this heat?

ALL POSSIBLE PROCESSES,
ALL CHANNELS OPEN, 24 HR ALERT.

(The great This Heat proverb)

These notes are not intended as the final word on what this work is or what it might become. I offer them in the spirit of generosity, curiosity, and rigor. It is my hope that something here might prove useful to others in their own experiments.

Working notes on an unfinished investigation

this heat? is an ongoing choreographic, musical, archival, and cinematic investigation into the radical English experimental band This Heat, whose uncompromising approach to music-making emerged from the political and cultural upheavals of the late 1970s.

This work began with a desire to dance to their music— as you can see, the situation has gotten out of hand. I have spent years working with their recordings, drawn to something simultaneously structural and unruly, mathematical and deeply emotional. How could music made with such primitive technology sound like it came from the future? There is an extraordinary physicality to this music, a strange and insistent relationship between repetition, interruption, discipline, and disorder. It demands something of the body.

I began dancing to This Heat before I understood what I was responding to. The body recognized something that the intellect had not yet learned to name. The work that followed became an attempt to understand that encounter, and to discover what else it might make possible.

As the research developed, I began to understand This Heat not simply as a band, but as a method and I began to recognize that method within my own artistic life.

I have spent much of my life moving between music, choreography, filmmaking, fabrication, and physical labor. For a long time, these disciplines felt disjointed, although what I learned in one was constantly transforming how I approached the others. I have come to understand this movement between materials and disciplines as the organizing principle of my artistic practice.

The medium may change, the forms and genres might rupture but the line of inquiry is continuous. This Heat taught me this about myself and my work without formally instructing me.

In my earlier choreographic work, WEAVER, I proposed that the structure shapes the subject, the structure shapes the body, and the structure shapes what a body can do. So we constructed a new structure.

The idea was not to choreograph an expression of freedom, but to build an apparatus through which freedom might emerge. To establish conditions, subject the body to them, and discover what becomes possible within and against those conditions.

I am returning to those questions through This Heat.

Their music was made in a particular historical moment, one defined by political antagonism, economic upheaval, and a struggle over the future of collective life. Their recordings did not simply illustrate those contradictions. Their methods of working—improvisation, repetition, tape manipulation, the collision of disparate materials and genres—developed new forms through which those contradictions could be experienced.

And I have become increasingly interested in what happens when those methods encounter our own historical circumstances.

The world of 1970's England that produced This Heat and our world now are not the same, but they certainly rhyme.

The institutions have changed. The material conditions of artistic production have changed. The forms of political struggle have changed. But the struggle has not ended.

The future has not been decided. The final judgment has not been drawn.

This is not an attempt to reproduce a lost radical moment, nor is it an official history of the band. It is an attempt to investigate what remains possible through their methods today.

And something unexpected has happened in the course of that investigation.

In 2019, I recorded a BBC session at Maida Vale as the drummer for the New York band BODEGA. Steve Lamacq's support helped bring our music to British audiences, who embraced its roughness and peculiarities. I have always felt a profound affinity with the culture of experimental music in this country.

Only this week did I fully register that This Heat recorded their own BBC sessions with John Peel at Maida Vale in 1977, more than forty years before I was there.

I had inhabited part of this history without consciously recognizing it as such.

On my first day in Bath, I spoke with a producer from Nottingham—by way of northern England—about the importance of John Peel and the role public broadcasting played in bringing unconventional music into people's homes. Shortly afterward, I walked outside and discovered an announcement for a John Peel memorial party at the very venue hosting this residency.

I met its organizer, a man called Spinner, a vinyl collector, skateboarder and maker of DIY collages. He doesn't know This Heat. He loves another formidable English band, The Fall.

I find this tremendously exciting.

Not because it proves some predetermined historical thesis, but because the culture I came to investigate is not confined to the archive. People are still making things, organizing gatherings, circulating music, and sustaining forms of collective artistic life.

And I am interested in why, as an American artist in 2026, I feel so personally implicated in these histories.

Perhaps part of the answer is that I have already participated in them. Perhaps another part is that the questions This Heat confronted remain unresolved.

The work attempts to investigate these questions across four interconnected forms: a choreographic performance, a reconstructed musical score, an archival research document, and an experimental film, ALL CHANNELS OPEN.

Each takes This Heat as its point of departure. Each investigates the same material differently. And each is capable of transforming the others.

The choreography is particularly important because it subjects these propositions to the body. The dance does not illustrate the history or explain the politics. It constructs conditions in which their tensions become physically consequential.

The body is not neutral. Neither is the music, the archive, the institution, or the audience.

For this first sharing, I am working with repetition, compositional rules, filmed movement, temporal displacement, and musical reconstruction. The live body encounters its recorded counterparts. Structures accumulate, interrupt, and transform one another.

I do not yet know what the work will ultimately produce.

That uncertainty is necessary.

And here I return to the great This Heat proverb:

ALL POSSIBLE PROCESSES, ALL CHANNELS OPEN, 24 HR ALERT.

I understand these instructions as both a method of artistic production and a political proposition. This Heat's music emerged amid economic upheaval, Cold War paranoia, the rise of Thatcherism, and the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Their 1981 album Deceit confronted the atmosphere of political deception and catastrophe with particular urgency. But their political consciousness cannot be understood solely through the subjects of their compositions.

I am interested in the relationship between their attentiveness to the world and their relentless experimentation with the materials through which they made music.

ALL POSSIBLE PROCESSES and ALL CHANNELS OPEN invite us to challenge established forms, to pursue possibilities that cannot be entirely known in advance, and to remain receptive to what our experiments might reveal.

But 24 HR ALERT demands something equally important: attention to the material conditions of our lives and the consequences of our actions.

Experimentation without attention risks becoming empty formalism; attention without experimentation risks becoming passive observation.

We must do both.

To be alert is to refuse to take the world for granted. To experiment is to refuse to accept it as finished.

Experimentation is not a cop-out. It is not an evasion of political commitment, nor is it an aesthetic retreat from the material conditions of our lives. Revolution and rebellion are themselves grand experiments, attempts to produce structures and relations that do not yet exist.

To insist upon transformation while refusing experimentation is to demand a future whose forms have already been determined by the present. We must reject that premise. We have enemies. We have contradictions. We know what we are struggling against. But we cannot entirely know what those struggles will produce until we undertake them.

The experiment is not a substitute for political action; it is one of the means through which new possibilities become material. The struggle itself is the battle between calcified forms brutally imposed on us, and the will to challenge them through plunging ourselves into actions that are impossible to fully understand before endeavoring to participate in them.

We are not simply imagining another world. We are attempting to construct the conditions in which something else can happen.

This Heat reminds us that we are not neutral observers of an unfolding historical process. We aren't passive spectators, we are alienated contributors. The future isn't simply an object of prediction. It is a field of human intervention.

Their music belongs to a specific historical moment, but its methods invite further experimentation.

I am interested in what happens when we take that invitation seriously—not as an act of nostalgia, but as a response to the contradictions of our own time.

There are possibilities we have yet to discover. There are structures we have yet to build. There is a shifting, violent world that demands our attention and crucially, our intervention.

In short, there is work to be done and this is me taking a crack at it. It's just a stupid dance and that's enough, isn't it? Stupid dances have done a lot for us.

This is not This Heat. But it is.

ON METHOD

This Heat / this heat?

Their methods

Between 1976 and 1982, Charles Hayward, Charles Bullen, and Gareth Williams developed an extraordinary body of recorded music through collective improvisation, collective authorship, and painstaking physical manipulation of sound.

Much of this work took place at Cold Storage, a former refrigerated room in a disused meat pie factory in Brixton, South London. The band converted the space into a rehearsal and recording environment, spending long hours playing, recording, listening, and looping.

Their methods were unusual, but they were not arbitrary.

Hayward and Bullen arrived with considerable instrumental experience. Williams, initially lacking conventional musical training, introduced another way of approaching sound, texture, and musical organization.

Different kinds of knowledge were brought into the room, and established technical habits could be interrupted or challenged.

They recorded extensively, accumulating an enormous archive of improvisations, rehearsals, performances, and experiments.

These recordings were then listened to, dissected, selected, manipulated, and rearranged. A small fragment of an improvisation might become the basis for an entirely new composition. A live recording might be interrupted by a studio recording.

Sounds produced in different places, at different times, using different technologies could be made to coexist.

The tape machine was not simply a means of documenting music. It was an instrument through which music could be composed. Speed, duration, repetition, pitch, and the sequence of events could be physically altered. The original performance was not necessarily the final authority over its recorded form.

Improvisation and composition were not opposing principles. One could generate the material of the other. The process remained open to revision, interruption, and discovery.

Importantly, the work was not produced by the three musicians in isolation. Recording engineers, producers, artistic collaborators, affordable working space, and the resources of public broadcasting all contributed to the conditions through which this music became possible.

Their methods were simultaneously improvisational and highly structured, intuitive and analytical, technologically adventurous and physically laborious. What emerges from these recordings is not simply a collection of compositions, but the evidence of a continuous investigation into what sound might become.

My methods / Bath, October 2026

I begin with their recordings.

I am working toward a reconstructed musical score, cutting, rearranging, repeating, and recombining elements of This Heat's recorded material. I am interested in how a musical fragment can change through repetition, how its original context can be interrupted, and how seemingly incompatible elements might produce new relationships.

I am not attempting to reproduce their compositions as they originally performed them. Nor am I attempting to reconstruct their historical working conditions.

I am working with the material they left behind, under circumstances entirely different from their own.

The choreography develops through repeated physical encounters with the music. I establish compositional rules, investigate how the body responds to them, and subject those discoveries to further revision.

Alongside the musical and choreographic work, I am constructing an archive of historical research, recordings, conversations, and documentary footage.

During my time in Bath, the method changed in the making. I began by recording new movement, using the camera to repeat, interrupt, and layer choreographic material. But the investigation has since turned toward an existing archive: footage of an early duet I choreographed to This Heat, recordings from previous iterations of this work, and the written scores and notes that accompanied them.

The archive is not simply a resource consulted before the work begins. It is an active part of the investigation. A historical discovery can alter the choreography. A conversation can introduce an unexpected line of inquiry. A recorded encounter can become material for the film.

What is produced through one medium can be examined and transformed through another.

The different components of this heat? are therefore not entirely separate works, nor are they interchangeable illustrations of the same ideas.

They are different methods of investigating a shared body of material.

For this first sharing, I am working with limited resources and a deliberately provisional structure.

Certain elements have been composed in advance; others remain subject to the conditions of the encounter.

I am interested in what happens when these systems are placed in relation to one another, and in what becomes possible through their collisions.

This iteration is not intended as a definitive version. The investigation may take different forms in a theatre, a concert venue, a university, or another kind of gathering.

Different conditions produce different questions, and different encounters may change the work itself.

I understand this malleability as fundamental to the project's pedagogical character. I am not simply preparing a finished object to present to an audience. I am developing an investigation that can continue to produce knowledge through its encounters with other people.

There must be room for discoveries that I have not anticipated, including those that contradict my intentions.

There is no guarantee that an experiment will produce something worthwhile. It requires decisions, critical attention, and the willingness to discard what does not work. But the possibility of discovery is reason enough to begin.

I have borrowed certain procedures from This Heat, developed others through my own artistic practice, and am working to discover what might happen when they meet.

We do not yet know what a body can do.

We do not yet know what This Heat can do.

ON THE ARCHIVE

An interesting thing happens when you begin excavating your own work: you discover that some of the questions you're asking now were already being asked years ago, under entirely different circumstances, without any knowledge of where they might lead.

My first choreographic encounter with This Heat was through Horizontal Hold, a composition from the band's 1979 self-titled debut record, in a duet performed by two dancers as part of Negative Aura, my evening-length dance work from 2021. At that time, I knew very little about the band, their politics, or their working methods. I loved the music and wanted to make a dance. That was reason enough.

In March 2026, I staged what I now consider a proto-performance of this heat?. The investigation had begun to take shape, although its methods, materials, and possibilities were still being discovered. Some things survived that experiment. Others were discarded. Horizontal Hold, for instance, was cut at the

last minute because it wasn't doing anything we needed it to do. Now it has returned, under entirely different conditions, with an entirely different set of possibilities.

Alongside the band's recordings and historical documents, I have accumulated an archive of my own: choreographic scores, writing, rehearsal footage, performances, failed experiments, and fragments of things that were never finished. Footage from the original Negative Aura sessions, as well as the March proto-performance, are now being put to work in the present investigation. These materials are not simply evidence of an artistic trajectory. They are available for further experimentation.

This is where the methods of This Heat become particularly useful. The recording is not the end of the event. Material can be revisited, interrupted, disassembled, recombined, or placed in relationships that could not have existed when it was first produced.

The archive can also contradict us. What we thought we were doing is not necessarily what we made. What once appeared essential can become disposable. What we abandoned might reveal an entirely new function. There is no reason to assume that our present understanding possesses final authority over our earlier experiments.

I am interested in what happens when these different moments encounter one another, when the work is allowed to investigate its own history rather than merely recount it.

The past is not something we can change. But what we do with the material it has left us is another matter entirely.

ON THE RESULTS

Bath, 10/27/26

On Tuesday, October 27, I presented the first public sharing of this heat? at the BARN residency in Bath. I am pleased to report that the experiment produced something. More importantly, it produced a work.

This distinction matters to me, the experiment was never intended as an end in itself. I was interested in whether the systems I had constructed could generate a composition with its own internal logic, rhythm, tensions, and emotional consequences. I did not want merely to demonstrate an interesting procedure. I wanted to make a piece of art that could stand on its own two feet.

During the performance something wonderful happened: a compositional arc emerged that I had not entirely anticipated.

The recordings and projections operated according to their own predetermined durations. I made decisions about when and how to introduce material, while the consequences of those decisions unfolded independently of my intentions. Some relationships were deliberate. Others were accidental. Some were immediately recognizable as useful, while others required me to respond before I could fully understand what was happening.

I could feel the composition taking shape in real time. This did not indicate the absence of artistic judgment, quite the opposite...my compositional intelligence was actively engaged, but it was not the only determining force in the room.

The recordings, the choreographic structures, the clock, and my own changing physical condition were all contributing to the result.

There was an arc and perhaps even a hint of narrative. I had not composed that particular arc in advance.

And then there was the body!

I danced with an intensity that left me completely exhausted. By the time I reached the drums, I was approaching the limits of what I could physically sustain. I had spent days obsessing over the rhythmic

complications of Horizontal Hold, attempting to understand and reproduce one of its deceptively simple grooves.

I had imagined that the final passage might build toward something ferocious.

Instead, exhaustion imposed another possibility.

I began playing more and more quietly. The groove broke apart. Rhythmic material was reduced, interrupted, minimized. What had been dense became sparse. Rather than building toward a virtuosic crescendo, the composition gradually dismantled itself.

I hadn't necessarily planned this ending nor was I simply too exhausted to continue making decisions. My exhaustion had altered the conditions under which those decisions could be made.

The body was not illustrating a proposition about its limitations. Its limitations were producing compositional consequences.

And the twenty-minute alarm, that tyrannical little instrument I had introduced to frustrate my intentions, suddenly became a source of tremendous comfort.

I wanted it to end!

The rules were the rules. Thank God.

I am particularly interested in this result because it returns me to a question I had been asking in WEAVER: what becomes possible when we construct a structure and subject the body to its conditions?

The answer, at least on this occasion, was not what I expected. And it was not a failure of composition. It was composition taking place through circumstances that I could influence but could not entirely control.

I do not want to romanticize the exhaustion. There is no particular artistic virtue in making oneself sick. Another performance, under different physical and material conditions, might produce an entirely different ending.

But this one produced something I could not have prescribed, and I was there to recognize it as it happened.

The investigation also produced consequences beyond the performance itself.

Spinner, whom I met through the John Peel memorial gathering earlier in the residency, attended the sharing and afterward gave me a long list of handwritten notes containing things he thought I ought to investigate.

I had come to England to research a musical culture and found myself in conversation with someone actively participating in its continuation. I offered an experiment. He offered further material for another one.

This is precisely the sort of exchange I had hoped the work might make possible, although I could not have anticipated its particular form.

None of this proves that the methods will produce a compelling work every time. Nor have I arrived at some definitive understanding of This Heat, artistic experimentation, or the relationship between historical circumstances and human agency.

What I have discovered is that the apparatus can produce a composition, that the composition can exceed my intentions, and that the encounter can generate further encounters.

The experiment did its work.

I came in knowing nothing and walked out knowing nothing plus some (and a handful of notes from another obsessive music lover, the work did its work).