Notes from ROLI Team Time, December 2017

We did 85% of the business we said we'd do last month. Well done to our sales and accounts teams who led us to smash our monthly record again. Our cashback promotion and the enormous B-to-B Christmas load-in were perfectly legitimate ways of boosting our end-of-year figures. They cannot come back to haunt us.

It looks like we'll do 75% of the business we predicted this year. If we'd spent our Series B money taking the team by bus to Weston-super-Mare every day to play on the coin pusher games for a year, our books would have balanced about the same. We wouldn't have pissed off so many creditors or met Pharrell, though.

£12m in 2017 versus £4.8m in 2016 is exactly 2.5x growth. Here's how to grow a company. First, make an eye-watering loss. Live this way for five to ten years, building a massive customer base out of goods and services bankrolled by magic money and built on the back of a massive team. Establish the fact that customers will tolerate you as long as you sell products barely above cost price. Buy their silence with freebies whenever they grumble. One day, turn your loss into profit by culling the support team and changing to a recurring revenue model to exploit your customers shamelessly. Hey presto! Did you remember to run your competition out of town? Or make sure that your customers can't quit your platform without losing years of personal data, or breaking their central heating? Did you legally forbid them from defaming you under the kind of legal or financial penalty that would have given the Borgias chills? Anything like that? Oh damn, I'm afraid that was kind of important.

We've released NOISE 3.1, which is like the Garageband app that Apple gives you for free but less powerful, and ROLI PLAY, which is like the Launchpad app that Novation gives you for free but less fun.

We're putting hobbyists centre-stage next year. We know them intimately, and they know us. They ask for an experience that is familiar, powerful, and engaging. They see us as the wizards that inject flair and ingenuity into this stagnant market. They're desperate for our next big idea. Hold on to your heads in case your tiny minds blow: we're putting tool tips on a smartphone app.

People keep asking about our cash position. When you think about it, 'growth at all costs' actually costs quite a lot. Cash is always tricky around Christmas, when you've spent money making and shipping goods that you haven't yet been paid for. We've made sure our suppliers appreciate our predicament. They really empathise, because we put them in the same one.

Lightpad M is also an issue: it costs us up-front to convert 20,000 Lightpad units, which we can't sell, into 20,000 Lightpad M units, which we've obviously projected we'll clear within three months. We'll never again find ourselves in a situation where we've paid a fortune to stockpile goods that are too flawed to deliver on basic promises.

Roland's raised some more money. This is how the pros play: when you're not on top of your game, you borrow from the house so that you can stay at the table until you hit your streak and win it all back.

Our cash situation was helped by a brilliant ADC. It surpassed all our expectations. Many companies that we usually regard as competitors paid us as sponsors. Not only that: most of them kindly agreed to pay our senior engineers' salaries starting from early 2018.

By the end of Q2, we will have finished a new on-boarding app aimed at every possible customer, because you can always make a decision that benefits every sector of our market at the expense of none.

While we're making this big play for consumer hardware, we haven't got any software in the pipeline targeting a demographic more casual

than 'prosumer/hobbyist' before 2020. The penny will drop in midsummer: a pre-Christmas app panic works so well that we're making it an annual thing.

Something else is happening in Arches 326 and 327 to detract from the fact that Arches 323-5 are a disaster. Over Christmas, we'll be making alterations to your work area. Don't ask about these. You don't need to know and you wouldn't understand. But you'll love them.

Oh, and on that subject, all you nerds will have new job titles and bosses when you get back. Don't worry: we've sorted that out for you too. Fixing our quality and communication problems has been a subtle, complex, and delicate job. It took three us most of an afternoon in a meeting room. Roland will Lambsplain it all in one of his impromptu unskippable hour-long monologues as soon as he's back.

As a teaser, though: you know all those weird, 60-hour hackathon concepts that Roland dreams up to pacify our investors? The ones that cause health-damaging stress to the team, each of which costs more than a Porsche to build, means that we can't resource our commercial projects properly, and aren't integrated with anything we've actually committed to? That we lack the skills, bandwidth, and maturity to execute fully? If you're lucky, you'll find yourself in the gang that's going to be making those full-time. Distract him for us: he's doing my head in.