

Lea Mullen Interview – 13th April 2020

Matt Mead interviews LEA MULLEN, initial drummer from The Rub.

How did you first get to know Reni ?

I first met Reni when I worked at a musical instrument shop in Manchester called A1 Music, maybe late 1980s.

Were you aware of Reni before you knew him ?

I was aware of The Stone Roses but not really of Reni, believe it or not. I didn't really take notice of the Manchester music scene at that time, I was more into jazz and Led Zeppelin.

How did you join The Rub ?

One day I was in a rehearsal room playing drums. The door opened and Reni walked in. I didn't recognise him because I hadn't seen him for maybe three years, and he had a big beard. He said to me, "I want you to play drums in my band. You play just the way I envision my songs to be played". The band then was called Little Caesar, so this was maybe a year even before The Rub.

Who else was in the band at this time ?

I was summoned to Al's house in Whalley Range where we listened to the tracks which were recorded on a little 8-track. Pete Garner was on bass, so just the three of us.

Were there any specific songs that you were working on ?

There were songs he wanted Pete and I to learn. He had written a full rock album. All drums, all guitar, all vocals, he'd done all the demos. Maybe 10 or 12 songs.

Were you just playing the drums in The Rub ?

I was just playing out and out rock drums in the band.

Were any of the rehearsals you played on recorded ?

Al recorded everything we did. What he used to do was record on old audio tape cassettes. We also recorded at Spirit Studios for a while in Manchester on Tariff Street. Me, Pete and Al would rehearsal all day, have a break then do the whole thing again double tempo. One of the nicest things he ever said to me was, "you've got a bass drum foot like John Bonham".

How long were you a member of The Rub ?

I was a member of Little Caesar for 6 months and then when the name changed to The Rub, maybe 12 months.

What kind of relationship did you have with Reni ?

I love Al. While I was working with him, I got to know him, his partner and his children really well, lovely people. He is a really generous person, very headstrong. Knows what he wants. Some might see that as arrogance, but he isn't at all. He's not just an amazing drummer, but an amazing all-round musician and lovely man. He always treated me with nothing but respect.

He was a player of many instruments; did you see this in rehearsals ?

He would mainly play guitar and sing in rehearsals.

Did he ever drum in rehearsals ?

Not that I remember. He always gave Pete and I plenty of homework to learn so I just learned what he wanted me to play, almost like being a session musician.

Why did you leave The Rub ?

I really couldn't commit in 1998/99 to the busy rehearsal schedule and I thought it wasn't right to mess Al and Pete around, so I made the difficult decision to leave. We parted on

good terms. I'd also had a call from Happy Mondays' management, offering me some touring work with them playing percussion.

Did you see The Rub when they went on tour ?

I saw them in Manchester at the Academy.

Did you keep in contact with Reni ?

Try to, but haven't seen him for a while.

When was the last time you were in contact ?

I was last in contact with him when he invited me to The Stone Roses' shows but unfortunately, I was away on tour so couldn't attend any. Before that he played Roland TD 25 drums in his attic for me on a track called Inside by The Jooks, which is on iTunes.

Were you pleased to see him back on stage with The Stone Roses ?

I was really pleased to see Reni back where he belongs, on the big stage.

What other bands have you worked with ?

One of the first people I jammed with was Noel Gallagher, when I was 14. Craig Gilly (God rest his soul) was a friend of mine. Around 2002, he took me into their studio in Cheetham Hill and I recorded some percussion so they could run it live, instead of taking a percussionist on tour. I did bongo, congas tambourine and shakers.

My band are called Buffalo 66 and I've also worked with Inspiral Carpets, Happy Mondays and Paul Ryder's Big Arm.

I'm on Paul Heaton's number 1 new album (Manchester Calling).

What's on your playlist at present ?

Pat Metheny and What Heat by Bokanté.