

Report: Book Launch and Concert Finale - May 30th 2025, New Continental, Preston

What an emotional night! Though CBS continues into workshops talks etc. this was the last performance of the Preston-based lineup. Bear in mind that some of the musicians had been involved for many years - in Josh's case 12(!) - it was the end of a long chapter. Format of the evening: A final version of Dream of Space, followed by discussion of the book including some key players in the project sharing CBS memories, lastly, a group jam included alumni and friends.

Dream of Space has been such a great vehicle for the band. First performed in 2018 it was always a natural fit - improvising/prog rock type ideas with space footage - see countless other groups! *So how did it work?* Though we were improvising throughout, so every version was somewhat different, there was always an element of structure: I split the film into different sections, we knew who was going to play in those sections and at points had some broad parameters to work to e.g. 'open section with no drums'. In the 2025 version, we did have a riff for the end part (thanks Kyle) and also a song 'Woza' by Isha Phiri - who was unable to be part of this performance but did perform with the band in Hebden Bridge (another another great night [link here!](#)) For the final gig and the 14th May performance at Darwen, vocalist Rosemary Howes came in and improvised vocal parts - no mean feat - thank you! I thought this version of DoS was particularly strong. It was a real journey, with interesting interactions creating different sections and varied ideas within the music throughout. There was some great playing with drama, contrast, space (at points) and character. As a band of improvisers we've always had a question as to *how much pulse-driven music we are going to do?* I always think a bit less pulse would be good, more experimental and open, but then the balance here seemed to work - there were parts where the music was pretty open, even though there was some strong pulse-driven bass playing (from Sean and Bench).



Talking in the middle was really hard. Although this was an exciting moment - launching a book, moving out to something new - it was the end of something very good, substantial and significant. Certainly, I found it quite difficult to express my feelings without being overwhelmed and I think the same was true for some of the other speakers (Michael, Holly, Les, Tony, Josh.) Still it was the right thing to do, it was important to acknowledge the band of the band's journey, some of what we had all been through. Coming out very clearly in conversations across the night and moving to hear, was how much the project meant to people, how much it had given them and the importance it had had in people's lives. Thanks to everyone for your personal feedback and words of encouragement.

It was fantastic to be able to launch the book 'Music Improvisation Magic' with so many CBS friends in the room. Producing the book has been a very steep learning curve, with countless hours over the last year put in to translate elements of my thesis into an accessible guide for musicians. Again, thanks to all of those who made it happen. I'm so pleased with how it's come out - a colourful, engaging, practical guide. I'm fascinated to see how people receive it as it makes its journey into the world. [Available to order through the site later this month](#), look out for more talks, launching and promotional book-type events very soon. You can read more about the book on my previous post ['sneak peek'](#).



Being CBS - all about music making - the night had to end with a jam. Working with the GRID system, the results were fascinating. There were points where the music seemed to entirely fall apart, to stutter or go nowhere, other points where the music took flight and soared up above the Ribble, wild, creative and free. I know some might think it strange to let the public see the hesitant moments but they are essential to improvisation. It has to be that we don't know what will happen when we interact and that other than interacting, we don't have a plan. Here, everyone had the confidence to experiment, even people who'd never met or spoken before - all under the bright spotlight of public scrutiny - fantastic to see.

Having said all that... to roundup I found myself guiding the music into a Hendrix-like jam on E - to some extent ending this chapter where it began all those years ago... See you on the next chapter and don't be late! SBP 03/06/25.



Lineup for the Finale:

Josh Bennett: Synth

Daniel Bench: Bass and Cello

Sam Bowen-Wild: Drums

Mads Rolinson-Lord: Violin

Kyle Hughes: Guitar

Sean Bogan: Bench

Simon Partridge: Guitar

Guests

Rosemary Howes: Vocals (inc. Dream of Space)

Les Gillon: Guitar

Holly Edge: Flute

Leah Eccles: Vocals

Chris Hancox: Sample Box

Chris Graves: Bass

Harry Warburg: Guitar

Con Daniels: My guitar

Thanks again to Anne Fox who made such a great film for the DoS 'Dream' section, to Tony Rigg of the Preston Jazz and Improvisation Festival and to Rob and Ethan from the Conti for facilitating.

Thanks also to [Michael Porter Photography](#) for these (and many other) great photos.