

## Owl Project - Rock Music

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**Abstract.** During the last year Owl Project have been developing a ranges of interfaces and techniques for transforming the ancient process of making a hand axe into a live musical performance. In Rock Music Owl Project delve 5000 years back in time to one of the oldest known creative processes, making sharp tools from rock such as flint. We are interested in turning “non-musical” processes that are bound up in the history of production into music. The constraints of working with these processes create new musical possibilities and provide a way of re-examining old technologies. In this project we bring together experimental archaeologists and equally experimental electronic musicians in an attempt to couple the primal act of chipping rock from rock with the considered precision of synthesised music.

**Keywords:** Biophysical sensors, New interfaces for musical expression, Non-musical performance interfaces, The Acoustic and the digitals.

### Introduction

Owl project are interested in how rhythms are the creators of forms and also one of the foundations of music, previously they have explored making electronic music from early industrialized processes, including a traditional “Pole Lathe” Soundlathe, and a “Jacquard Loom”. The Rock Music project was developed during a residency at the Manchester Museum during which they reflected on older technologies and processes to create objects.

### Technology

The basic tools of flint knapping including, rock and reindeer billets, leather leg protector have been modified to contain a range of movement and pressure sensors. These “extensions” of the knapping process are plugged into a number of Eurorack synth modules that manipulate the signals and produce a range of sounds. Ancient tools for working with stone are turned into new performance interfaces.

### The Performance

Owl Project will perform alongside a fully insured professional flint knapper. It will last for approximately 30 minutes. The audience will witness the creation of a hand axe and a unique audio visual performance.

## Biographies

### Owl Project

Owl Project is a collaborative group of artists consisting of Simon Blackmore, Antony Hall and Steve Symons. They work with wood and electronics to fuse sculpture and sound art, creating music making machines, interfaces and objects. In 2009, working in collaboration with Ed Carter, they won a major commission to create ‘~Flow’ a floating tidal water wheel powered electro acoustic musical instrument responding to the river. It was one of twelve public art commissions for ‘Artists Taking the Lead’ celebrating the 2012 Olympic Games, installed on the River Tyne, Newcastle, attracted over 50,000 visitors. They have performed and exhibited internationally, in 2013 they had a solo show at Bildmuseet Umea, Sweden. Sound Lathe continues to be shown as part of Sound Matters a touring show curated by the Crafts Council. 2014 saw newly commissioned works for ‘Barnaby Arts Festival’ and a residency project at ‘Manchester Natural History Museum’.

### Karl Lee

Karl Lee is a master flintknapper and archaeologist with over 20 years experience of teaching the manufacture and use of stone (“lithic”), bone and wooden prehistoric tools. After obtaining a degree in archaeology at the University of Wales College Newport, he was accepted as a research student working on an archaeological PhD also with the University of Wales. He has also provided extensive teaching collections for several British universities including Bristol, Liverpool, Durham and branches of the University of Wales, and have carried out demonstrations and experimental research for the British Museum, London.

## Additional Information

More information can be found at <http://www.owlproject.com/rockmusic>.



Owl Project and Karl Lee rehearsing Rock Music, 2016