

## Notes from ROLI Team Time, June 2019

Being back at Team Time after a long absence is like waking from a coma. Not quite taking it all in; piecing together tiny fragments of a larger picture; wondering silently about how much I've missed. *Are these all new faces, or have I just forgotten?*

Moving ROLI to Kickstarter is the logical follow-up to a string of projects that have promised so much and ... No. It does not need to be said. And you do not need to hear it.

Kickstarter! Because we're not selling you a product, but a dream of an image of one. 'Manufacturing?' 'Supply and demand?' Ha! Go paste your Arts and Crafts wallpaper to an ocean-going steamboat, you industrialist dinosaur! With your 'ownership of the means of production' and your 'labour theory of value' and your 'improving physical matter through a sequence of controlled processes.'

Kickstarter! Not a shop window, but an expensive Hollywood CGI render of one, with competition-entry prose about what we'd put in our shop, were it actually a shop. Your money's real enough, though. Why not pre-order? Or, as we like to say here, 'make an unsecured investment for an unspecified time.' After which your investee may choose to compensate you with any object they please. A plastic doll; a novelty keyring; a mail-merged letter written by their new administrators.

Kickstarter. How did we, as a society, come to entrust ourselves so completely to this postmodernist vortex but not forget to breathe real air, eat real food, and make real money? What is real anymore?

Here comes the Kickstarter promo video, in which one of our team with an American accent lilts, in dreamy sing-song, over a flotilla of strange, hypnotic shapes and colours. This is :| Jony Ive :| universe. In which :| everything moves :| at 75% of full speed. Slowly rake focus :| The multiple suns that illuminate our gentle planet :| render outlines a little harshly :| and cast no shadow.

Perhaps take :| a couple of Ibuprofen. We don't use static cameras :| at ROLI. The tracking shot :| The dolly :| The raked focus :| Watch the lens breathing. Feel your lungs move in sympathy with its rhythm :| You are now ours ...

Being musically literate conveys superpowers that most punters will miss. Look! There's sheet music for Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, and there's that bit of Anna Magdalena's Notebook. That's what the urban kids are into these days. Crazy fam. Doin' time. Arks to play myself a nursery rhyme. Cos I'll shank you bruv. Have you any wool. Gonna take your phone. Three bags full.

As the video ends, we reflexively lower our palms. The marketing plan actually seems slicker this time. ROLI's concubines have found a source of reason and are tuning in at last.

But, sucker punch! This is a new product category, attracting a new customer, so we're running Facebook and Instagram groups specifically for it. They're condemned to run for the lifetime of the campaign, and probably the product. The software team, if it still had vocal chords, could tell you a little story about rebooting the brand every year because a new executive decides that he's the guy who'll actually reach consumers. We can sing the exact sound of the whine of gears when, two financial quarters into this, ROLI pretends that prosumers were the mark all along.

Lumi looks beautiful, with the semiotics of a keyboard, but the prototype doesn't feel like one. I hope customers don't mind. This is straight from Peter Stringfellow's playbook, of course: goods are more premium if your customers can't touch before they buy. If they ask too many questions, look weirded out and stop returning their gaze. I have a nasty feeling.

Roland started talking. I successfully parsed the first couple of sentences:

*'Wow, 50 percent off, that's amazing and, y'know, like ... I think there's nothing better to be honest as a gift ...'*

before my atavistic defence mechanism - neural wiring as ancient as life itself - kicked in and muted him. There's preaching to the choir, and then there's telling them to frontload the collection plate.