

## **PREFACE**

The following is a creative response to the 2017 exhibition, *New Contemporaries*, held at the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh. Upon visiting the opening night of the exhibition I learned that there was an awards ceremony taking place and I was struck by the attention and enthusiasm it garnered. Indeed it reminded me of a kind of X Factor for the arts. As such I have written a parody of this ceremony titled *The Art Factor At The RSA* which is written in the format of a very short radio play that itself mimics a radio broadcast.

The Art Factor At The RSA

By

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INT. ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY

NAMELESS DJ

Hello and welcome to this BBC Radio 4 live broadcast of *The Art-Factor* coming to you from the New Contemporaries exhibition here at the Royal Scottish Academy. I'm one of those blonde DJs that does that rounds at the BBC; Lauren Laverne, Fearne Cotton, or god forbid Jo Whiley, who gives a shit really, and we're delighted to be here for this special occasion where awards will decide once and for all which of these young people is good at doing the art and who should fuck off and collect their Nando's job application. I'm joined tonight by the ghost of John Peel. Ghost of John Peel are you looking forward to the ceremony?

GHOST OF JOHN PEEL

Oh yes I certainly am, I love seeing all these enthusiastic young people. You know my wife was only 16 when I married her

NAMELESS DJ

That's great John, thanks for that. Now let's get straight to the action. On stage first is contestant number one, coming all the way from the University of the Highlands and Islands. Who the hell's heard of that? Certainly not me.

GHOST OF JOHN PEEL (SHOUTING)

Play Teenage Kicks!

NAMELESS DJ

Please, Ghost of John Peel. Now, our first contestant is a painter so as per the usual Art-Factor format they'll finish their painting on stage then we'll hear from the award judges. Let's listen to her paint.

(Sound: Silence)

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NAMELESS DJ (WHISPERING)

Exquisite form. And that colour palette's to die for. It's worth noting here Ghost of John Peel that this contestant has a distinct advantage in coming from a working class background. Judges from a similar background often have a chip on their shoulder and may score her high while more well-to-do judges want to avoid any accusations of elitism and show they can relate to these common troglodytes so they too might be generous in their scoring.

GHOST OF JOHN PEEL

Did I ever tell you about the time I bumped into Captain Beefheart in 1972 at folk-jazz fusion festival in the small hamlet of Drope, just outside Cardiff?

NAMELESS DJ

Sorry John, one moment, I think... Yes, the contestant has completed her painting. Let's go down to the judges. Our first judge is a curator known only by his gang tang, H.U.O.

H.U.O.

Wonderful! Simply wonderful. I love the style of painting but what I love even more is that it can be part of a series that can endlessly grow and grow. Like 'an endless conversation' one could say - each giving an excuse to publish another book, each book garnishing more publicity, each piece of publicity increasing sales, and each sale lining the pocket of your boy  
H.U.O!

(Sound: Crowd chanting: H.U.O, H.U.O...)

(Sound: Chanting lowers)

NAMELESS DJ

Now, as the crowd settles down, let's hear from our second judge, Mr Stewart Home...

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STEWART HOME

Fuck you and fuck your piece of  
shit right-wing painting.

GHOST OF JOHN PEEL (SHOUTING)

Play Teenage Kicks!

NAMELESS DJ

Well, strong but eloquent thoughts  
from Mr Home there. And finally, on  
to our last judge, the writer  
Nicholson Baker.

NICHOLSON BAKER

The painting is acceptable - but it  
lacks energy, a real punch in the  
gut. Now, did I ever tell you the  
story of the hole in my sock? Come  
see me after the show, you're in  
for a real rollercoaster of a tale!

NAMELESS DJ

And there you have it. I'm sure  
this contestant who spent months  
battling with her painting  
appreciates the insightful and  
expert opinion of the judges who'll  
determine her future. Stay with us  
for contestant number two, a  
performance artist who molests a  
live cockatoo while carrying out a  
seance to channel the spirit of  
Shannon Hoon, lead singer of the  
1990s alternative rock band, Blind  
Melon.