

Big 30 Website Deptford – Long edit – Transcript

MUSIC: This Town is My Home by Raf featuring musicians from the London Symphony Orchestra

Mat: I mean Deptford, you know. Deptford Creek, you know, next to New Cross, before Greenwich - Deptford. I mean, a lot of the stuff I did down there is not the sort of stuff we want to talk about.

Jenny: I think Deptford is just ideal for Heart n Soul, because it just has that kind of vibrant feel to it. You just get all walks of life and that's what I love about living in this area.

STREET SOUNDS

Hannah: I just remember always sitting on the 53 for hours to get anywhere, because to go anywhere you had to leave South East London and then obviously to get home was, you know, long.

Adele: Yeah, being in this area was all about travelling around for hours on buses.

Hannah: And yeah, those horrible waits at the bus stop at like, whatever time in the morning, freezing.

Adele: Yup.

MUFFLED MUSIC SOUNDS

Hannah: That was when we moved into that flat opposite The Venue.

Adele: Oh my god, it was like the worst flat ever, it was so bad. We were opposite The Venue.

Hannah: It's a massive nightclub

Adele: Huge! I definitely went there as a kid but you were always slightly embarrassed

Hannah: Yeah, bit of a meat market. You kind of smell the aftershave before, you know on a Friday, Saturday night in the area. We just heard everything, so even at four in the morning I could still hear the DJs in my bedroom when I was falling asleep and my windows would rattle from the bass. How long did we last? A year and a half?

Adele: A year and half, yeah.

Hannah: It was a good party house though.

Adele: Yeah, it was.

Adele: There was a lot of prejudice towards the area. I had a boyfriend who was just like, didn't understand why I wasn't living in East London. He wasn't from London and he....I guess we didn't have the fear of South East London because we'd grown up here so we knew how to get around. And actually there was a real sense of community and a real little scene in itself. There was a really good music scene, a lot of friends in bands and Goldsmiths as well. So it did feel really nice, quite focused, it felt a little bit more like you were part of something. And it was just a lot cheaper so that's why we ended up here. And we knew it; we knew that there was nothing to be scared of. We knew where to go and how to do things.

Jenny: I think Deptford has a really strong spirit. It feels like it's a bit mischievous. There's something kind of naughty about Deptford.

Ricky: There's a lot of little things that keep Deptford alive and underground, alternative still.

Jenny: It's a bit of a rebel centre.

Hannah: There was always a real mixture of people, lots of different cultures, classes. It was a real good mixture.

Adele: It was a real melting pot of different people. And to be honest, I didn't think this would be the case but I still know quite a lot, we still know quite a lot of the people that we did go to school with at the end. A lot of them have either come back to this area or went away for a bit and came back.

Hannah: Or went away, came back and now leaving because they can't afford to live here any more.

Adele: Yeah, potentially that as well, yeah.

Wozy: Growing up as a black child, black person in the 1970s, the National Front were very active at the time. There was a big march in Lewisham I remember, demonstration and a mini riot. And they were very, very active from Charlton end down to Eltham, Bermondsey, there were pockets of South East London that you didn't go into, as a black person you wouldn't go to. Various estates, the Cherry Orchard estate at that time was renowned in terms of the National Front, in Charlton and Bermondsey.

JB: I remember when I was very young that Deptford was also a place that was a bit kind of 'whoah', in the evening, at night time for black people.

Wozy: See for me, Deptford was never ever scary because I grew up here.

SOUNDS OF LEWISHAM RIOTS

Terry: There was the Lewisham riots in the 80's. Before that in the evening time you could go window shopping, but after those riots in Lewisham they started to get the screens down over the shops and you couldn't look in shops, they had all these screens - but that was the Lewisham riots.

What it was, the National Front wanted to march up Loampit Vale. Well, Loampit Vale is the road that takes you from Lewisham to New Cross, it's the main road. A lot of immigrants from the Caribbean moved into that area because the houses were quite big. A family could rent or buy a property there and they would share the cost of it. It's like Brixton, big houses in Brixton and a lot of people from the Caribbean moved to Brixton, and that's what happened here in Lewisham. But the National Front knew what they were doing. There were there to incite people to this hatred they had. And a lot of us were opposed to that. We were out on the streets trying to stop that from happening, and of course you had the Lewisham riots.

When you have a march against fascism or whatever, you've got those who joined that group to cause trouble, and that's sadly what happened. There was people arrested, people hurt; it was horrendous. They start throwing fireworks at the police... You lose track of what you're there for in the end and fights break out and it all gets naughty.

Jenny: The co-op where we live, Sanford Housing co-operative - there's quite a few in this local area. There's Deptford Co-op, Nettleton Co-op's in New Cross as well. The co-op's been there since the early 1970's.

It's a really exciting place to be, and it's diverse but also there's a lot of things that people have in common, a lot of beliefs that people share. To me it feels like a little bit of a sanctuary. The energy's a bit different to anywhere else that you might go.

Co-op living is all about working together and the challenges that come with that. It's about riding through those challenges and finding ways to work together and live together. A lot of the people that live

there really, they really care about where they live and they're really invested in it. And that's what Co-ops are all about – giving people ownership, shared ownership so that it's something that you share and invest in together.

Ricky: We're all responsible, we're all collaborating, we're all doing a lot of things. You stop putting yourself first as a person, but you're working for the larger picture, for a bigger thing, which is the community.

Jenny: It's the responsibility as well. It's really easy; I think in society nowadays to blame something external to yourself. If something's not working for you, you can go 'oh well it's this authorities fault or it's that authorities fault. My landlord's not doing this'. Whereas in the Co-op there's no real excuses, there's no they, it's just you.

Ricky: The Co-op feels like a little reflection of society. And you see in small detail why things work or don't work because you are responsible. If you want to do something to make a change, you just do it and the Co-op is a great example of that. The moment that you start doing things, things move on and change. The moment you stop, or no one does, you can see that nothing moves on.

Dean: Well, I live in New Cross. I live in New Cross since I was twelve, which is next to Deptford. I've been living there for about 16 years now. And going to Deptford growing up, I remember the first time I went to Deptford was way back in the 90's, before I went to Heart n Soul. I remember I went to the Albany before with my child-minder who looked after me when my mum and dad were at work. I remember, I was watching a theatre show called Pinocchio and there was a guy who was playing music, a musician. And this man, he played two or three characters. I was sitting next to a friend of mine that I used to go to school with and it was like a good show.

Mat: The first gig I ever did in London in 1982 was at the newly built Deptford Albany Empire where it still smelled of the paint that had just been put on there. Great gigs. They always get the obscure bands, like the Skatalites will play at the Deptford Albany.

Jacqui: I would say I've got quite a long history of coming to The Albany for different reasons, not just for Heart n Soul. I might have come here to see the Christmas Panto when I was little. And in fact, it hasn't changed dramatically. I mean, there was a time when it was going to close down and there was a massive fight to keep it open, and they obviously managed to keep it open. What's really impressed me is the garden and the fact that there are chickens in the garden, that I'm really impressed with.

Keith: I got involved in the Albany doing cloakroom at a gay and lesbian club called Out Dance. You'd have the in-crowd, so you'd have lock-ins. You'd be at the bar until 4/5 o'clock in the morning of a Friday or after a performance. If I hadn't have been at The Albany I would probably have been at home, watching TV until whatever time, going to bed, getting up, going to work and then coming home and doing the same thing every day. But with the Albany, it was like a different family.

Wozzy: You have to remember, the Albany goes way back before even having a theatre, it goes way back in the community as a workhouse for women, when it was based on Creek Road.

It was created as a space for the community of its day, and you have to remember that Deptford was lots of migrants, because it was the Docklands and everything. So it's always had a very diverse cultural

community. And that workhouse is what became a community centre, The Albany. And it was Jenny Harris and John Turner who brought the Combination Ltd. from Brighton in the 70's to the Albany and the whole theatre thing and all the arts stuff; because the Albany was renowned for its welfare rights and its social justice program.

And really, moving that from Creek Road, after, in the late 70's when the National Front burned down the old Albany, building this new space; it meant that there was a more purpose built art platform for the area.

Mat: The Deptford Albany café, apart from being really good food and super cheap – like if you know anything about the area, that's where you go to have lunch- you'd also often see a lot of disabled people. Drake were in there, all sorts of organisations were in there, coming in and out and Heart n Soul have been constant throughout. So more often than not if you're there during the day in the café you're going to be seeing a few disabled people, learning disabled people around. That was different.

And the whole place was a hotbed of artistic creation. Everyone there seems to be either doing art, planning art or about to plan some art or looking for somebody else to help do their art with them. There's nowhere else in south London that has that concentration of disability arts, equality and a kind of 'now' feeling and good old working class south London. It's always had a smell of left-wing, working class pride. I mean, you don't get many pro-Thatcher events at the Deptford Albany Empire. And I'm proud, and it's only right that that should be the place that begins an awareness of disability culture and learning disabled culture, because you're not going to get it at the Conservative club on the s-bend of World's End in Chelsea.

Jacqui: The Albany Theatre's always been a hub. It's always been a place that people have come to, but the surrounding area has become a little bit gentrified or is becoming a little bit gentrified. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. And what I mean by that is that I've seen some cafes that have opened up along the high street and in the surrounding areas there have been lots of new buildings that have gone up, new bars and restaurants. And if local people are employed in those places then that's a good thing.

So it has changed quite a bit, but not as much as other places in London, or other places nearby, it hasn't changed as much as those places. It's still keeping it real in Deptford.

Keith: Oh my god, Deptford! I wouldn't say it's becoming another Chelsea. Well, it is in parts. Being involved in the tenants and residents association with the development of all the land, the sale of all the land, it's slowly pushing the heart of Deptford out. There's no memorabilia left. The anchor's gone, which is a big part of Deptford. The anchor...I don't know where it was dragged up from but it used to live at the Deptford Broadway end of the high street and when they modified the high street it got taken away and put into a warehouse somewhere. There's nothing of Deptford left that shows, really shows Deptford exists.

Dean: Yeah, quite different as I remember. It looks completely changed now. Because there are a couple of shops that I've never been to before, like the Japanese restaurant that I really like going to. There's a library in Deptford now, in the lounge and I go there a couple of times, borrowing books, comics with superheroes and manga, using the computer sometimes.

Wozzy: It's the flats, lots more flats for me, a bit more condensed. We've lost park areas. There used to be the park opposite the old Deptford Green School was, where St Mark's church is, all of that was a park around that, it was park.

JB: It was all park. And we used to, at lunchtime go into the park and have something to eat. Run around, eat, mess about, boys, whatever.

LAUGHTER

Keith: A lot of the housing is buy and share and all that and it's slowly but surely, social housing is disappearing. It's as if it's being pushed out wilfully and that's frightening because not everyone can afford this new type of housing.

Wozzy: It's different to the developments in Shoreditch and what's happened to Brixton. Brixton was very much a black, primarily black dominated area and now when you look the shifts and the change it's like...I go, 'spot the black person!' Am I in Brixton? Is this real?! It's just totally, totally different.

Whereas here in Deptford, as much as you'll get these pockets of development I still know families and I still know friends and family who are generations and generations of being here. So I think there are more of those people, and we've got quite large estates here. When you think about Pepys Estate and Evelyn Estate, the estates are too big for people to decant people out and build whatever they want to build so they can sell a million pound flat.

It's very interesting the price rise in Deptford. Some of the houses in the area, even on Watson's Street I was looking up one that was four hundred-something thousand pounds and I was like 'in Deptford?!'.

That was the money that you would pay to go to Blackheath, that was the money that you'd pay to go to somewhere else – no, you're joking!

JB: Deptford still has some of the things that it's always had; park your car and you're in trouble. So you've got four hundred, five hundred pound cars ... where you gonna park your car? You think it's gonna be safe? You better not leave nothing in there!

LAUGHTER

Wozzy: But it's true.

Adele: Our old studio, which is at the old police station is going to be made into flats. So a lot of the artists that are in there need to move. It was really hard for us because we've been in this area for a long time, we work in this area, there's less and less studio spaces. It means something for us to be here.

Hannah: Yeah, definitely. There's quite a few buildings, even ones that had been studios for years and years and years and years have already been knocked down and turned into flats. Deptford has always been a place where artists have been and I think that if you then start taking that away then it will lose a real edge to it. And I don't mean edge like an arty edge, it's just people.

Adele: It's a really hard one because in some ways it's really exciting to see all sorts of new businesses and stuff. And there's some great places like the bar that's near us, Buster Mantis, that's run by the guy who was a few years below us, in your brother's year at school. I think he was saying, I didn't have anywhere to go out round here and I'm from the area and I wanted to create a space for that. And that's really exciting to see, but obviously as well it's really tough. And I think sometimes you get a space but it's at a very high cost and it's the

same as property; our peers, they're all moving out to Margate and they'll take all of that culture and energy with them.

Wozzy: Sometimes I feel quite squashed in Deptford now. You want to find more green space. We need trees, we need trees, we need green and space.

JB: I think that's what's changed a lot. As in, the Albany used to have space for people who were different and could come in and do and become anything, set something up.

I also think, even in London in general, that space to be free and creative and sit in the park and see more park in front of you rather than a house or a block of flats is diminishing and diminishing. Everything is functional, it has to have a purpose and you have to be able to explain the purpose right now. Whereas, there was none of that structure, but out of that non-structure, structure came.

And I think that's how Deptford has changed a lot, which is that everything has to be prescribed. Whereas before people used to have freeflow, so I can do a bit of this, I can do a bit of that, and while you're doing that you're connecting with all different generations.

I remember doing drama workshops here and going, right we're all going to do a procession through the market – god knows reason why! And you're doing it; people are joining in, coming along. And it wasn't that next week we were going to do an outreach thing and blab la blab. It was much more impromptu. And then you got what you got and you worked with what you got.

Arthur: I mean, it's Lewisham we're talking about, the borough of Lewisham. Lewisham itself is being built up all over the place; it's changing a lot.

Kali: Being from Lewisham, I'm kind of proud of it in a lot of ways and sometimes I think, wow Lewisham is something that has a landmark for a lot of people, it's a great place. I remember years ago, back in the 90's there was Woolworths, there was the Early Learning Centre as well, there was the Pizza Hut that we had. I loved the Early Learning Centre, that centre was good. Once they started shutting Woolworths down it didn't feel like Lewisham any more, it really didn't. It's was kind of like, what – are you really shutting it down? Are you crazy?!

Arthur: Do you remember Beatty's?

Kali: Yes we did, we had a Beatty's.

Isaac: TK Max....

Arthur: TK Max is really new for me, I still think of TK Max as being quite...that's new Lewisham.

Kali: Because Lewisham was brilliant beforehand, don't get me wrong but it's kind of like, feels like parts of my heritage, where I grew up, it's being taken away, where I think it shouldn't be.

Arthur: I know what you mean. I grew up in Honor Oak Park which has changed a lot. There hasn't been that much development there but the main strip there's now loads of shops, there's bars, there's restaurants. There's a scene, a little economy there. Little pockets of that have just popped up more and more over London, which I guess all contributes to the rise of house prices and all that wonderful stuff.

It's funny, there's a part of you that thinks, oh I wish it could be like it always was, but then you look round the world and that doesn't really happen anywhere. You kind of have to go with the flow I think, especially if you're living in somewhere like London, where everything

is changing all the time, you can't be resistant to it, whatever that change is.

Jacqui: I hope that Heart n Soul still has an important place here in the Deptford community and in the landscape here.

Ned: I think a lot of it has been...I think the word's gentrified, some people say modernised. Change has happened I think. Yeah, it's an interesting time at the moment. There's lots of modern things going on. There's lots of people that are worried about things changing to much. But like I say; change is inevitable and it's a good thing when you really, really, really look at it. Because the Albany, where we're sitting now in Deptford, wasn't always here, it used to be somewhere else before it came here, and people were worried about it not being there.

People change anyway, people that were here many, many years ago aren't here any more and I don't think it's that they're being pushed out I think they've just moved on.

Hannah: I don't know, I suppose you always hold a special place in your heart for somewhere that you've grown up.

Keith: I still love Deptford, no matter what, it's been a good old friend.