

EXCAVATING



**Excavating
The Reno**



The Reno, simply put, was a legendary, rocking, funk and soul, 1970s cellar club in Moss Side, Manchester.

Deemed notorious or a rite of passage. Frequented by all nations, all walks of life. To us 'half-caste' it was home.

Just after the Second World War, when rationing was still in place, and signs in boarding house windows said ‘No blacks. No Irish. No dogs’, and women drank in snugs, these kinds of white women met these kinds of black men.



They made these kinds of families.

**The white women were ostracised.
People spat in our prams.**

**My aunt had sweets in her drawer
for her full black nieces and nephews
but not for us.**



**Fashion changed.
Racism didn't.**



1971. Mosley St. The Magambo.

**Barrie George and a bunch of his mates declare
'no more parting for the white guys.'**

**They walk through them. A fight breaks out.
Victorious, the half-caste lads go down the Reno.
It enters folklore. Half-castes from across Manchester travel there.**

**They colonise it.
The Reno is born.**



Women refuse to be treated as pets.
We claim a mind of our own.



Linda Brogan

When I was a teenager in 1976 I went into this club called the Reno in Moss Side. We walk down the stairs, when we go down there's like wall-to-wall half-caste and we've never seen so many people the same colour as us. And from that night we didn't leave for about 6 years. So 40 years later I'm gonna dig that club up. I'm gonna excavate it. We were all artists. But, at that time in the 70s, we would never have dared to think we could be artists.

I want to bring the Reno back to life. I want to give us the opportunity to be artists now in this day and age. We never see ourselves as heroes. Even, if it's a negative hero. Even, if we were criminals. We were heroes.

It was wonderful. I love that time. I regret nothing about it.



Steve Kelly

Me dad was a chef. When he got work he worked. But when he didn't have any work he went out and made dough cos there was 11 of us. He taught me how to make dough. He took me on the ships when I was a kid. And we'd bring weed off them days, you know, back in the day.

He just had a way, you know. Black as coal. But he could deal with white people, you know. And he taught me how to do it. Play the white man.

He'd give the police on the gates fucking 4 cans of lager each. 'I'm going on the ship,' he'd say, 'to sell these toothbrushes.' He'd give them a couple of toys for the daughters. 'Yeah, go on Mr Black Man.' We'd go on the ship. Play the white man. Come off with these fucking 2 sacks of things. I'm, I'm 8.



Ann Maloney Danks

We went to see a clairvoyant and she said to me, she said, 'someone plays the guitar.' I said 'yeah.' It was Stewart. She said 'he's not very good at it.' I said 'no, he's not actually.' She said 'well he needs to stop what he's doing.' So I said, I said 'what d'you mean?' She said 'he needs to stop what he's doing. Because if he doesn't, within the next 10 years he's not gonna be here.'

And everything she said happened.



Fonso Buller

The door opened, and as they opened the door we looked down the stairs. And thought wow! Then we looked up. We seen this Asian geezer stood next, they used to have this speaker about that big, right. There was a little ledge along each side of the Reno, there was a ledge, then a speaker, then the stairs down. Jinx used to stand at the side of Lati. And Lati was in his little cubicle at the door. When we looked up there was an Asian geezer sat next to the speaker. So we can see he's our age. We went in there.



There was no kids in there our age. There was a few teenagery looking people at 14, 15, 16 or whatever. So anyway we went to the bar. We asked for a coke and lemonade. We got a coke and lemonade. So every single person in the bar is looking at me, me and Willis. Like, 'who the fuck are they?' 'Who the fuck?' 'Who the fuck are these 2?'

I was at Junior's dad's funeral and our Ces came to the pub or somewhere we was, and our Lanza turned up as well, and I was saying to our Ces at what age me and Willis met Himmet and he wouldn't, he wouldn't believe it. Our Ces, me brother said 'You weren't in the Reno at 12.' I went 'okay bro. I'm not gonna debate it with yer.' I didn't fucking dream it. I didn't imagine it. I'm telling everyone, that's the viewers, when I first heard the word 'wild child'. Didn't need to be wild. They were just kids growing up that needed to be out of their houses and partying and doing whatever they needed to be doing, because they needed to flap their wings and be free as kids. I was one of them. Not a wild child. I was a child that was amongst the moon and the stars at an early, very early, age.





Ann Sarge

Ann: **Me Irish nan had 9 mixed race Chinese. She had me mum and me Auntie Pat, and that was it to me Irish Granddad.**

Linda: **And then he died?**

Ann: **Then he died. No he was still alive. But when me mam, when me nan used take her washing to the Chinese laundry she got in with Charlie. She got in with Charlie Lin Fong and ended up having 9 kids to him.**

Linda: **Fuck man. Ann, I didn't know none of that man.**

Ann: **Yeah, yeah, yeah.**

Linda: **Wow, that's pure multiculturalism innit.**

Ann: **And the only time I could go to me nan's, I mean, I loved me nan, me nana, she was lovely with me, but the only time we could go was when me nan's Chinese kids weren't in.**

Linda: **Why?**

Ann: **Cos she, cos I was black you see.**

Linda: **Fuck off, but they're coloured as well.**

Ann: **But then me mam'd kick off.**



**Robert Taylor (speaking)
and Chris Jammeh**

**This time I get 2 right horrible
twats with me who work for
security in the jail. And they've got
the handcuff on, right, and the dog
thing, right, so I thought how am
I gonna get out of here? Cos I'm
raring to go now. So I say 'I want
to go to the toilet.' So what they've
done is they've put this chain on
yer, they take one cuff off and put
the chain on the other cuff like a
dog chain, and they're under the
door. So I've heard him say to the
other one, 'you go and phone a
taxi.' So I've come out. So I've got
my leather coat off, yeah, so he's
reached forward to undo the cuff to
put it back on this arm. I knocked
him out. Bang! Just sparkled him on
the spot. I get off, right.**

**Little did I know the other
one's a jogger!**



Mandy, Linda, Susie

Susie: **Had our own area.**

Linda: **Oh yeah.**

Susie: **When it became a tune of all tunes you had to hit the dance floor.**

Linda: **Like what, what d’ya, what?**

Mandy: **There’s loads. There was loads.**

Susie: **Peter Brown – Do You Want To Get Funky With Me. Tommy and Derrick Star’s track.**

Mandy: **Yeah.**

Susie: **After Love Is Gone – Willie Hutch.**

Linda: **Nearly burst into song then.**

Mandy: **Hard Work.**

Susie: **Hard Work, yeah.**

Mandy: **Yeah, Hard Work was hard work.**



Susie: **Killer Joe. You know when you think of how long he used to play it, not many places you’d go, now you do.**

Mandy: **They’d play a track 7, 9 minutes long.**

Susie: **An instrumental. Like Hit and Run, d’ya remember that? About 9, 10 minutes long. You’re like that ‘for fuck’s sake.’**

Mandy: **Morning, Noon and Night, that’s about 7 minutes.**

Susie: **Oh come on now [to DJ] One Nation Under The Groove. That was about. Jesus Christ how long have I gotta keep going on? Fucking hell how long’s this track? Used to be 3 minutes.**

Mandy: **Making up new moves.**

Linda: **Yeah.**

Mandy: **Persian.**

Linda: **Give us a break.**

Mandy: **For fuck’s sake.**

Susie: **Total workout.**

Mandy: **Don’t make me hair sweaty.**

Susie: **D’ya know what I mean. Fucking going back into an afro here.**

Mandy: **Persian, don’t be making me frizz.**

Linda: **We’ve passed the frizz moment, you know, about 6 minutes into the track.**

Susie: **D’ya know what I mean. You gone out like Shirley Bastard, hair all nice, then the next thing you’re a fucking Hair Bear Bunch.**



Tony Bello

**Some history was made
on this patch.**





















**1976. Afros reign.
Never go down before midnight.
See that stair leaning against the wall
Stepped on by all. Wall. Door. Light. Alarm. 'I know your farda.'
Check yourself in the wall of mirror. Do not what ever you do fall down the stairs.**







THROUGH THE RED LINO DOORS TURN LEFT



**First call the ladies. Check your makeup.
Take your last pill just in case.**

**The knights drown the empty wallets in their cistern.
Dab of aftershave just in case.**

**Dangle between 2 fingers, clench by the top, says something about you.
Coke or Pepsi says a lot more.**









Courvoisier for the working girl just ended her shift.

Stood to the right of the 3 top tables.

**Where our king, looking dapper in his purple beret,
Waits for his queen in her floor length white fur.**

Persian's blue picket fence: he never spoke then.

**Flak jacket knights sip their Special Brew with their spliff.
Till they hold up the first Asda.
Then order champagne in their matching safari Jackets.**



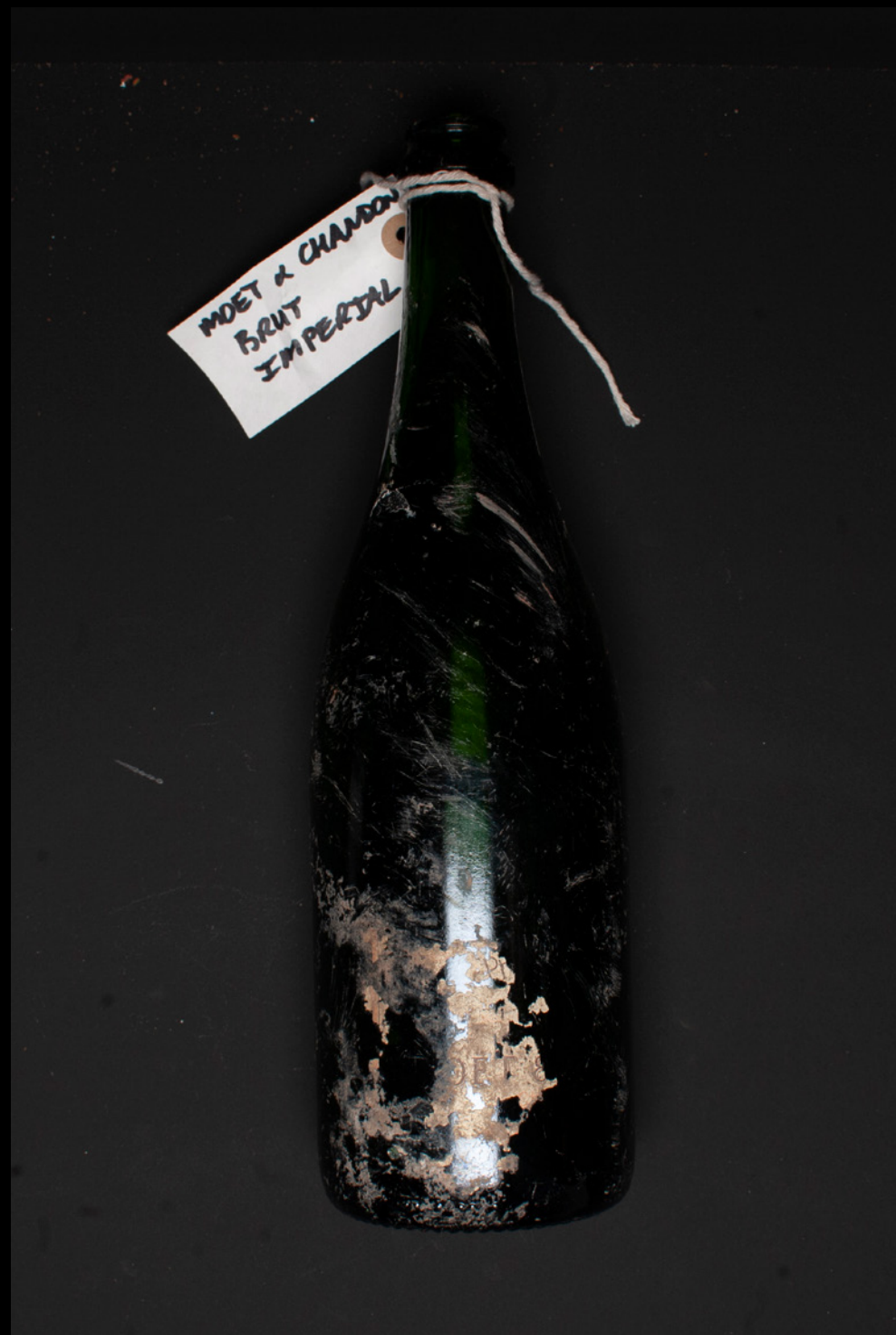


THE RENO

To me the Reno stunk, it was a structural deathtrap, it had the good the bad and the ugly in there. I seen happy people in there and very sad people too. I seen shit dancers and wicked dancers in there but I loved watching all of them when I was stoned in a secluded corner. There were people who were cool and people who thought they were cool. There were women I fancied and women I didn't. I felt sorry at times and sometimes not, for strangers who were being stalked unaware they was going to get robbed. There was a sense that this type of activity apart from money was a form of protecting the Reno from strangers who thought they could come down and take the piss, it was a message to closet racist and other external threats. There were rats and beetles crawling all over the gaf probably stoned too. But central to all this was the wicked music which fitted in with the images my mind was enduring whilst observing the beautiful madness all around me. There were slick fashionistas in there and people who cloths wise had nothing but in other ways they had plenty. The toilet was like a bath tub full of piss. The bar was like a hatch on an ice cream van more often than not packed. Most of the time the dance floor was like a scene out of 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' but was a buzz to observe. It was a place where like myself a lot of people started their street PHD. It was a place where I had some of the best times of my life regards going to clubs and sometimes that was without a carrot. The Taxi service was second to none because the pirates was always outside some got paid some didn't, depended who they were or if they were connected to anyone we knew. Anyway I'm signing off for now but that was my little summary on 'The Reno' Those that know me know me those that don't don't. Phew!!!

JC
21.01.18



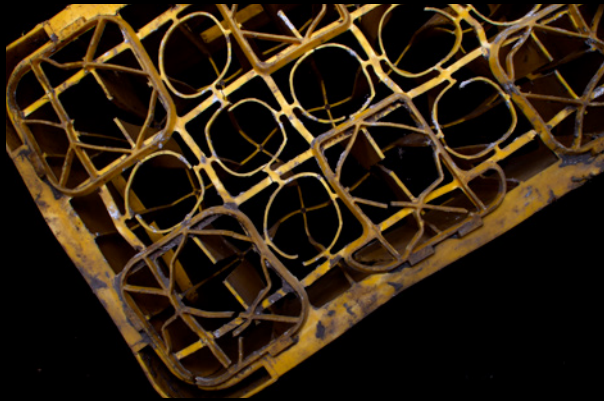




**The gambling room fire always ablaze.
Older Jamaicans drink Guinness for their health.**

**Careful, the red and blue tiles incline slightly where the crates tower.
You're back opposite the stairs.**





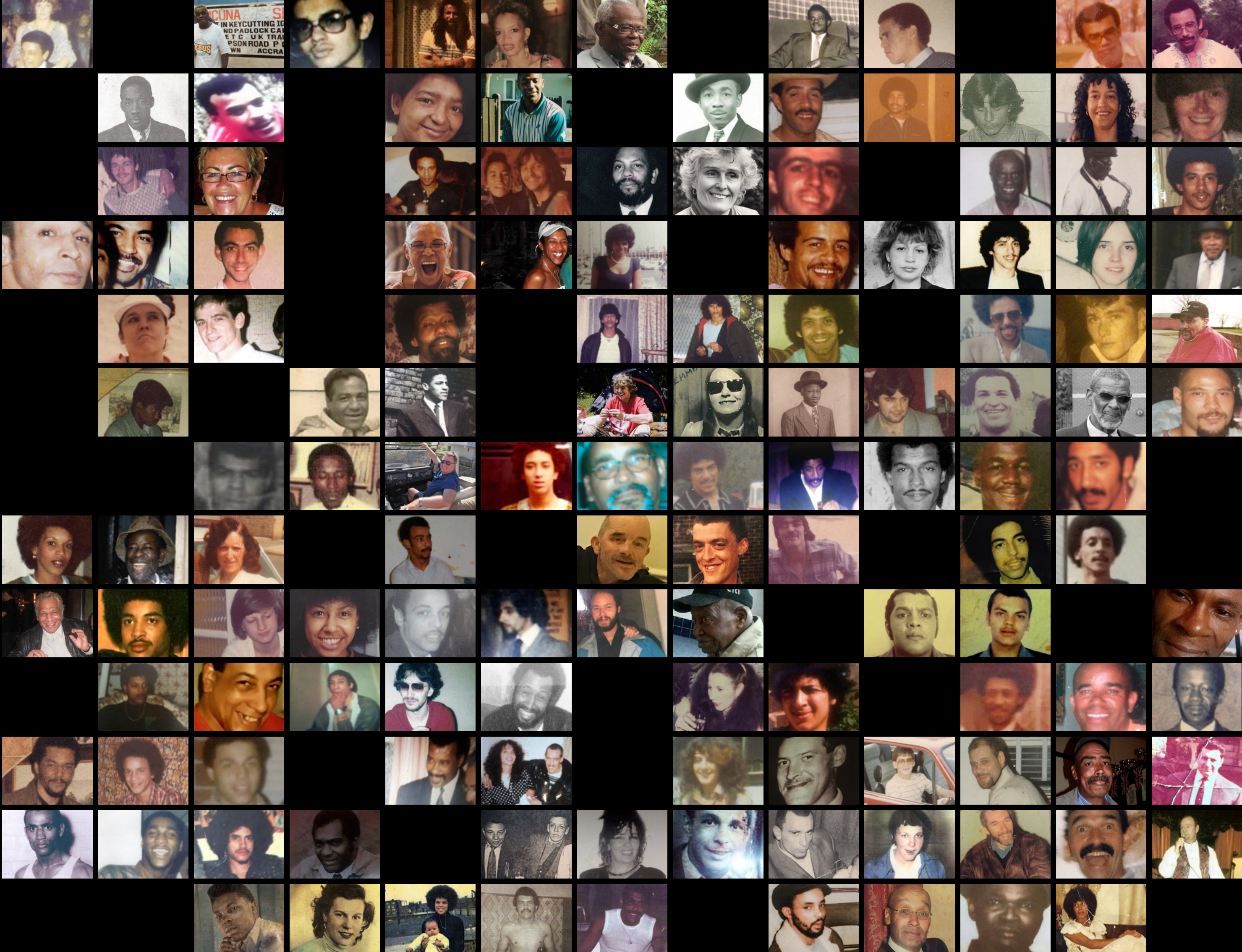


WHEN WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK YOU CAN HAVE MORE

FRONT

Specialist small business insurance.

HISCOX
EVER ONWARDS



See thereno.live
for a regularly updated memorial page

Those who have left

Chatting amongst ourselves, we realise the value of the place, the vibe, the music, the friendship we gave each other. On the excavation site, someone would turn up who I hadn't seen for 40 years: it would feel like I hadn't seen them for 40 minutes.

On Facebook, in Excavating the Reno Group, join, we were saying the other day: we are all walking towards death. What this has given us is someone to hold our hand. We are holding each other's hands in a way we didn't as kids. You know how it is: you're cool, you're fly, you're shy, you never know if you can trust each other to show your real, real heart. What's beautiful about our resurrected community is now we all know the truth: we weren't really cool. We laugh, we play, we joke, we talk politically, we talk poetically, we talk philosophically, we talk artistically.

Those talks made this book.

**Linda Brogan
04.11.19**





Funding

Special thanks to Nick Hern Books who gave the first £1000 everything else is built on. Thank you to Arts Council England who funded our entire journey. Especially Alison Boyle who taught me how to plan my applications. The Royal Court, Battersea Arts Centre, Manchester International Festival, Royal Exchange, Contact Theatre, Niamos, Rochdale Literature & Ideas Festival, Blue Moose Books, Bound Book Festival, Manchester Histories, One Manchester, Ambition for Ageing MCR, and Age Friendly Hulme & Moss Side all generously donated. The Whitworth funded our exhibition and its revamp. Logos are on our website.

2016 Reno Memoirs

Thanks to the 15 who came to our introduction tea party; the 70 who filmed Reno memoirs; the thousands who watched them on Youtube; the hundreds who rocked our memoir celebration Xmas party; everyone who dug out Reno teen photos; and everyone who honoured us with their loved on our memorial wall.

2017 Reno Excavation

Thank you to Manchester City Council for the loan of the land, especially our champion Sarah Elderkin; Salford University Applied Archaeology for enabling the Reno excavation, especially our patient, wonderful lead archaeologist Sarah Cattell; the hundreds of Reno Regulars, their kids and grandkids who helped us dig, little shout out to Sobers here; including amateur archaeologists, especially Posh Margaret who made the excavated Reno look like we could eat our dinner off it; those who fed us all, especially guaranteed lunch ‘mum’ Suzy Mousah; those who gave us lifts; the hundreds who turned up just to say hello; the 1000, made up of 4 Reno generations and our fans, who got down in our epic celebration marquee: and joined us to colonise the Whitworth for one night 23rd November 2017, with all we had found.

2018 Finalist in 8 National Awards

Everyone who nominated us.
Everyone who voted.

2019 The Reno at The Whitworth

Sincerest thanks to the Reno 12, those most loyal to the excavation: Barrie George, Brian Thorn, Carmen Jones, David Trigg, Dionne Richardson, Jeff Bassey, Reno DJ Persian, Philip Collins SNR, Steve Cottier, Susie Quarcoopome, Suzy Mousah, we lost Myra Trigg to a hip replacement. In weekly Thursday meetings 6 till 9, October 2018 to March 2019, we bared our soul on film, connecting to our social media audience, preparing to occupy our double height Whitworth gallery, where as a living sculpture in an evolving exhibition, March to October 2019, we created our timeline, montaged our teen photos, edited our memoirs, excavation footage and photos, erected our memorial wall, gleaning insight through our in depth conversations with our exhibition visitors, their comments, our Facebook group, comments on our weekly blog. Until, pop! Suzy Mousah, staring at an A1 of the Reno’s open door, our cover, said ‘wouldn’t it be great if that photo was big enough that you felt like you could walk in it?’ Its 5m x 4m image brings our space to life. We’re here till April 2020. The journey hasn’t always been easy between a nightclub and an institution. Whitworth Director, Alistair Hudson has handled it all.

Special Thanks

Nikita Gill and Robert Parkinson assisted by Rachel Hughes photographed our artefacts. Max and Richard designed this book with Karen Rangeley and me. Manchester Culture Awards 2019 rewarded us with ‘Outstanding Contribution’ to Manchester culture.

Super Special Thanks

Our photographer Karen Rangeley aka Rude Gal, with us since before the memoirs in 2016, the gorgeous modern day photos are hers. Our filmmaker John Lloyd aka White John, with us since the excavation, the beautiful lava lamp photo, and me and Mandy laughing on screen is his. And to Philemon Magbotiwan for owning the club: none of this would have happened without him.

Our memoirs, and excavation footage are tagged beside our weekly Sunday blog on www.thereno.live. You’re gonna love ‘em.





www.thereno.live