

## Yank the Chain

Our initial approach to this residency was to think broadly about what resources were at our disposal and about how that could match up to what we needed, how we could be as maximal as possible with any opportunity we're given. We basically thought that spending our artist fee on a package holiday to the Costa Del Sol would be more inspirational for our work at that time than going to stay in rural Cambridgeshire.

We collaborated previously on a radio project, Got 2 B Radio, broadcast between 2015-19, which looked at British culture, politics, current events in erratic and zoomed in ways, which was as much about a swapping of subjective interests for enjoyment as it was anything else. Through writing, music, sampling and collage we covered multiple protests, moments within popular culture and personal obsessions we'd had with subcultural and mainstream anomalies and figures.

The Costa Del Sol is a place where there is a 'hyper' idea of british-ness; caricature brit-abroad identity, an ex-pat community rumoured to be one of 'the criminal underworld' (a subculture in itself) related to the trade of amphetamines and birth of EDM, and most crucially: it is affordable, we could get more for our money than in Cambridgeshire. In our work we explore what it means to collaborate, and in this instance, we wanted to explore what it means to push a residency to some sort of limit. The tug of war between institutional and non-institutional ways of working is a constant dilemma for both of us and we've asked ourselves to what extent we want our work to be framed by or be within an institution. We addressed this with two distinct stages of the residency; we went to the Costa Del Sol and then we went to Wysing to consolidate what it was we were working on.

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Prior to going away in 2021, the mood in the UK and amongst our peers was that art felt quite redundant, people were questioning its relevance. Writing the lyrics to each track was done in a languishing state of mind which echoed this mood-: obviously it was a pandemic and everything had just gone, you know, really *wrong*, and then Ruth was like let's just fucking go on holiday and get a really good deal and then the writing went from being an exploration of what it is to languish, from being another institutional critique that you sort of can't be arsed to even *do* anymore, and commenting on the disgusting and (sort-of) understandable apathy of the general public, us included in that, and wondering do we, in some way want to sell out? Do we just want to get a big house in the country, not that we could afford that, and moving from that feeling, to really wanting to escape, even momentarily, and then imagining and making a sort of strange version of a filmic clichéd road-trip, embarked upon by friends, a reality.

Within the bracket of examining languishing and then escapism as a trajectory of emotion, we're also referencing music from the 2000's which involves a bit of a post-punk hangover, electroclash and ultimately a deadpan mode of delivery. A very dry, anti – not anti-stylistic because it's very stylised – almost like a nowave minimal sound and aesthetic. Looking at this now, it seems like in the lead up to (and at the time of) the millennium a lot of dance music, electronic music, and pop culture, culture in general was really maximal, positive, drawing on all sorts of things from around the world and was extremely hopeful and then as we got into the 2000's it was like there was a *crash* of hope and people were like 'oh no, nothing's changed', and went back to these retro-aesthetics, stripped things down, and returned to a really niche kind of exclusive idea of style.

In terms of the recent economic history of the UK, obviously the late 90's was this big boom of excess, we've then got (pre the 2008 recession) this palpable societal awareness that everything is going to slowly go to shit, and then the financial crash happens and everything does go to shit and we've both been making art and music in a time where either everything has gone to shit that very moment in

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terms of seismic shifts in the social fabric of our existence on a personal and societal level, or in a time where we have a very recent memory of everything going to shit, because everything has gone to shit so many times on this accelerated loop in the last decade, maybe a bit more than a decade, meaning that a deadpan, sarcastic, bored vibe is something that we are very comfortable with, so it felt interesting to reference a time when that really had come into play, both in art and in music.

For Yank the Chain, we combined our individual research threads: escapist feminist films (Emily), which typically end in tragedy or at the very least don't attempt to eliminate misogyny in the plotlines, going on holiday with a friend and documenting it was very interesting from that perspective, and longterm research into hedonism and subcultures (Ruth). Torremolinos, where we stayed, is absolutely a site of hedonism, escapism and leisure.

Perhaps the most crucial thing this work explores via its process, is the importance of genuine friendship in the arts, and the importance of a bit of attitude and organisation in the face of hostile environments and individualism. Which brings us to what we've produced:

- Yank the chain – 3 track E.P:  
*Music to Kill Yourself To*  
*Anti-Work*  
*Stuck in the Toilet*
  
- *Off the Record* VIDEO

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- A lot of great conversations, playlists, ingenious ideas we didn't go with in the end and anecdotes we will not be sharing on this occasion.

## Lyrics

### 1. *Music to Kill Yourself To*

Wishing for steamy windows  
noticing that the shadows  
cast from buildings  
are now darker than the night sky  
on the sagging  
skyline  
and with all the rubbish out there I wonder why the top  
layer of the ground doesn't just cave in

The world has looked sick for a long time  
Sick street lamp orange mixed with computer generated  
dark grey  
compliments a widespread feeling of a sticky,  
overheated  
stasis.

We watch the climate crisis unfold on-screen,  
a contradiction very typical of the current state of  
affairs  
we now live inside a society which feels speculative  
and sadly  
I have to admit that self mythologising hasn't worked out  
that well so far

and ever since I noticed that the outside was so  
dangerously ill  
and I realised binge watch after watch wasn't  
going to teach me anything I didn't already know

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I thought I should probably go  
and connect some other way  
and now I spend all my time listening to  
Something To Talk About  
and *you*  
You said *anything but that*  
Blindingly obvious  
but it's definitely not ten years ago,  
is it.  
Sense of possibility minus fucking five I'd say  
and that song *it's only four degrees*  
that we used to wail to  
has turned terrifyingly into two

***(Elastica lyrics)***

**Keeping a brave face  
in circumstances  
is impossible  
cannot describe  
so many  
decisions  
it's impossible**

in addition the immediate circle has turned into anywhere  
within walking distance  
kill the bill / yank the chain / stamp on the ceiling and  
throw shit out the window  
is your advice  
and I don't know if it is mine anymore.  
Overcome and overturn and four emphatic hearts  
whilst tenuous protest powers are rapidly stripped back  
and statues topple into the river  
and there isn't a free party for miles

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but a rather damp set of decks somewhere on the outskirts  
of somewhere

Run the generator please

lets get fucking moving

don't turn into a gamer

why has the focus become buying houses?

really?

is my next question –

I thought you thought ownership was evil

unless it was in some way collective

but who am I fucking kidding?

I always knew a lot of ideals would dissipate in favour of

some kind of

something else

and that is called moving up

and moving on

and maybe I want moving up

and moving on to be me too

Or maybe fucking not.

and now I spend all my time listening to

Something To Talk About

and *you*

You said *anything but that*

Music to kill yourself to

Blindingly obvious

but it's definitely not ten years ago,

is it.

### ***(Elastica lyrics)***

#### **Keeping a brave face**

#### **in circumstances**

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**is impossible  
cannot describe  
so many  
decisions  
it's impossible to know  
which is the proper order**

**The best position to be in  
Take advantage  
Or so it seems  
The way it goes**

### ***Anti-Work***

**Chorus:**

**What do you do?  
well I mean it's complex  
People ask me  
how can I be useful to them?  
It's a red flag  
Don't ever tell them the truth  
It depends on what you mean by 'do' anyway**

**I am always working  
Also doing nothing  
Am I wasting my time?**

This job feels like being inside of  
a permanent break up  
It's creepy  
like, yes,  
you *are* evil but  
you *aren't that bad*

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sometimes  
you can even be  
quite kind  
Hannah Arendt coined  
that one a long  
time ago  
I only know that she coined it  
because I read it on an infographic  
about whistleblowing  
Kill me now

Only joking  
I'm inherently anti-work  
I think  
To be anti-work  
and yet employed  
you have to become  
a really good liar

**Chorus:**

**What do you do?  
Well, I mean it's complex  
People asking how I can be useful to them**

**It's a red flag  
Don't ever tell them the truth  
It depends on  
what's your definition of 'do'?**

**Making always making  
Decisions I'm regretting  
I can't make up my mind**

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This country feels like the many facets of  
an abusive relationship  
very demoralizing  
like, yes,  
You *are* evil but  
you *aren't that bad*  
Occasionally  
you can even be  
slightly funny  
Even though you gaslight me  
all day  
Without a shred  
Of remorse  
Because you are such fucking  
heinous egomaniacs  
Kill me now  
Only joking  
I'm inherently anti-hierarchy  
I think  
To live under conservatism  
and have cordial relations with 99% of people  
you have to become  
a really good liar

### ***3. Stuck in the Toilet***

Glad it's not the 90s  
Beer sponsorships and heroin  
I'm playing the lottery again  
Carved out so much space for  
imagination  
Then filled it all up with entertainment

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And I'm living life like it's a road movie  
And I'm not really sure that's what I want it to be

**I'm stuck in the toilet again**

**Having such a laugh**

**(Oh Oh)**

Typical maudlin  
Navel gazing crap  
I'd rather be (insert new phrase here)

This languishing theme  
of boredom and bad pay  
We use words that mean the wrong thing

I'm sitting by the window looking out  
These are the observations  
that I'm recording now

**I'm stuck in the toilet again**

**Having such a laugh**

**(Oh Oh)**

I was stuck in the toilet  
I tried the lock but didn't want to force it  
People were hanging round for sex and drugs  
The only people not having a good time was us

You were stuck in the toilet  
I went upstairs and went and tried to sort it  
So many people tried to lend a hand  
No one spoke English didn't understand

**I'm stuck in the toilet again**

**Having such a laugh**

**(Oh Oh)**

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Panicking in the toilet  
Until a guy came over and kicked the door in  
And me and him became immediate friends  
Then me and Ruth/Em were reunited again

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