 1989-90, by Eno, who I'd known and had worked with since 1975. Brian invited me to a meeting with Peter and others - creatives from various disciplines - to brainstorm ideas towards a water-based theme park in Barcelona. I remember meeting every couple of weeks for a few months in a flat/office base that Peter had near to Paddington station. A series of ideas emerged that were drawn up into a proposal, which Peter asked me to design. I found Peter to be, like Brian, as I'd hoped, a kindred spirit; generous and open to ideas, ceaselessly thinking about possible new futures. A genuinely good person. A rare gem who actually cared and had the courage to follow his convictions.

During this time Peter commissioned me to provide art for Peter Gabriel 1-3 a 3 CD limited edition collector's edition box set (1990). This was followed by commissions for Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *Mustt Mustt* (1990), which was followed by his *Devotional Songs* (1992), *Love Songs* (1992) and *Night Songs* (1996). These were the best kind of commissions as Peter and others at Real World had enough faith in me to simply allow me to follow my intuition with no directional interference, so that I could attempt to create visual responses to the music that I felt would convey its essence.

In 1996 I was working on a collaborative multimedia installation called *Measured In Shadows* for Tullie House Gallery and Museum in Carlisle and the Guinness Hopstore in Dublin. It was conceived to have at its core a complex contactually anchored sound work. At the time I didn't have the facilities to mix and master the vast menu of sounds I needed to work with and although I had some funding from the Arts Council and other bodies, I couldn't afford studio time to enable me to realise the work to the standard I was hoping for. I wrote to Peter outlining the ideas behind the installation and the importance of the sound work, and asked whether he might consider funding in kind by allowing me to work at Real World. This request was a pie-in-the-sky plea and I was quite prepared to be disappointed. Much to my surprise Peter got back to me to say that he liked the idea very much and he would let me use Real World at a much reduced rate. This extremely generous offer was made even more attractive by the fact that he would appoint one of Real World's engineers, Russell Kearney, to work with us on the recording and mix. The time at Real World was a joy. The place itself was/is beautiful and its location and ambience lent itself to focused work in a relaxed atmosphere. Everyone I met there was really helpful, supportive and genuinely interested. Musicians, producers and engineers from around the globe were on site beavering away in a variety of studios. Myriad languages and ideas were mingled and exchanged around the dining table in the house. Despite all the cultural divides music and sound united everyone. For me it

felt like being part of a large extended family of kindred spirits. Peter was there working on his own material in his own studio, but would occasionally wander from studio to studio to touch base with everyone, to listen to works in progress and discuss music. I felt that his interest was always genuine and his feedback was gently supportive and wise. Peter's generosity, vision and his light touch approach and receptivity to ideas has created an environment at Real World- akin to what art schools were like when I was a student - in which possible futures, not just for music and sound, but also wider cultural issues, may be explored in a genuinely exciting way. Thanks to Peter, Mike Large and Russell Kearney (who did such a great, careful job on my motley sound samples), those few days there were inspiring and revelatory.

REFLECTIONS ON REAL WORLD RECORDS

Jo Frost

Songlines editor

It was 1993 and I had just graduated and moved to France, where I started listening to FIP and other French radio stations, introducing me to a whole spectrum of new, unfamiliar sounds. The business of musical categorization seemed far less constrictive here than in the UK. It also coincided with my first encounter with Real World – a French friend played me an album with a striking skull on the front cover by Jam Nation. I had no idea who Jam Nation were, but before long, I was hooked on the version of 'She Moved Through the Fair', sung by Caroline Lavelle. After that I would keep a beady eye open for any releases with the telltale, multi-coloured strip on the spine that has become the distinctive trademark of the Real World catalogue. Even today, when I'm rifling through a stranger's album collection, it's always a reassuring sign to spot this marking on a CD shelf – a sure indication of a modicum of musical discernment, however naff the rest of their collection might be!

I've had so many favourite albums over the years – from the early Afro Celt releases picked up in the WOMAD shop; *Passion*, played so often it's become the *Songlines'* office soundtrack, and most recently *The Gloaming*, an album of so many musical textures that I'm sure it will become as durable as *Passion* has been. Congratulations and here's looking to the next 25 years!

Ian Anderson

fRoots Magazine

Hey, it's my lawn sound track! Two of my most revelatory and memorable experiences from 1985 in the years BIWCWM (Before it was called 'World Music') were lawn-based: the extraordinary voice and multi-instrumental skills of Bagamoyo's Hukwe Zawose on a sunny afternoon lawn in the park beside the Commonwealth Institute, and Zimbabwe's mighty Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited tearing up the grass on a Wednesday night twixt-festivals at South Hill Park in Bracknell. The last time I saw Hukwe was on a lawn as well, on an open day at the Real World studios in rural Box. Real World have given a home to so many others of my favourite artists over the years too, more recently the likes of Bristol's very own Spiro - witnessed not so long ago playing to the animatronic dinosaurs at dusk on the Lawn at Bristol Zoo. Oh, and I could even show you a snap of Ayub Ogada jamming on my very own bijou patch when I used to live in London. And so many other non-turf-related artists too. Just looking at the track list for this collection is quite boggling, and all in a mere 25 years. Fantastic job! Fantastic taste! Long may your grass grow!

John Diliberto**Nationally-syndicated *Echoes* radio**

Real World Records launched the same year as *Echoes* and the music they've released has been part of our soundscape from Peter Gabriel's *Passion* in 1989 to 9Bach's *Tincian* in 2014.

Real World didn't just put global music on the map, it created the map itself with a non-purist's disregard for traditional boundaries - and a music lover's regard for musical creation, collaboration and cross-pollination. After 25 years, Real World remains the standard for global artistic vision and beautiful music.

Betto Arcos**Host, KPFK's *Global Village*****Contributor, NPR & PRI-BBC's *The World*****Los Angeles, California**

The first Real World album I held in my hands was Orquesta Revé's *La Explosión del Momento*. As it turns out, it was the same year the label had been launched by WOMAD and Peter Gabriel. Since 1987, I had been co-hosting a Latin music program at KGNU, a public radio station in Boulder, Colorado. Record labels such as Luaka Bop, Mango Records and Real World, began to release music from all over and opening a wide window into a world of music I'd only imagined.

As a native of Veracruz, Mexico, I was already familiar with a lot of Latin American popular music but when I heard Orquesta Revé's classic tune 'Ruñidera', with the singer's nasal *voz de vieja*, I knew the label was onto something different. Within a few years, I started listening to all kinds of African, Middle Eastern and Asian artists, and then Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan! Over the years, I collected and still have many of the Real World titles that I felt essential to have. Twenty-five years later, I'm still listening to them. Gracias por la música!"

Tom Frouge**Founder, Globalquerque Festival, New Mexico**

Real World... Even the name conveys a sort of visionary brilliance: "Real" World. Not some collection of forced world music "fusion" or a glimpse inside a perceived ethnic amber bubble but a true reflection and record of music as it genuinely exists.

In so doing Peter Gabriel and his amazing team, along with the artists with whom they have partnered, have created a living musical chronicle - indeed historical volumes. From its birth 25 years ago Real World has always reached for and mostly attained the visionary heights to which they aspire and have, along the way, inspired. Viva Real World!

Yatrika Shah-Rais

The Global Village, KPFK Radio, Los Angeles

I remember the sense of wonder upon first hearing *Passion* and the excitement which its complementary accompaniment *Passion - Sources* produced in me. I knew then that a unique label had been born and that its sonic world was populated by highly talented and diverse musicians.

Real World's contribution to the world of music has been invaluable: from giving a platform to the wide breadth of our planet's melodies and rhythms, to providing exceptional opportunities for cross-cultural collaborations, to transcending the boundaries of styles, and most importantly respecting the artist's identity and individual self-expression, this is a label that commands respect. I look forward to the next 25 years!

Kerry Clarke

Artistic Director

35th annual Calgary Folk Music Festival

We've been honoured to program many Real World Records over our festival's 35 year history, including: Charlie Musselwhite, Joseph Arthur, Spiro, Little Axe, Aurelio Martinez, Juldeh Camara and Justin Adams, Holmes Brothers and Los de Abajo. It's hands down one of the world's most ear, mind and eye-opening labels. Thanks to your discoveries and work, our audience has been exposed to really unique artists from the furthest corners of the globe.

On a personal note, my life was transformed when I saw Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan perform in my town at a Croatian Centre to an audience of 400 Pakistani-Canadians and about 20 community radio listeners.

Mark D. Moss

Editor, Sing Out! Magazine

Real World has always been that rarest of labels: Always sharing eclectic, beautiful, inspiring and music with a tangible, consistent level of excellence that made recognizing that rainbow brand on the spine as music I needed to hear immediately. Congratulations on reaching this milestone, and thanks for making the world so audibly real!

Damien Bracken

Dean of Admissions, Berklee College of Music (Boston)

Even in today's ever-changing music industry, those individuals and organizations that understand the power of the creative arts and the disruptive spirit that moves music forward can still be found. Real World Records has been such a force for the last 25 years. As diverse as the artists on this label are, they are all consistent in their healthy disrespect for the norm. They push the edges and create new opportunities for expression. Thanks to Peter and Real World for playing such a vital role in supporting and nurturing these artists.

Jeff Tamarkin

veteran music journalist

Throughout the history of recorded music, certain labels have consistently exemplified quality. Real World is one of those labels. Even if I've never before heard of an artist, if that artist is releasing new music on Real World I know I can expect a high level of artistry and innovation. My list of favorite Real World albums is long and diverse--I've so often been enlightened, surprised and thrilled by music that Real World has introduced me to. I have no reason to believe this will change as Real World heads into the next quarter-century.

Sandy Miranda

KALW San Francisco, KPFA Berkeley

Real World has been a key go-to label for me since I first began broadcasting world music in 1988. Always cutting-edge and authentic, Real World has consistently informed the Zeitgeist in the magnificent and transformative realm of global sound. Whether a new release from RW is rootsy or sophisticated, as a DJ in San Francisco and Berkeley, I know I can always trust them to have unerring taste and creme-de-la-creme production values. Happy 25th birthday, Real World, and thank you, for introducing me an my listeners to the finest from both upcoming and established *world class* artists.

Angel Romero

Founder & Managing Editor, World Music Central

During the past 25 years, Real World Records has released time after time top of the line world music. There is a guarantee that anything coming from Real World Records is going to be consistently impressive and masterfully recorded.

At the same time, Real World Records has introduced a wide range of lesser known global artists and contemporary forms of traditional music global music to international audiences, including Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Afro Celt Sound System, Samuel Yirga, Mamer, Imagined Village, Sheila Chandra, and lots more.

www.realworldrecords.com/25