

**EVERYTHING I HAVE  
IS YOURS**

EILEEN SIMPSON AND BEN WHITE  
(OPEN MUSIC ARCHIVE)

This text responds to *Everything I Have Is Yours* (2019) by Eileen Simpson and Ben White (Open Music Archive), an artists' film that takes as a starting point records produced during the first decade of the UK pop charts – 1952 to 1962 – and experimentally repurposes them in an on-going exploration of the limits of sampling and the possibilities of live collaboration.

Originally published in *Everything I Have Is Yours: The Commissioned Texts*

SOMETHING NEW

Ellen Mara De Wachter is a writer based in London. She is a contributor to Frieze, Art Quarterly, Art Monthly, World of Interiors and The White Review, and her columns, exhibition and book reviews, profiles, interviews and essays have featured in a range of other publications. Her book *Co-Art: Artists on Creative Collaboration*, which explores the phenomenon of collaboration in the visual arts and its potential in society at large, was published by Phaidon in 2017.

*Everything I Have Is Yours* is the latest expression of Open Music Archive's ongoing investigation into the intertwined processes of safeguarding and creation. The project, by Open Music Archive's founders Eileen Simpson and Ben White, has resulted in a 30-minute film in which professional and amateur musicians from the Greater Manchester area interact with samples and loops created from records that were in the UK Singles Chart when they were teenagers. But *Everything I Have Is Yours* is not just a film: it is also the most recent contribution to a set of practices articulated via Open Music Archive. Accumulated over more than a decade, this growing compendium of approaches to using archival material is steered by Simpson and White's philosophy, which is characterised by its two-pronged approach of simultaneously safeguarding sonic and other visual and historical material, and facilitating its further use for new creative outputs.

Simpson and White's collaboration, which began in 2005, grew out of their shared interest in archives, found film and sound, and their recognition of the value of analogue technologies in an increasingly digitised age. They initiated the Open Music Archive as part of their wider practice in order to work with others, and it has generated a collection of sounds, as well as a series of relationships with collaborators over the years. It consists of both finished things and ongoing processes; its open-ended design puts

it in the realm of the eternally unfinished, and it extends an invitation in perpetuity for others to interact with its materials and supplement its existing — and malleable — rules.

Through working with found material, and specifically with recorded music, Simpson and White initially spent much of their time considering copyright and how to work with its restrictions on use. Although some artists who use found materials ignore copyright altogether, Simpson and White view its restrictions as an opportunity to explore an alternative terrain. Rather than battling the copyright giants, they eschew the problem and instead focus on material within the public domain, which is available for free use and creative transformation.

In 2005, Simpson and White began collaborating, not long before the online video sharing platform YouTube was launched. It soon accumulated more material than anyone could have imagined, yet as stocks of cat videos and digitised television broadcasts proliferated on the online channel, so did legal control over copyright. In light of the suffocating litigious attitude towards sharing and sampling existing material, Simpson and White steered their practice towards mapping the public domain, identifying material available for free use, and using it. They describe their ambition as *“to expand the public domain by occupying it”*.

Copyright is automatically assigned to any creative product, and everything produced is therefore owned unless ownership is circumvented. Simpson and White see this as a symptom of the widespread

‘commodification of every gesture and mark’, and it is something their work has questioned in different ways over the years of their collaboration in Open Music Archive. One way they circumvent copyright over their own creative production is to assert ‘copyleft’ over the films, archives and performances they generate. When applied to creative material, the copyleft mark, sometimes symbolised as ‘(cc)’, which stands for ‘Creative Commons’, signals that an author is open to others using their work as source material for something new. This attribution is a legacy from the free software movement, which invites others to use lines of code and software for free. In addition to posting them on their wiki-style website, Open Music Archive lists its holdings on resources for free music, available for anyone to use as they wish. Tracks they have made available have been used in strange and unexpected ways, including a foot fetish video posted on YouTube.

As well as making source material available for the development of new creative outputs, Open Music Archive’s projects also make use of a range of found materials. In 2013, their performance event *ATL 2067*, commissioned for FLUX Night in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, used beats created from 1920s and 1930s recordings of blues, Cajun folk and country music for a six-hour-long performance in which MCs rapped about their visions of Atlanta fifty years in the future.

For the project *Auditory Learning*, commissioned for the British Art Show 8 (2015-17), Open Music Archive created a public sonic inventory that holds

58,757 sounds for download. Prior to their inclusion in the *Auditory Learning* project, individual sounds were separated out by the artists from Top Ten hit records produced in 1962 and stored in an online database which can be queried using an audio-recognition tool. As part of *Auditory Learning*, Simpson and White also produced a video, the result of collaborating with teenagers from Southampton, who were invited to rap on top of samples from the inventory, and in turn contributed their mimetic and beat-boxing skills to the archive. Working in an anechoic chamber built in the 1960s at the University of Southampton, the performers created what Simpson and White describe as ‘a script for archival recall’, interacting with the archive as a performative space for action, rather than as a static repository for information. Like the performers in *Everything I Have Is Yours*, the teenagers in Southampton worked with the artists to establish a framework within which to improvise and draw on their skills, creating a series of audio tracks that they could build upon and leave with the archive for safekeeping and later use.

Such projects develop over time, within specific contexts, spaces and groups of people. They feed on the Open Music Archive to produce new material, which is then routed back into the archive. This recursive gesture allows the project to evolve, but it also provides practical collaborative experiences that can be analysed, enabling the project to refine its working processes and to develop a better understanding of its own utility as a publicly available tool and store of material. This dual nature — Open Music Archive is both

a repository in which information is stored and a tool with which this information is animated, transformed and built upon — is what makes the project so appealing as a means of cultural production. The archive, which enables things to be done and elicits reflections on such doings at the same time, develops a kind of cognition, learning new approaches as it goes along. As an artistic endeavour, Open Music Archive does not simply involve creating something and then moving on to the next project: rather, it maintains the integrity of what it produced in the past as a potential constituent part of everything that will be made from it in the future. In an era of accelerated trends and ultra-disposability, the endeavour's commitment to its own ongoing constitution is cause for wonder.

\*\*\*

Copyright in music — as in literature and artistic works — lasts for 70 years after the death of the author and 50 years from the date of recording (this was amended in 2013 and extended to 70 years). Identifying particular songs or pieces of music whose copyright has expired is an important part of Open Music Archive's work. In order to access copyright-expired music, it is necessary — but not always sufficient — to know when an author or composer died. Music that sits at the edge of the public domain is routinely neglected by the music industry. Sometimes, Simpson and White must 'liberate' tracks when the copyright expires, in order to make them available for creative purposes. They do this by various means;



purchasing lyrics and original 78rpm records on eBay, or making formal claims with the British Library's sound archive for lyrics to be transcribed or recordings to be transferred onto disc, which involves providing the British Library with evidence that the work is in the public domain.

Simpson and White's most recent project, *Everything I Have Is Yours* (2019), involved around twenty musicians from the Manchester area, who met weekly between October 2018 and January 2019. Most of the participants were in their 70s and 80s, born in the 1940s and 50s. They were the original 'teenagers', for whom popular music was a way of life. For *Everything I Have Is Yours*, the artists collected together records from between 1952 and 1962, a decade that spans the first ten years of the UK Singles Chart in 1952, and processed copyright-expired material at a macro-level to newly release copyright-expired elements from songs that are still in copyright. The artists make use of material that lies at the edge of the public domain, the result of changes in copyright law that affect music produced between 1963 and 2013. Recordings created in 1962 fell out of copyright in 2013 (50 years after their creation), but recordings made in 1963 will only fall out of copyright in 2034 because of the extension of copyright from 50 to 70 years, which was instituted in 2013. Copyright is an expression of the connection between legal and market forces, and it is not a coincidence that 1963 was the first year the Beatles had Top Ten hits, which continue to generate enormous wealth for their record companies to this day.

Many of the participants in *Everything I Have Is Yours* were in bands in the 1950s and 1960s, a time when being in a band often involved playing covers, applying a personal style to songs people knew and loved. The musicians drew on their expertise in copying and reconfiguring songs during the making of *Everything I Have Is Yours*, for which they were played loops of micro-sounds excised from chart-topping records and invited to play along to them. Adopting a method that recalls the use of beats and loops in avant-garde, hip-hop and electronic dance music, the musicians built on the archival sounds to create new music. Some improvised, while others decided in advance what they would play and rehearsed it prior to performing for the camera.

Simpson and White explain the layered process of collaborating with others as ‘*working together to reach an understanding of how we can work together*’. This description of a continuous twofold generative/recursive process mirrors the Open Music Archive’s approach to the material of music: it is a cycle in which salvaging and archiving songs, lyrics and compositions facilitates the understanding of how such material might be further used — and, crucially, also enables and supports this further use. Building and developing relationships with collaborators requires time and involves staging encounters between the living stores of knowledge embodied by participants and the material archives held online.

When the UK Singles Chart was first compiled in 1952, it was one of the first official means of polling public taste in the UK, quantifying what

young people were listening to and providing the music industry with valuable indicators for what people were into, how quickly trends waned and what the next big thing would be. In its engagement with the early days of the charts, *Everything I Have Is Yours* has a particular resonance in our day and age, as many people discover the power and influence of other kinds of polling on their public and private lives. The charts were a forerunner of today's data aggregation tools, used to gather information about everything from people's favourite type of butter to their political allegiance for big tech companies such as Apple, Google, Facebook and YouTube. But this wealth of data is accumulated out of the private information we all give away every time we use our smart phones or social media sites.

*Everything I Have Is Yours* was shot over two days. Although the footage has been edited into a film with a formal looping structure, it retains the sense of immediacy and spontaneity that makes live performances so thrilling. It conveys the balance of expertise and risk involved when diverse individuals come together to produce a single, harmonious piece. Exemplifying how Open Music Archive operates as a generative platform, the musical performance given in *Everything I Have Is Yours* will be fed back into the archive, available for others to use as part of new creative undertakings.

Open Music Archive's generative capacity is its strength: it encourages and facilitates the free usage and widespread sharing of creative material by individuals and institutions alike. In addition

to creating videos and building its archive, an important part of Simpson and White's work with Open Music Archive is sharing with institutions their unique approach to the creation and use of archives. As part of Open Music Archive's exhibition at Salford Museum and Art Gallery, the work, along with a CC license, will be acquired for the University of Salford Art Collection. This double acquisition — of the object as well as the set of principles and tools with which the object was made and through which it can be freely disseminated — exemplifies Open Music Archive's twofold ethos: material and process accommodated together in a space designed to foster ongoing and creative use. Everything they have is also yours, so go ahead and use it to make something new.

# EVERYTHING I HAVE IS YOURS

A Film by  
**Eileen Simpson & Ben White**  
(Open Music Archive)

—

**Chas Baker** – vocals  
**Norman Beaker** – guitar  
**Max Beesley** – drums  
**Roger Browne** – piano  
**Stewart Butler** – baritone sax  
**Tony Chess** – drums and djembe  
**Maureen Donahue** – vocals  
**Mike Farmer** – tenor sax  
**Peter Fox** – guitar and vocals  
**Bo Lee** – bass guitar  
**Jill MacDonald** – vocals  
**Jean Martin** – vocals  
**Paul Medina** – double bass and trombone  
**Bruce Mitchell** – drums  
**Richard Piggott** – guitar  
**Roy Rigby** – guitar

## **Commissioners /**

### **Executive Producers**

Film and Video Umbrella  
University of Salford Art Collection  
Castlefield Gallery

### **Producer**

Laura Shacham

### **Assistant Producer**

Polly Wright

### **Casting Producer**

Claire Bleasdale

### **Additional Casting**

Open Music Archive  
Laura Shacham  
Polly Wright

### **Director of Photography**

Jamie Kennerley

### **1st Assistant Camera**

#### **/ Focus Puller**

Sean Beasley

### **2nd Assistant Camera**

Josh Hagherty

### **Additional Cinematography**

Jonas Mortensen

### **Grip**

Rick Griffiths  
Jon Head

### **Gaffer**

Mark Rickitts  
Dan Tunstall

**Lighting Technician**

Simeon Ogden · The Stoller Hall

**Sound Engineer**

Lee Aston

Brendan Williams

**Stylist**

Ianthe Wright

**On-set stylist**

Lily Austin

Lou Hall

**Hair & Make-Up**

Katy Brody

**Production Assistants**

Adam Douglas

Hannah Jupe

Daniel Newport

Joseph Preston

**Sound Mix**

Lee Aston

Brendan Williams

Low Four Studios

**Additional VFX**

Matt Wilmshurst

**Colourist**

Max Ferguson-Hook ·

Time Based Arts

CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-  
SHAREALIKE 4.0 INTERNATIONAL

**The artists would like to thank  
the following individuals and  
organisations who supported  
the production of the film:**

Steven Bode, Susanna Chisholm and all at FVU  
Lindsay Taylor, and all at University of Salford  
Helen Wewiora, and all at Castlefield Gallery

University of Salford, TV Studios  
Queen Mary University, London  
Manchester School of Art  
at Manchester Metropolitan University

John Ashbrook

Big Fish Rentals

Astrid Bin

Richard Bradbury

Linda Brogan

Melissa Burnand · Jam Street Cafe

Simon Chaplin

Barry Daykin

Mel Dean

Drop City Lighting

Fac365

Gillian Fox

Timothy France

Anthony Gannon · All+

Calypso George

Bob Gill

Jonathan Green · Unity Radio

Josh King

John Mephram

Tamsin Middleton

Alex Morley

Niamos Arts Centre

NoDrama

Colin O'Toole

Dan Parrott and Brendan Williams · Low Four  
Studio

Nancy Porter

Derek Quinn

Pauline Renshaw

Trevor Roots

Sean Simpson

Teresa Simpson

Denise Southworth · Legacy FM

Liz Starkie

The Stoller Hall

Ashley Tidball

Helen White

Matthew White

EDITED BY Steven Bode and Ellen O'Donoghue Oddy  
 DESIGNED BY Textbook Studio  
 SUPPORTED BY Manchester School of Art at Manchester  
 Metropolitan University, and University of Salford Art Collection.  
 PUBLISHED BY Film and Video Umbrella

ALL CONTENT PUBLIC DOMAIN OR (CC) BY-SA 4.0

ISBN-10: 1-904270-43-3  
 ISBN-13: 978-1-904270-43-0

COMMISSIONED BY FILM AND VIDEO UMBRELLA, THE CONTEMPORARY ART SOCIETY, UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD ART COLLECTION AND CASTLEFIELD GALLERY THROUGH 'EQUAL SHARES' 2019



PRESENTED BY CONTEMPORARY ART SOCIETY, MBILI FOUNDATION AND THE UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD



SUPPORTED BY MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART AT MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, SALFORD MUSEUM & ART GALLERY



OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME SUPPORTED BY PUBLIC FUNDING FROM THE NATIONAL LOTTERY THROUGH ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND, THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND, THE D'OYLY CARTE CHARITABLE TRUST



COMMUNITY PARTNERS AGE UK, GREAT PLACES HOUSING GROUP, NORTHWARDS HOUSING, SALFORD COMMUNITY LEISURE



AND CASTLEFIELD GALLERY COMMISSIONING PATRONS, JO AND ALLAN MELZACK

FUNDERS FILM AND VIDEO UMBRELLA AND CASTLEFIELD GALLERY ARE FUNDED BY ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND AS NATIONAL PORTFOLIO ORGANISATIONS. CASTLEFIELD GALLERY IS FUNDED BY MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL AS A CULTURAL PARTNER

