Alan Wilder / Recoil

(Long-form Biography)

Recoil is the project of **Alan Charles Wilder**, formerly of **Depeche Mode**. Born on 1st June 1959, he is a classically-trained musician and renowned contemporary music producer.

Recoil was born in **1986** as a two-track experimental EP. Simply entitled **'1 + 2'**, this collection of primitive demos caught the attention of **Mute Records** label boss Daniel Miller and was inconspicuously released as a mini-album on 12" vinyl. An album, '**Hydrology**', soon followed in **1988** and both were eventually re-issued by Mute on CD as '**Hydrology plus 1+2**'. These early Recoil recordings revealed Alan's position as a pioneer in the newly emerging world of sampling technology and demonstrated how he could turn the Depeche sound around to create something entirely new. Wilder described the project at the time as "*... an antidote to Depeche Mode; a way to alleviate the frustrations of always working within a pop format*"**.**

Almost immediately, Wilder found himself back in the studio to record what would become the most successful Depeche Mode album to date,'**Violator**'. It wasn't until the band finally allowed themselves an extended break after the enormously successful '**World Violation**' tour that Alan could return to Recoil - not, however, before agreeing to produce '**Ebbhead**', an album for label-mates **Nitzer Ebb**. It was during this time that he cemented a working relationship with lead singer **Douglas McCarthy** who would return the favour by singing on Recoil's next album,'**Bloodline**'.

Released in **1991**, Wilder recruited guest vocalists for the first time with further contributions from **Toni Halliday** and **Moby,** helping to produce an album that demonstrated his ability to concoct slow-burning soundscapes drenched in drowsy paranoia. 'Bloodline' also marked the first Recoil single, a cover of Alex Harvey's song **'Faith Healer**' as well as the innovative '**Electro Blues For Bukka White**', featuring the posthumously sampled voice of Blues-man White set into a post-modern context - an influential idea later popularised by others.

Between **1992-93** Wilder resumed his Depeche duties as the band recorded the album '**Songs Of Faith And Devotion**'. Released to universal acclaim, it topped the charts in the UK, USA, Germany and a host of other countries. Enjoying hits with '**I Feel You**', '**Walking In My Shoes**', '**In Your Room**' and '**Condemnation**', the Mode embarked on their most adventurous tour to date, enduring a grueling 15 months on the road. Although the group had reached the pinnacle of success, aspects of the lifestyle had taken their toll on everyone and things eventually came to a head. In June **1995**, having spent 14

years as an integral part of one of the most popular and influential bands the UK has ever produced, Alan Wilder made the difficult but inevitable decision to leave Depeche Mode.

Free from his group commitments, Wilder could now focus solely on **Recoil**. In September **1996**, he began work in his own studio, '**The Thin Line**', gradually piecing together the unnerving scores that would eventually reveal Recoil's next album '**Unsound Methods**'. The final results were more impressive than ever. What emerged appeared to take up where 'Songs Of Faith And Devotion' had left off. Guest vocalists featured **Maggie Estep**, **Siobhan Lynch**, the reappearance of **Douglas McCarthy**, and **Hildia Cambell**. The styles of each could not be more removed from one another helping to create a startlingly original and diverse collection. The more organic style of 'Unsound Methods' incorporated every imaginable musical genre from Trip-Hop to Gospel whilst dealing with the subject of obsession in all its manifestations, taking the listener to the edge of unease, through dark, dub-infected landscapes, reverberating with shivering piano, seductive strings and a deep electronic pulse.

In the Spring of **2000**, Recoil gave us '**Liquid**' which this time utilised the unique qualities of internationally acclaimed fellow Mute artist **Diamanda Galás**, 1940's Gospel crooners **The Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet**, along with New York spoken-word performers **Nicole Blackman** and **Samantha Coerbell**. The worldwide music press received the 'Liquid' album with a host of glowing reviews and Wilder was awarded the **Charles Cros Grand Prix 2000**. Strangely enthralling and genuinely unhinging, 'Liquid' masquerades as the aural equivalent of a disturbing movie. Wilder's intoxicating soundscapes kick up clouds of the same dark dust that falls on David Lynch or Nine Inch Nails, but where others may hammer out their message with histrionic force, his touch is lighter and characteristically more subtle.

Following a 5 year break from recording, Alan Wilder returned with Recoil's **5th studio album**, entitled '**subHuman**' released in July **2007**.

Collaborating this time was Blues-man **Joe Richardson**, whose evocative vocal style is complimented by accomplished guitar and harmonica performances. Born in Southern Louisiana, Richardson spent years immersed in the murkier side of New Orleans life and offered a unique commentary on conflict, religion, incarceration and personal struggle. English singer **Carla Trevaskis**, a songwriter in her own right, also brought an expressive range and control to 'subHuman'.

Says Wilder: *"We seem to have learnt nothing from past experiences and our so called 'civilised' world is still awash with personal and global atrocities. From suicide bombings in the Middle East, to ethnic cleansing in the Balkans; from the homophobic rhetoric of the Christian fundamentalist preacher, to the activities of Western governments engaged in their 'war on terror'*".

'**SubHuman**' asked us to reach within ourselves and extract the very essence of what makes us human - and more importantly what allows us to subordinate others, sometimes with the most brutal consequences. "*We are all 'subhuman' in somebody's eyes.*"

In **2010**, Recoil returned to give us '**Selected**', a selection of classic Recoil tracks with the listing chosen by Alan who explains: "*The collection is made up of my personal favourites, remastered and edited together into what I consider a cohesive and total listening experience."*

'**A Strange Hour**' was presented during **2010** & **2011** in 52 cities across the world, as part of the '**Selected Events**' tour to celebrate 25 years of the Recoil project, signifying the first time Recoil had ever taken to the road. The events were not so much 'live' band but more art installation. The music was comprised of stripped down, edited sections from many Recoil remixes and alternative versions, combined so that what resulted was recognisably Recoil but not necessarily what you would hear on the studio versions. Wilder gathered together filmmakers from as far as Russia, via the Czech Republic and Hungary, all the way to Argentina for this purpose, working very fast, and in the modern way, by creating a central server where everybody could upload their work for others to see, react to and feedback on. Says Wilder: "*This for me typifies the whole essence of what Recoil is all about - a collective but with a focused direction - and a very thrilling process it was too, watching and hearing 'A Strange Hour' come together from our base in the UK.*"

Following his remix of '**In Chains**' for his old **Depeche Mode** bandmates in **2011**, Recoil returns in **2012** to release the concert film **'A Strange Hour In Budapest'** on **Blu-ray**. With 5.1 surround sound, the performance was filmed using the latest high-definition technology in order to capture the event in its full glory. For this, the team from Umatik Entertainment was recruited, headed up by director **Attila Herkó**. The results are stunning and offer a captivating and exhilarating document of 'A Strange Hour'.

Also in **2012**, we see Alan Wilder turn up again as Executive Producer & contributor for a new tribute album to **Mark Hollis** & **Talk Talk**. Recoil offers two cover versions for the album utilising the vocal talents of **Linton Kwesi Johnson**, **Shara Worden** and **Paul Marshall**. Wilder also mixed a track for **Richard Reed Parry** from **Arcade Fire**. '**Spirit of Talk Talk**' is due to be released later in the year on **Fierce Panda** Records.

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