B&O Sound Matters / A publication produced by Bang & Olufsen focusing on sound and music culture, as well as sound related art and events. Sound Matters is produced about 4 times per year and is complimented by an online podcast produced by Tim Hinman from Third Ear. Soundmatters’s articles span widely across different periods and cultures, aiming at displaying a differentiated and versatile image of how sound, music and cultural currents intertwine and enrich each other. Soundmatters’ focus is primarily on the unique and different that is often overlooked in pop culture and the current media image. It encompasses everything from sound systems on the 90’s balkans, astronauts playing the saxophone to cover-designers and underground music collectives from the ghettos of Atlanta.

Note/The publication is produced with the corporate typefaces of B&O/B&O Play. The round brandmark of B&O Play only appears on the 2 first publication, but has been discontinued due to brand strategic decisions. At the same point the publication name was updated from The Journal to Sound Matters.
Alistair Philip Wiper / The photographer and author of The Art Of Impossible: The Bang & Olufsen Design Story tells us about his fascination with heavy industry, shooting CERN's Large Hadron Collider and scouring the B&O archives for product prototypes.

You photograph a lot of different subjects: industrial, scientific, and architectural projects. What do you find interesting about them?

I love going behind the scenes and seeing things that other people don't get to see – I feel nextremely lucky to be able to do that. I'm particularly attracted to the industrial and scientific work because I get to explore the insane solutions that human beings come up with in order to solve problems. The architectural stuff I do tends to be a bit more quirky, but I still take exactly the same approach towards the subject matter. I am not a conventional architecture photographer and am more interested in finding the work of eccentric, nearly-forgotten architects that were doing things out of the box, showing their work in new ways.

How did you start out shooting these subjects?

About five years ago I came across a couple of photographers who worked for “big industry” in the 1950s and 60s – Wolfgang Sievers and Maurice Broomfield. They were photographing big oil refineries and manufacturing plants at a time when the companies that owned them were proud of them instead of ashamed, as they tend to be today. I was totally amazed, it was like a lightbulb moment where I knew that was what I wanted to photograph from now on. So I started researching like crazy, and trying to talk my way in anywhere I could in order to build a portfolio – over the last few years a lot of my time has been spent learning how to get ahold of the right person and how to convince them to let me in to their facility.

Is it usually difficult to gain access?

It can take a lot of work to get into some places – sometimes I reach a wall where I get the wrong person to deal with who just doesn’t understand what I am trying to do. But like I said, I have got quite good at it over the years.

One of the easiest places I got access to was a place I thought would be the hardest: the Large Hadron Collider at CERN in Switzerland. When I was just starting I planned a trip there to take their regular tourist visit, but I also sent an email to the press office asking if there was anything I could see that the other tourists don't get to see, anything at all. To my surprise they replied saying I could have an afternoon being shown around on my own.

What's your favourite of your projects?

One that really stands out was photographing the building of the Maersk Triple E in South Korea - the biggest container ship in the world – for Wired magazine. That was just epic, seeing these huge blocks of ships being lifted around and put together like bits of Lego.

And of course making The Art of Impossible book!

How did The Art of Impossible come about?

I remember Bang & Olufsen from my childhood – my grandad had a B&O TV – and it has always been on my radar as a really interesting company. When I moved to Denmark I became even more aware of it and it was obviously exactly the kind of company I would like the chance to explore. Through a friend I arranged a meeting with someone very senior in the company and pitched them the idea of doing this book. To my surprise they went for it, and went for it all the way – I was really allowed to make the book that I wanted, with very little interference. The company has so much history, with so many iconic products – I wanted to show all of that but in a way which hadn't been seen before, and different from the glossy marketing.
Sound Matters Issue 06

(Tuning your world)

From noisy city to peaceful countryside, built environments have been teeming with sound for millennia – but it’s only recently that experts have paid much attention to how we actually listen to our world, and just how profoundly it affects us: Your soundscape matters.

We live in a world of complex acoustic properties of the environment – whether urban or rural; man-made or natural. The soundscape of the world around us is known as acoustic ecology – the study of the relationships between ecosystem development and sound. Reaching back further, “archaeoacoustics” has shown how prehistoric species sang and communicated among one another.

When an ecosystem is influenced by the sound of fences, walls and other constructions, it becomes noisy. For example, found that birds living in a forest – its soundscape is drowned out by machinery, similarly altered, as vocalizations are faster songs compared to their forest-dwelling equivalents, and native species."If ear cleaning and the proposal for a wander, prompting hearing the character, coming along to design and improve the orchestra, together to design and make acoustic design to make urban planning should focus on the soundscapes, as the concept of acoustic design to make urban planning should focus on the soundscapes, and listening.

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The author of Electric Eden: Unearthing Britain’s Visionary Music and a forthcoming book about the experimental rock band, Can, sets his ears on how music and the natural world interact. By Rob Young

MUSIC BY NATURE

The Art Of Impossible
The Bang & Olufsen Design Story is published by Thames & Hudson
Drawing Sound / When musical composition met graphic design

By Jennifer Lucy Allan

A brief introduction to a long tradition in the heart of illustrative instructions for musicians.

Sound Matters Issue 07

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Sound Matters Issue 07
The power of sound / From industrial music to wildlife television, one thing unifies the career of influential British field recordist Chris Watson.

British sound artist and field recording pioneer Chris Watson has made these 400 hectares of common land just minutes from Newcastle's Town Moor his personal playground. "I've made some of my best recordings here," he says; "They really recognise the value to record now and not just take pictures," Watson notes, explaining his techniques – he always has a microphone on him, for fear of missing something, and admits that "you get all these perspectives from the Town Moor.

The impact of Watson's work comes in the ears, which is why sound recording: "I love that people want to record now and not just take pictures," he says; "They really recognise the value to record now and not just take pictures," Watson notes, explaining his techniques – he always has a microphone on him, for fear of missing something, and admits that "you get all these perspectives." Watson is a true believer in the power of sound, and his work acts as an accessible gateway to the natural world.

"One thing I hope people do, and this goes for all my work, is walk or cycle around the Town Moor and just stop and listen for a couple of minutes," Watson says, enjoying the silence around him. "If you're in a car or on a train, you're not listening to the world, you're just hearing noise. We've all got that power to learn to listen."

"I have this notion that we're so preoccupied with visualising the world, that we're not using our ears to listen," Watson says, and it's true; we're all so used to hearing noise that we rarely listen. "I have this notion that we hear things that are otherwise hidden by noise," Watson speaks of a quiet determination to open the ears to the world.

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