

THE WORLD RECORD FOR THE SAX
ENSEMBLE:~THE BIG BLOWOUT.



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**the big
blowout!**

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HELP US TO SMASH THE
GUINNESS WORLD RECORD FOR
THE LARGEST SAXOPHONE
ENSEMBLE EVER! *•***

**ON THE WORLD RENOWNED OPENING NIGHT OF THE
BATH INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL**

21ST★ MAY 2004

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All photos by Simon Archer.

www.simonarcherphotography.co.uk

Chapter .1.

'What seemed like ' A GOOD IDEA

AT THE TIME!::~~

APPROACHING WILL GREGORY EQUALS 'THE BIG BLOWOUT.

November 2003. During discussions with career coaching guru Mr William Pennington the Director of The Blowout Sax Mr Mark Archer mentioned Number 78 in the pr book of 101 ways to great ' PR PR darling!' Break a world record. Seems like a plan. The Blowout Sax School had been building up it's reputation over the years and William checked the record and found it was currently held by the Dutch who played a specially composed piece called 'Off the Beaten Track! Well Blowout Sax founder Mark Archer figured the 321 saxophonists needed would be a breeze! This is because The Blowout Sax Bath and Bristol currently boasted over 180 students so that was a backbone!! Plus a list of oldies and brightened by the early optimism it would be easy to eclipse that total.

There are so many different reasons to put The Blowout Sax Schools on the map. It's originality stemmed from the fact that the Blowout Sax teachers make music enjoyable, amusing and quick to learn. Over the years the School has swelled as student saxophonists came to have a taste of blowing the 'dream machine.'

And why are they there?

It's the sound man! That siren sound that can translate a feeling into notes, transmitting those basic emotions of sadness, anger, fear to love tenderness and the expression of unadulterated joy. It can deliver any feeling.

Couple that with the cool look of a saxophone. The additionally super-personality charge. It's like falling in love again with a legitimate lover. And that love affair lasts forever.

And it's a personal. With your very own personal sound.

The ultimate buzz of self-expression.

The Blowout Sax organisation have been ready to spring forth on the unsuspecting public, for many years.

The principle launch was to be through it's teaching book.
Blowout Sax. A revolutionary way to learn the saxophone.
No musical knowledge required.

Within this book lies an original and proven way of learning, with cartoons and superb black and white photos of Blowout Sax students playing on stage and local Sax gods like Andy Sheppard. The first draft was written over twelve years before and The Big Blowout event was supposed to be the launch! And what happens eh?

A couple of years of snarl-up in copyright red tape and with the passage of time there is almost too much information which like all great teachers is constantly being processed and evolving i.e. me.

The beauty of teaching the saxophone is we can continually learn from the student and hone our skills.

The great art is communicating this.

So in a hands on way and through the book we are pleased to announce that the official re-write edition 1 will be ready by the beginning of January 2009.(Nearly 5 years later!!) (Note actual jan 2012!!)

So the plan has been laid now how to get a slot on the opening Night at the Bath International Music Festival.

And there on the street corner of North Parade Mark Archer nervously coldcalled a famous Saxophonist namely Mr Will Gregory. He who has composed music and orchestrated events like this before. Five years before Circus Maximus was an amazing musical fanfare. Bath's Georgian Circus was filled with with over 200 musicians, three brass bands, several wind ensembles, Saxes, Clarinets and Percussionists galore. Trumpets appeared from the rooftops. A memorable experience for audience and players alike.

For me he was an inspirational Saxman for Bath's very own 'Tears For Fears.' Currently he is behind the current phenomenon which is Alison Goldfrapp. He was supercool and was up for it.

Then the placing of a call to the Bath Festivals Trust. We explained who we were and what our intention was and mentioned what we believed to be the password magical name of Will Gregory to initial sceptism. The lady on the other end of the phone promised to pass on the message to the main organiser Tim Joss.

Then we recieved an instant response was a happy and joyous ansaphone message giving us the OK to stage this event. The powers that be had seen the opportunity!" Hurrah game on!



On alternate Monday nights in The Bell Walcot St., plans were drawn up between Mark and one of his teachers the very marvellous Stan Scott . Ideas and beerages flowed merrily. The Guinness World Records were notified and a long long post brainstorming list of jobs to do were scrawled.

Our idea was of an amazing event at the finale of the opening night post fireworks at The Circus –that was the dream. Exciting, visual, aurally stunning and

acoustically breathtaking.

Ideas for the piece were a loud spine-tingling finale, the idea of layers so everyone gets a taste of playing a part, as well as being uplifting, comic and yet simple ,to include very type of sax and even the idea of an after event stellar saxbash.

December 2003.Mark met Will Gregory for the first time at The Blowout Sax HQ at the turret on North Parade. There on a crisp yet sunny lunchtime the meeting was very cordial, easy and informative. Will was in on the strict agreement that the legwork needed to come from The Blowout Sax organisation. He outlined the points we needed to clarify.

- 1.The Venue. Need to OK with council, festival and residents.
- 2.Time . Post-fireworks.
- 3.Lights and staging.
- 4.The shape of the fifteen minutes.
- 5.Bass and rhythm section.
- 6.Rehearsals venues and times.
- 7.Rough list of instruments.

So far so good though the world record file was starting to look rather fat and the can of worms had been well and truly opened.

January 2004.The lady from the Bath Festivals who was assigned to us was called Lindsey Dear. We emailed our dream event to her and early one January morning she came to The Blowout Sax school and gave us a fait accompli.

8 pm on the main stage in Royal Victoria Park, and we would have half an hour slot. So that was it in a nutshell. No negotiating.

Stan reckoned it was great .

No council planning meetings.

No worry about health and safety, lighting and many of the potential time consuming worms avoided.

So we have a time, date and destination Friday MAY 21st 8pm. So let's go and get the numbers required.

Chapter2.

STUDENTS NOW AND YESTERYEAR.

BLOWING THE HORN AND BANGING THE DRUM.

Cor what hard work!

February 2004.

Over the fifteen plus years of teaching the sax we have had every type of personality, profession, race, creed and colour. And unsurprisingly for an instrument that looks so bizarre many brilliant and wacky eccentric characters. The great attraction of the saxophone is the complete variety of ages, kids, youths, students, professionals, and the desire spreads right up to those in their 70's. Marvellous.

When the current crop of Blowout Sax students are told about the World Record the reaction is favourable and we soon get the first 100 signed up towards the total required.

The next obvious port of call was to locate the old student lists dating back from the early days of 1989 and since then. These were excavated from decaying diaries, torn morsels of paper with student lists with random numbers and many names familiar and the odd few that sadly weren't. And through it all there was the evolution from handwritten numbers to a cheap typewriter to neat lists from hi-tech computer. There aptly is the growth from a one

man band into a full working teaching force that is The Blowout Sax School of Bath.

A list was drawn up by Mark of old students that he could remember. 120 names of top folk that he had spent a lot of one and one teaching time with. As a teacher, confidant and friend you know that the time you spend with them must be enjoyable and you also learn that like most of life it will have a beginning, a middle and eventually an end.

The majority of Blowout students attain standards they couldn't have believed when they first turn up for their first session, nervous shy and trying to blow the sax for the first time. Many glorious days later there they are playing the infamous cult Saxtracks like the 'Will You" solo, Madness' One Step Beyond,' Pink Panther and the ultimate fingertwister, 'Lily Was Here.' (see You Tube-Blowout Sax Channel)

It's strange calling those former students though. Often the reason for leaving is life itself. Giving birth, going to college, moving away and moving on .A transience which always ends, often a touch of sadness. This though became a fine excuse to see what happened to them in their post-Blowout Sax years.

The vast majority are pleased to hear from you and at least a quarter are up for it. In your mind their image is frozen from the last or first time you saw them or from a particular moment when they played something that really was great at a Blowout Sax gig.

Chapter 3. **SAXOPHONE TEACHERS OF GREAT BRITAIN UNITE?!**

March 2004.

Our coldcalling block has been well and truly removed now and after a visit to see our ace sax repairman Ray Colomb in Corsham we now were furnished with the telephone numbers of all the sax teachers known anywhere within a 2 hour radius.

This is an interesting exercise with positive conversations with other teachers becoming a premium. The likes of American Sean McBride whose enthusiasm from the off was immense are very few and far between. Great support and advice is also offered amongst others by Ian Haystead, the exuberant Peter Bettle and the vibrant Nick Sorenson.

Unfortunately the majority are fearful of their ivory towers being smashed by The Blowout Sax. It reminded me of starting the sax those 20 years ago. Saxophone teachers who can't be bothered to raise their game to meet their eager students requirements. This in a nutshell is why The Blowout Sax is so successful.

Blowout is prepared to work out and teach any piece of music that inspires the students. We put our students on stage with a live band in front of a packed 250 people audience. We will teach any style of saxophone playing ska, reggae, gospel, soul, funk, pop and be-bop. The Sax is so multidimensional and so are we. That's why we love it so.

The aim of this world record is to put our beloved sax firmly on the map where it was in the halcyon days of the pop 1980's. We love the Saxophone and we believe there are others that do too.

We then block email send out press releases to all teachers, players, music repairers, and any other musical lead in the UK music industry. Unfortunately we are getting hundreds of spam about porn. Maybe the Blowout Sax name can be misinterpreted!! Now I wonder if all the spam that has come through is blocking the actual information that is important both in the inbox and the outbox.

We also are trying to now step up the campaign to get vital plugs on the radio. Jane Jones of Classic FM fame and mother of one of our stars Morgan plugged it. The rest don't consider it newsworthy

yet. Courtney Pine's management give the polite but go and be provincial handoff, Humphrey Littleton's manager was lovely and said he'll give it a plug on his Radio2 show early May. Left message with Parky's secretary about it at the BBC. Didn't realize 'there were trouble at mill then' and he was leaving for ITV! Still its nothing personal just got to keep on pushing on.

By the middle of March with the number at 200 our computer which has been teetering on the edge of a breakdown finally crashes.

Six weeks to go and another 130 saxophonists plus to find.

It seemed like a good idea at the time!!!

Chapter 4.

THE SUNDAY WORKSHOP WHERE THE PIECES ARE TRIED OUT.

The next meeting with Will Gregory at The Café Retro was to discuss the music. Craig Crofton Blowout's American jazz superhero quite rightly pointed out that as it's a Blowout Sax event both he and I as well as Will should contribute pieces that would represent what The Blowout Sax School is about.

So one splendid afternoon, Mark and Stan got together in Mark's soundproofed room (necessary if to keep everyone happy when your inspired on a sax and it's 2am!!) with the view of composing their piece. Now with a couple of hundred players, their idea was it had to be natural notes, i.e. simple to finger, KISS(Keep It Simple) and a slow beautiful melody. Using a drone, a couple of takes later there produced an effortless composition of a piece which we called appropriately 'Something Simple.'

The beauty of the moment was enhanced by the unexpected descent of freak snowstorm outside.

Very pleased with this composition Mark and Stan then sat in a car immobile stuck in a snowstorm for a couple of hours going nowhere as Bath came to a complete standstill!!!

On Sunday 7TH March at midday we all met at The Inventions Arts for a workshop with a selected band of students ranging from the beginners to the highly gifted.

In true musician cavalier fashion our percussionist Andy Fuller was hauled out of bed 20 minutes before and Will Gregory turned up right on midday. Mark Archer who by now was living life on his nerves was having one of those stomach churning moments.

We started the workshop with the piece 'Something Simple,' and it came together beautifully. What was great was despite never having heard it before everyone flew in on the first theme, it was like a 21st century wave as people played early and late and even a few at the right speed but there was no doubt that with 25 saxs it worked! Within 20 minutes done taught, played and sorted...Next!



Craig was next up with his tune called 'Sunny Day,' which definitely captures the wacky more grin-filled aspect of the Blowout Sax as well as the comic feel a sax can undoubtedly give.

Unlike a straight melody, this tune has a 2 phrase bouncy base hook over which different themes can be overlapped. The basic theme sounds excellent especially with the addition of the Tenor



sax 'honking low ship coming into port' Bottom B flats. Then the addition of theme 2 a high stab. The third theme adds the Pink Panther jazz lick. It certainly complemented the first tune 'Something Simple.'

Meanwhile the great Will Gregory had been rubbing his chin thoughtfully at these tunes.

The next hour the exuberant Will showed us a master class of ideas starting with reminding us the sax is a multi-directional instrument and soon had all the saxophonists spinning playing a single note and turning around on the spot, starting the note soft and getting loud then snapping the note off tight and the next time he had everyone playing harmonies.



Fine with 25 players but we figured a couple of hundred maybe not!!! Then he came up with a simple repeat melody of a sequence, anchored by the Tenor Saxes keeping the bass line going.

Add a harmony and there it was, a trilogy of world record pieces of original saxophone music.

It was a very enjoyable experience for all concerned, players composers and a great taster of the madness to come!



We were fortunate to have the whole event filmed by Ian Singleton who was shooting a programme on the event and the following day he shot all 3 of us playing our pieces to go on our website www.blowoutsax.com with the idea that students could see it.

So the pieces refined it was back to banging the drum going to get the numbers up.

Chapter 5.

LOCAL RADIO THEN TV FINALLY TAKE INTEREST.

The one truth in trying to get media attention is contacts. If you ain't got them you might as well not bother.

DJ Tony Clark is a very good friend of mine and together we wrote *Sax Madmen* a plotted guide to the antics and music of some of the greatest exponents of our beloved saxophone. Another brilliant idea this one is actually finished and is still on the eternal 'to be launched' pile. Tony has a masterful knowledge of music and he kindly invited us onto his late night jazz show on Star FM and we managed to conduct an orderly chat about this World Record attempt.

The next lead came from one of Blowout Sax stalwarts Rosy Drohan who's daughter was going out with a Bath FM DJ and the next thing we know there is a phone interview at 9.15am.

Then another Blowout sax student and top man Luke Taylor got in touch with a good friend of his Kate Salisbury from the BBC Bristol news show and she came in and we did a great vibrant interview. The next day we listened to it over breakfast and now my young boys think their dad is cool.

The ball is rolling now.

The follow-up story is on a BBC Bristol on Saturday morning at 7.20 am and is going out live.

After what can only be a fitful nights sleep (alike to waiting to going on a school trip in the early hours) there I was at the Blowout Sax School attempting to see if me and me sax could communicate in those early hours for a musician! And then in he bounced some whippersnapper interviewer full of zest and off we went with the finale of the main melody of Will's tune 'By The Numbers.'

Straight back in the car and back to me lovely warm bed beautiful wife and zzzzzs.

Hope someone heard it that early on a Saturday morning!!!

We now have received over 300 applications and probably more but again our computer is being highly randomly selective over what emails it lets through.

The local TV stations have been hard to track down and with the up coming rehearsal on Sunday at Bath's famous Pavilion, the

local TV cameras say they are going to make an appearance. That hopefully will give it the shunt towards the numbers required.

Obviously leading up to the world record we were going to attempt to get the famous Norris McWhirter to come and adjudicate as he lived in Wiltshire. Roy Castle and the McWhirter twins really put Record Breakers on the map and this obviously embedded with a deep need from childhood for all of us who watched this show to enter sacred it's record books.

Equally we have tried to contact his son Ben Castle a brilliant sax man to join us and he sent us a good luck email. Norris unfortunately died playing tennis at his home at Kington Langley near Chippenham before we could approach him.

First Competitors!!!! A BRIGHTON ATTEMPT.

There have been rumours circulating about another attempt in the UK in Brighton. This Wednesday May 5th we received a call from an jovial sounding man called Simon De Souza who is leading 100 or so and was labouring under the belief this could be a world record!! I wish! I invited him up to ours but obviously he is focused on his own matter in hand. However a pact has been formed and maybe in the future we can unite to do something equally ridiculous.



Chapter 6. THE REHEARSAL.

'PEEWEE' ELLIS.

We have been fortunate to secure the services of a heavyweight Tenor Saxman of repute. Mr PeeWee Ellis who is going to help us break the world record. PeeWee is one of the 'founding fathers of funk,' and has been the musical director and tenor Saxman for those notorious taskmasters James Brown and Van Morrison. He truly is an awesome force to witness on his instrument. He also



has written musical classics like 'Cold Sweat' and 'Chicken.' We are proud to have him on board. Once again we are finding out who is on board the good ship Blowout Sax and those that are not!!!

This is what we wrote up for the Bath Evening Chronicle. 'The Big Blowout.'

The rehearsal for 'The Big Blowout' on Sunday the 9th of May was an outstanding musical event. Captured by the HTV and BBC camera crew over 200 saxophonists of all ages descended on Bath's Pavilion to run through the world record

pieces. It was extraordinary to hear and see that many of Adolphe Sax's wonderful creations from the deep rich baritones, the lushous big sounding tenors, the bright and brilliant altos and the lovely straight sopranos all being blown together.

The pieces written by The Blowout Sax School teachers Mark Archer, Stan Scott and Craig Crofton and arranged by the supremely gifted Mr Will Gregory sound so wonderful as those chorus of instruments rang out.

'The Big Blowout' was also given a positive boost as the legendary Saxman Alfred 'Pee Wee' Ellis came to join our attempt which can

only help raise the profile of the saxophone still further. That was a great surprise.

The rehearsal was a massive success and our thanks to everyone who appeared. We still need more players of all abilities to break the Guinness World Records, so if you would like to take part on May 21st please do call us on Bath 01225-339007 and/or check out our website www.blowoutsax.com where the music and application forms are online. Alternatively if you know someone please spread the word.'

Here's the real version.

Awoke having the fear in my stomach. Would The Pavilion be open?

Would anyone turn up?

And how do we manage the crowd if they do?

This would be yet another great challenge!

As I turned the corner of North Parade there was a snake of a saxophonists and cases leading towards the Pavilion. Phew! And The Pavilion was open. As we walked in there was the sound of 160 Saxes warming up !

I looked up and there was Dr Boo McConnell one of my old students who was living in Barbados. I wouldn't miss this she said. What a lift and equally as incredible, looked round and there was Pee Wee! There was The Blowout Sax enterprise with a couple of hundred saxophonists greeting one of the founding fathers of funk!

And after lots of sorting folk into different groups so all the beginners, intermediaries and advanced were together in 8 separate groups and with more and more photocopies of the music being needed. Many of the students liked the fact that this gave them the opportunity to have a chat with other saxophonists especially with those at your level. Everyone was hugely supportive of each other.

'Something Simple'(even without the deputy percussionist Ivan who failed to show, so we improvised with The Pavilion's pots and pans!!) still sounded great as we split the playing so half played



each theme, then we linked into Craig's piece 'Sunny Day,' which the baritone's kicked off and is a musical round. With the additional parts it sounded very groovy, working well with a couple of hundred sax players.





Then with 'By The Numbers,' up it started with the menacing bass line theme, Will then cleverly incorporated the great legend Pee Wee Ellis on this track before the wild stabs and the melodic themes.

Will is really is a great showman and is really going for a climatic piece which to me seems massively complicated, as I live by the musical creed of K.I.S.S (Keep It Simple Stupid.) I was in the midst of switching off when Will turned around and caught me off guard as he asked

me to play his main melody. Fortunately having taught it with individual students more than a hundred times, it was somewhat 'under my fingers.'



This piece has grown somewhat from it's infant beginnings and is full of menacing filmic score quality.

To close the session we ran through the pieces back to back and it sounded incredible.



Now for THE BIG BLOWOUT day!

At the finale students came at us the organisers asking a myriad of questions and quick and easy to negotiate interview with HTV and then hopped out of the Pavilion sidedoor!

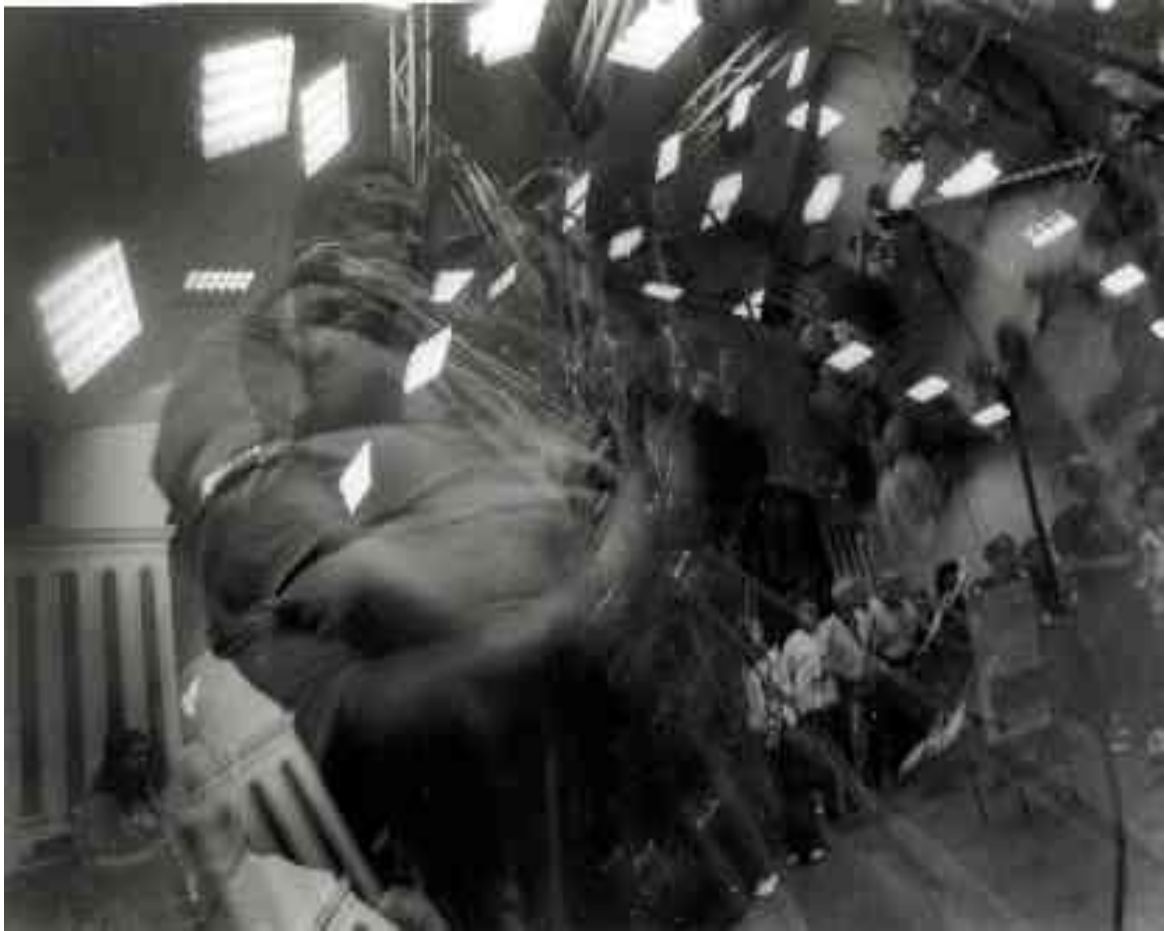
On getting back home a sort of joyous relief overtook me and I slept deeply for 2 hours, and awoke felling enraptured and then gutted as I had missed my premiere TV performance!!

Finally saw the HTV plug which was excellent:~ which was introduced by Jane Solomons.

Pee Wee said of this event:~

“That’s the first time I’ve ever done that...It felt real good, it was really supportive and inspiring.!”





Mark Archer's comments to HTV reporter Andrew Lindsey:~

“The idea is to put the saxophone on the map. Put the Blowout Sax on the map as well. The original idea was to launch our original teaching book where you don't have to read music, so music is accessible to all, but of course it's not quite ready, but the world record goes ahead anyway!

“To have that many people playing my piece is quite outrageous, but it will be more outrageous when we bust this world record.”

THE DAYS LEADING UP.
MORE COMPETITION FROM CANADA.

The Friday before as I picked up the boys from school, I was handed a sheet of paper from one of my students, fellow dad and pal Julian Davies which read that on May 30TH in Toronto being organised by The Shuffle Demons (who look like a wild bunch of fellow saxophone lunatics,)they are also going for our world record!

They acknowledged the Blowout Sax attempt before them and are going to play a 'Hockey Night In Canada.'

We have been running at this for 6 months through calls, emails, texts, radio and tv plugs. In jingoistic terms we are trying to run up the interest factor with this attempt. It all can help the 'PR PR darling.'



The Monday before there we are organising and arranging the music as one of the greatest pieces of feedback to come from The Pavilion rehearsal was from retired wild man Scottish George Young.

From the student/player point of view he quite correctly pointed out the tightness of the entry/exits will be the key to performing these original tunes and pulling them off. This applied especially to Craig's 'Sunny Day' and Will's 'By The Numbers.' And it's strange how suddenly we didn't just want to break the record but wanted it to sound really musical. We are opening up the Bath International Music Festival and really want to make our mark.



The ceaseless admin jobs mounted. There was Mrs. Blowout Sax Cate, painting signs saying 'information,' flags and numbers, getting groovy

t-shirts and stickers done, co-ordinating with top Blowout Sax teacher Berry Goddard on the eternal list of admin to be done! Meanwhile Mark offered silent prayers to the Sun King.

13 of the past 14 years opening night has been a wash out.

Saxs don't like the wet especially the pads so Plan B was still to do it but at The Pavilion but how anti-climatic would that have been. The huge irony was it would have been scorching if they had left it on the usual Friday but they moved it a week to break the hex!!! 'Be dry was Mark's silent mantra!'

The week was building in intensity and with the day before we had totalled 380 applications. I received a call from a mate saying he'd heard Radio 2 had plugged it on Steve Wright's afternoon show which top student Paul Jones had instigated. Radio Bristol and Bath FM too helped to heightened the tension and on the Tuesday PeeWee Ellis had been on BBC Points West in Bristol 'bigging' The Big Blowout up.

The Chronicle was loving the story focusing on the legendary 'names' and as soon as I dropped the Canadian competition in whoop up another intensive notch.

'The race is on to blow out world sax record.' More great press.

The day before, The Chronicle called and within 15 minutes of opening my eyes, there were photos being taken of me for the paper that day. Spread over from page 1 onwards. They looked great visually but never realized my earlobe was such a weird shape!



Then on to check the stage with a downpour threatening even though still pleasant and warm. The full Blowout Sax team checked out the stage and venue. What a backdrop The Royal Crescent.

Discussions on PA, how many players were we allowed on stage, passes for the rhythm section and general how is this going to work were ironed out.

Meanwhile in a mixture of fear and over-anxiousness Mark Archer had decided to phone all 380 received applicants as the first five callers of that day had all called to say, 'Is it still on??' Also we knew many wouldn't know where the two new signing in positions were and I could see the wrong sort of anarchy ensuing!!! Lessons to be learnt!!!

We also now have second base at The Parkside School by Royal Victoria Park where we can put our cases. So it's a measure of crowd control!!!

Thank the lord the majority of responses was not only immensely positive but up for it big time. We were also factoring in those many random and loose saxophonists who would just pitch up!! As one of my students had said the week before 'this is for us as well as you Mark!'

Well by 9pm tired sore and exhausted of phone chat Mark hung up his last call and felt the rest was up to the fates, a pray for the weather and for the numbers.

Chapter 8.

THE DAY OF THE BIG BLOWOUT ITSELF.

This is it.

A feeling reminiscence of finals exams again lurching around the stomach. Don't wanna get out of bed.

Had weeks of day and night each of the pieces churning around in my head, teaching them intensively every day. What's the weather like???

Warm and sunny but interspersed with black lumps of cloud cover. Come on just be fine!!

Had the fortune of having me big bro' keeping cavy on me. Top man! Keeping me calm!

For us as an organisation, for me personally and full stop this has to be a success.

If someone declares openly on TV, radio, in print and to anyone who listen that they are going to do something it has to be done. No question and on the day I felt we had done everything we could do.

If we failed, I declared it was shaved head, dress in sackcloth and ashes and take a long walk in the desert!!

Now the rest is in the lap of the gods!!

Another final radio plug, with me talking on the phone upstairs and my kids listening to it on the radio downstairs.

The school phone is red hot as usual with folk joining even in the hours to go. Must keep myself busy, it's easier that way and in Blowout Sax HQ, there we are cutting the boards and making musical alterations from Craig to simplify his piece, right up to the early afternoon. And to be honest simple works if you want that many people to tow the line.

When Will phoned in with his 10 stages to his final final arrangement of 'By The Numbers' I nearly fell of me chair!! Be lucky if you get to stage3 and everyone knows where they are me thinks!!

Then we bought a Chronicle on the big day Friday The 21st of May and there was me on the cover with that original title 'Sax in the city,' faded into a full page blue for 'the joy of sax,' caption and then named as a sax entrepreneur for the night's 'most eccentric event.'



Another good newspaper plug which I duly showed to Mark 'The Widge' Waddell on of my many close friends who had kindly come early to help with the organisation.



As the tension was rising I felt the need to get away from Blowout HQ. Mrs Blowout Sax Cate was organising the admin and the break from the school sorted me out. After buying some post-celebration booze my brother Simon and I walked back into Bath along the canal.

A reassuring text from top student and friend, Mr Richard Freeman asked 'stressed?' I replied 'to the hilt!' and he replied 'it'll be great!' A beautiful walk magnified the epic event that awaited us. The sun shone and now we awaited the critical turnout.



After a half an hour catnap in the hammock in the school garden
.....
Stan and I glanced across the road at 4pm and there was a long
long queue of players and cases. The Big Blowout was really
happening and another of those fears disappeared.



After a few more minutes of covering it was time to make an appearance. Deep breath here goes!

For the second time in a couple of weeks there was The Pavilion packed with people, signing in with Cate, Berry, Mark 'The Widge' Waddell, Alex Walker, William Pennington and 'Prof' Kevin Gordon working flat out trying to reduce the queue.





There we were all ready with me to take on the biggest adventure in their saxophone life! A marvellous sight and I readily greeted everyone in sight especially

those I hadn't seen for years. And there was Stevie Budd in his Versace bright yellow shirt as an adjudicator helping me put on my gold wristband

and all hands to the pump helping to sign in as the everlasting queue stretched on and on and on....

We had the usual sweat over non-appearance of drummer Ian 'Snakedaddy' Matthews and percussionist Andy Fuller stuck in traffic. Bassman Benji Bartlett was in place with the rock star look and ready.

Finally the dress rehearsal could start. The group leaders held their Flags numbered 1 to 8, but that soon got more than a little random.

Now at the first rehearsal at The Pavilion we were really polite and middle-class in our instructions. This time round we had to be more forthright and Craig had that Yankee authority. Even then players couldn't be quiet. Incredible, the temptation is too strong to blow.



For the dress rehearsal this time we piled players on to the stage and the rest in front. It was slicker and faster especially as we knew we had to be on our way to second base point by 6.15 pm sharp!! Earlier that day HTV had wanted to do a live link at 6.20 and I said 'No way!' and they cow-towed to our demand for a 6.10pm live link up.

By this stage, I knew we were ready. We had run out of wrist bands which meant we had over 400 students, apparently another 100 players waiting for us at base camp 2 at Parkside School, the pieces sounded excellent so decided to enjoy it!



There was a live TV link with a top reporter Rupert Evelyn and I managed to turn it into 'Crackerjack,' as I shouted 'Are we going to do it?? To the roar of 'Yeeeeessss' from the throng. Enjoyed it so much I repeated it the chant, must be the suppressed leader in me!!!

After that chaos as we garbled instructions as everyone dissipated.

As I nipped in the school a Mr Peter Bettle introduced himself without doubt another saxophone teaching superstar. He had brought 8 students and one of his old and now a Blowout Sax students Lottie Wookey quite correctly pointed out his resemblance to a slim-line version of 'bleeding gums, Murphy 'the axeman from The Simpsons !!'

Showed him around the school and promised from our quick and easy conversation further meets will ensue. And they will. The saxophone community was happening there and then.



After a quick change into the most flamboyant wedding coat and the more front-man look, I had my second most precious walk of the day with my best pal of 30 years and the other adjudicator Dr Nick John. In front of us were swarms of players all carrying cases walking through town in the bright sunlight.



I remarked on the 'seemed like a good idea at the time,' and my Doctor pal retorted 'Well you're a long time dead!' And that is why this project is happening.

The excitement. The learning curve of connecting and mixing with people. And going that extra mile and dragging everyone else along too. Life is for living and this certainly made you feel alive. As we rounded Queen's Square there was a sight that I will remember for as long as I live. Outside The Parkside School dozens and dozens of saxophonists were there noodling away looking dapper in the varieties of dark clothing we had asked folk to wear as to highlight the Saxophones. Entering the school there was more meeting and greeting, there was definitely a great feeling of camaraderie. A huge buzz was in the air.



There was all types of ages and classes of saxo folk there. Students like fathers and sons like the Mark and Tom Suddaby, Richard and Matthew Freeman, Nigel and Max Crichton. Mothers and daughters like Sarah and Emily Bradshaw, Jean and Sophie Tyrell, and Sarah and Florence. The international flavour of the Sax was present, the Aussies, Kiwis, Italians, French, Swiss German and Americans were blowing. All bonded through a love for Adolphe Sax's most famous creation.

Jean Tyrell the artist painted even painted a portrait of Mr Blowout.



And there were those that weren't there, young Joel Flint who had broken his arm, and really balled his eyes out.(However do watch Joel's incredible performances on You Tube-Blowout Sax)



AND

Our Bristol teacher Jackie Greenwood who's waters had gone at midnight on the eve of The Big Blowout, so my gentle teasing of predicting the birth of her baby boy at the event wasn't too far from the truth, amongst an assortment of others.

As we weaved through the picnicking masses towards the side of the main stage, which is where the world record breakers that is The Big Blowout Sax Ensemble had congregated.

Backstage there was Pee Wee Ellis and his wife and manager Charlotte. Had a quick grin with them while showing him our original notation,



and then bumped into a lot of massively stressed out festival security men. All were more than freaked out with the swell of a burgeoning saxophone army. We had long since run out of gold wrist bands and that seemed to worry them. The stage management were loathe to move any of the chairs on the stage for the classic musicians and with that latest bulletin

I then stood on a ladder and told everyone to play all of 'Something Simple.' So much for the musical wave on stage and off!!! This was much aided by the Natural Theatre Company balletinas getting in amongst our mob. You learn with live performance to adapt to whatever scenario you get presented.





As the The Big Blowout Sax players filed onto and in front of the stage we wished all the players luck and at the very end as I rounded the corner with a big cheesy smile on my face a warm cheer went up from the expectant crowd.

The very sound of the tuning note played by hundreds of saxs was stunning. It's the first time applause has been given for a tuning note. Every player was busy sticking the music on the back of the player in front of them. Then the velvet tongued Will Gregory introduced me as Mr Blowout Sax:~



A victorious wave to the crowd, the prepared speech learnt and duly discarded off I went while waving at my little boys and their grandparents who were stood on tiptoes at the front of the stage:~



"Good evening. We are going to break the Guinness book of records for the biggest saxophone ensemble tonight." Big cheer!

"The current record is 321 held by the Dutch. We have over 500 here today!" Another rousing cheer.

We introduce the pieces with a quick warning for those 'wildcards not to improvise,' and with a final quote of 'stand by, fingers in the ears, bloodcurdling sounds, it's gonna be beautiful.'

All those months of planning and it's a happening
After counting 1 2 3 4..

Opening theme of Something Simple well negotiated, and a mild wave has started anyway.

The second phase fine then the vaguely tricky Calypso phrases excellent and we on the home run, melodious Saxophone, it's beautiful.



500 plus folk playing our own original music all together and by the repeat of the opening theme with a natural occurring wave between those on the stage and off it I deliberately cut the phrasing shorter and it works wonderfully well. Then as the music

must be seamless to break the record I get the final note held from 500 plus Saxes to one as Craig kicks off the bass line theme to 'Sunny Day.'



And with that the 3 parts layered up and sounded great and it went on until the chaotic mega finale. The Saxophone juggernaut was rolling uncontrollably and despite indicating with a slash of the throat for the rhythm section to end it they eventually acknowledged this and a big fanfare concluded the piece. Could have done with a chequered flag, or clearer hand signals!! With the last notes disappearing into the air, what a spine-tingling moment. As I shouted 'you are all record breakers we are all record breakers,' on the prompt from Will, Craig and Me all 529 players naturally lifted their Saxes in the air.



What a most glorious sight 'a forest of saxs' glittering in the 'golden hour' twilight. I shouted out on the mic
"The Big Blowout, Blowout Sax! How fantastic was that!"



Mission accomplished I introduced the legendary names :~

“We are very blessed to have with us 2 of the greatest saxophone players tonight. Mr Will Gregory who has written a piece for us called ‘By The Numbers’ and Mr Pee Wee Ellis who's there standing majestic on the stage!” As I say this I turn and raise my sax and everyone gives him a big roar of approval. He is adorned by the young Blowout Sax teachers Berry, Rachel 'MoFunk' L-Jones, Chris 'Topps' Cornish and Craig with the great 'Peewee' Ellis stood centre stage on the podium.

I shout in glory:~

“The world record piece is done. It's in the can we are history.”

What a performance!!

And off goes Will's menacing piece with the bass line, and immediately the altos come in about 7 points too early!! Fair play to Will he handles this his stride and gets Pee Wee to solo as the Saxs burble and swell highs and lows. Pee Wee is up in the clouds squealing away, his sound gritty yet melodic. His undoubted inventiveness knew no depth.

The altos then came in with their theme at the right place now and then back to Peewee, honking and screaming full of rhythmic and harmonic twists and turns to get above this serious collective saxophone musical juggernaut.



After a big thanks to PeeWee, Will, a thank you to The Bath Music Festival, and thanks to the crowd for supporting us and we'll be back! And a final thanks to all the players for attending!"

And as everyone marches off happy joyous, exhilarated, I am waylaid by local TV interviews by very dull and uninspired journalists and all I want to do is celebrate. Finally I am round the corner and with my clan. Big hugs with my wife Cate, Berry, Will, Craig and a big hug from Lindsey Dear from The Bath Festival who was blown away by it all. A shell-shocked stage manager Steve Hunt came over and congratulated us. Pee Wee shook my hand. The feeling was total euphoria one crazy idea and now a reality a big success. There were my fantastic little boys Belouis and Oscar Bonar giving me a hug, my brilliant ma and pa and 'Thanks' reigning in from all sides from those who had participated.

The most wonderful high and the walk back through the Park was extraordinary as I greeted lots of very, very thrilled players. Allegedly I said to the press:~
"It feels fantastic. This was the most saxes being played together in the history of the world. It's wicked man."

The celebrations were long and happy with my core friends. Not wildly excessive other than into the early hours as that was an ultimate high. Nothing can top that feeling of being world champs however long it lasts!!!

After 3 hours sleep both home and mobile telephone rings over and over and over...groggy I pick it up. Dalek voice, 'Hello,' 'This is Radio Bristol, can we do a live interview in 15 minutes.' A mug of tea and a stare at the sun later, and Mr Blowout Sax explains the thunderous sound of the Saxs, how great the whole event was and the exaltation that The Big Blowout had been such a success.

After the applause of my equally too early disturbed friends at my total professionalism, we sauntered around to 'Goodies,' Larkhall for the best pain au chocolat and buy a Chronicle and there we were on the front page with a colour photo of the players and the caption 'The line-up with real sax appeal!' Inside there was a big friendly write up under the caption 'Sax appeal gets festival off to a stirring start.' There was a great photo of me and I was called Will Gregory!! No big deal though as James Galway was called Lady Galway in The Independent that day, so it's all stellar company.

Then at lunchtime we all huddled around the TV and saw all the plugs and on one of the HTV bulletins there was my oldest son Belouis pulling faces over my shoulder!! Excellent. Also they had inadvertently interviewed one of the crowd members who was none other of my holistic masseur healer Dinah Govier who. This magical lady spoke of what it was like to listen to The Big Blowout:~

"Amazing. The sound was really good, you could feel it in your body."

The next day in Brighton a 100 saxophonists blew with a 1000 drummers, and the day after at Sherbrooke, Quebec pulled 327 saxophonists together for their attempt. What is it with this world record at this time of year, 3 attempts in 3 days!!! Shows the power of the sax!!!

Buying my coffee early Monday morning, Sam my coffeemaker from Café Retro told me it sounded like bees. The next thing I know a load of bees have gone down our chimney

at the Blowout Sax School and the next thing I know there is a hot and smoking embers smell and the fire brigade are arriving. Ironic or what!!

Teaching on the following Monday I recorded many of my students feedback on The Big Blowout. Looking at the super quickly developed photos of Trish Wooding as she said:~

“Everyone’s happy before but look at the totally different facial expressions after...’We did it!’ I got knocked flying when someone behind me hit me on the back ‘cus the music wouldn’t stick to my clothing!!!”

For many that was their debut saxophone public performance in a world record in front of 25,000 people!

Other great comments Of the World Record Breakers that week.

‘It was kickarse. I was on a high all weekend.’

I stood on a chair at the back and could see a vast crowd. The adrenalin rush was incredible...superb.’ JP Hartfield.

‘The best bit was when you first came on you could see they were all really waiting for it... ready to see and hear it a world record in action...they didn’t stop clapping. They could hear it a mile and a half away at Englishcombe Lane!!!’ Will Cini.



“We had a wicked time...the best bit was PeeWee playing...it was such a high...the best opening to the Bath Festival ever....”Emily Bradshaw.

“Was being at the front, with all the crowd, it was the biggest buzz in the world! And it all came together.” Jay Rosling.

“Standing in front of all those people and the impromptu holding of the Saxes up in triumph, it’s going in my little book of wonderful things in my life...still on the first page though!” Kev Jones

“It took 6 texts to get Steve Wright to read out ‘Good Luck to The Big Blowout Sax on Friday from the Chippenham possee...the best bit was the fame walking through the crowd.” Paul Jones.

“Raising the saxs, and talking to PeeWee signing a reed for my daughter Florence. The atmosphere was electric...”Sarah Maya

“Warm and enthusiastic reception from the crowd.. personally it was being the seeing dog for the blind man Mark Austin. I used to have a blind friend so I was quite relaxed about it...I went up to PeeWee and said 'it's the first time I've seen you since 1967 playing at Sacramento with James Brown...!! ” John Dottridge.

‘After the dress rehearsal, as soon as I turned on the Radio 2 and there was Steve Wright saying Mr Mark Archer is going to break the World Record... and I was screaming with delight...then the next day I turned on the TV and there we were on HTV news.. Jane Clulow.

“I thought it was a testimony to your friendship and the way you treat people, the way you care for people the way you’re friendly to people. People turned up for you, and the school. I don’t think they were that bothered about breaking a world record, but they are bothered about you...it fell together through your charisma thing. Good on you.” Vickie Brooks.

“It was a good night...I was there for the cause...The ever smooth Colin stood behind me and said I’m gonna stand behind you as you are the only one I can pin all 3 sheets on...also the amount of people who have come up to me from having seen me on TV from the first Pavilion rehearsal...apparently when we starting playing everyone stood up for our performance except my boy who lay down on my case and listen to it and then fell asleep!”
Big Jim Linfield

“it was impressive...when I turned around with a sea of saxophones and happy faces...”Suzanne Holmes.

"..an amazing experience playing with all those saxophonists.. "
Patrice our Martinique/Frenchman.

"mint..cool."

Tom Holst our German Blowout Sax student.

"awesome..it was thrilling to be part of this big big band.. the sound was resonating on your instrument at the same time, as it vibrates with the same sound...."

Luca De Matris Our Italian Blowout Saxman.

"just being there was something else.. the noise was incredible...unless you were there it's so difficult to explain.. I took a lost Aussie doctor up there who had only been in Bath a few weeks....my wife who is heavily pregnant was there for the dress rehearsal and the baby was kicking constantly all the time we were playing...

When I left at the end I only had a few pints in my own bar, me missus had gone to bed and I put the music on CD and on listening to it again on my own in the dark, I was just buzzing, I really was." Vincent Box.

"People travelled from far and wide to come and play..." Jon Starks.



"The best bit was meeting everyone who played the saxophone...I fell off the stage which was embarrassing but I wasn't carrying my Sax, a friend was!!!
The other funny thing that happened was 6 people looking at the same sheet of music, with the alto player transposing on the spot, and the sheet then blew away!!! "Lottie Wookey

"When Evan stuck his paper on me back. The wind blew up and the paper stuck to the side of my face!!...my bit of fame, where were you, there with a bit of A4 stuck to the side of your face trying to read the music."
Kev Lynch

"It was nice to be part of something special.. the wind came up while we were playing so the music blew up so you couldn't see it!! That idea was mildly flawed. It was blowing up so much that the bloke in front of me just ripped it off and threw it on the floor."

"There was a chap I met who works in Portishead, and he said I'm sure I recognise that woman. She works where I do. When he spoke to her, he found out she hadn't played for 20 years, saw this on the TV, got her sax out again and now wants lessons to play again."

Pete Bailey.

"It was fantastic to see the final result. We had a whale of a time. The crowd got really involved in it, clapping with the last piece of music, big cheers." Andy Palmer.

" Listening to PeeWee was amazing. Really exciting playing for all those people who are screaming for you. Makes you want to play loads of things you weren't allowed 'cus of Guinness' world record rules." Jack Harvey.

"What an adrenalin rush.. it felt like being Robbie Williams.. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of a group one family even though you didn't know half of them, one common cause.."

Julian Boswell

Other feedback were via email:~

"Thank you for thinking up and organising The Big Blowout and for giving me the opportunity to take part in such an awesome experience. It was great and I had a fantastic time."

Jan Pegler.

We also received a letter from Lindsey Dear from the Bath Music Festivals Trust:~

Dear Mark,

Well what can I say?

Friday night was a triumph ~well done to you, and all the Blowout Sax team for all your enthusiasm, hard work and dedication towards making the World Record Attempt such a success.

I have to admit to being quite moved by the sight of all sax players great and small streaming past me on their way onto stage! It was

definitely testimony to the influence of you and your colleagues that such a wonderful number of players turned out in force to smash the record~ well done.

Here's hoping the Canadians fail miserably!

Best wishes

Lindsey.

Also got the most important text:~

"Thanxs for 4 messages (we sent a few telling her to push!!) great news bout the world record! Nathaniel Rowan born sat 2.07pm just in time for the cup final... love Jackie"

Some texts saying simply 'fantastic'.....brilliant Richard Freeman..

'a unique experience..' Percussionist Andy Fuller..

'Resounding success.. amazing.. well done! You are a champion!'
Janey Clulow.

and one from fellow teacher Mr Sean McBride
"Ya dun it! SuperBAAD.."

Plus the best one from our Berry 'Well done us!!'

The final say should be from a great article was written by Tony Staveacre in The Chronicle who also produced a great Radio show for BBC Bristol Radio.

"It was a world premiere of new pieces by 3 local saxmen and composers...the music cleverly devised to accommodate the vastly different range of skills in the ensemble, from 8 year old beginners to ancient jazzers...
it was truly a memorable night, enjoyed by Bath Music lovers against a glorious backdrop of Royal Crescent. And bravo to the players, who gave us their time to rehearse and prepare for The Big Blowout and managed to get on stage and in front of it."

Chapter 9. **POSTSCRIPT**

We sent the Shuffle Demons in Canada an email which they posted immediately onto their site which said:~

" DEAR SHUFFLE DEMONS

GO FOR IT!

WE MADE OUR OFFICIAL COUNT 529

AND IT WAS FANTASTIC!!!

STAY IN TOUCH THIS IS ONE MASSIVE STORY BREWING

THERE BOYS."

They had cleverly linked in their attempt with playing the 'Hockey Night in Canada theme,' and are going to be shown during a game. Clever! Also they had the might of Jazz FM sponsoring the event!!!

The weekend of May 30th I had three desires.

Bath Rugby to beat London Wasps to be champions. Especially as I was going to Twickenham.

Longtime bane of my life Bristol City to win the playoff Against Brighton to get promotion,

and LASTLY but very much not least us to still be world saxophone ensemble champions.

AND in my heart of hearts I knew I was going to lose the lot. And right on cue

After an epic struggle Bath lost and I lost too, my voice shouting!!!

Bristol City as usual blew the play-off 1-0 and I was received a text about the Canadian result. At the end of the day it's about promoting the saxophone and when we learnt of their massive 930 I only see it as an opportunity to raise the bar again.' Saxophone Music for everyone!

Something equally ridiculous, but as Blowout student Trish Wooding said:~

'Mark doesn't seem to repeat anything.'

So we were the Leon Spinks of the Saxophone world.

World Record holders for 9 days!!!On the bright side we are still British and European Champs and it means the story goes on!!!!



HURRAH!!!

The other lovely postscript is that Mark and Cate had another boy child the following January. Though a World Record baby, they ruled out the possibility of naming him Guinness!!!

As my one of my long time students Doug Wilcox said 'Great sound, great fun...How do you follow that??'

But the next madcap idea is brewing??....



CERTIFICATE

**The largest saxophone ensemble
is one of 529 musicians,
who played, "Something Simple"
by Archer/Scott and
"Sunny Day" by Crofton
for five minutes on 21 May, 2004
in Bath, Somerset, UK**

Keeper of the Records
GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS LTD

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