

# THE BOOK OF Hieroglyphs

**DAVID THOMAS**

David Thomas presents a journey through the ghost towns of America. Along county roads, across lost bridges, on the banks of mighty Interstate rivers are places that you don't know that you know. There's not a map in the world to tell you where to find them. This is a story of the quest, a story of lives sighted. A Lincoln Continental Town Car races across the face of a neon land, trailing clouds of dust and dogs. The story goes Somewhere and ends Nowhere. It represents a different kind of writing; a form that went into a state of metamorphosis before the time of Homer, emerging from its chrysalis in 1877 as a new creation. A hundred years of maturation followed. The writing is become hieroglyphic.

## TESTIMONIALS:

“This book is not a book, it’s an alien.”

*J.C. Menu, French publisher, L’ Association and L’ Apocalypse.*

“I have trod and will retread this confirming and inquiring work time and again. It’s strangely home. Epic in scope. As mighty on the page as on the stage, with scat and logic, this MacDuff leads us on.”

*Van Dyke Parks, who describes David Thomas as “one of the most imaginative and transportive talents I’ve ever met.”*

“Thomas refuses to call the pieces in this book poetry, says they are not the songs. I really don’t care what you call them, and it’s true that they are unlike anything you’ve ever read before, but what they are are zings, stings, word bullets that tell stories so condensed that your mind changes on every syllable.”

*Bob Holman (Bovary Poetry Club, Author, Publisher, Director of Endangered Language Alliance).*

*The Book of Hieroglyphs* contains 20 chapters of poetry and prose expanded and adapted from four decades of the author’s work. This PDF includes Chapter 1 (America), as well as an excerpt from the prose pieces in the end chapters (“The Back Story”).

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An Irony-Free™ Book.

## READ THIS FIRST

[snip]

So, why this book now? Simply put, I figured out how to do it.

This is not a book of poetry with essays added on. It's one story. It's a movie. It's a novel. It's a song. It's meant to be read front to back in three minutes, like a song is 'read.' I flatter myself that this book is something new. This book is written with the narrative architecture of the Magnetic Age.

I'd been in possession of the key for decades – the same key I'd used for my own musical work from the beginning.

In 1966, Brian Wilson released the single 'Good Vibrations.' The impact reverberates to this day. It's regarded as the perfect recording. Wilson must have known what he'd accomplished. He must have thought, 'Now I have to go further.' He started in on the album. It was to be called *Smile*. He enlisted the *wunderkind* Van Dyke Parks to write the lyrics. Long story short, things went horribly wrong in his personal life. The project spiraled out of control and was taken away from him. An album of approximations called *Smiley Smile* (1967) was released.

In the '70s, bootlegs of Wilson's recordings for *Smile* began to appear. I collected them. As with 'Good Vibrations,' Wilson had recorded different versions of the sections of the songs. He sat in the dark in a large sand box, as the myth has it, surrounded by piles of acetate recordings. He played one after the other in different combinations, knowing where each acetate was located – in which pile – so that he could lay his hands on any one acetate – in the dark. As with 'Good Vibrations,' he clearly intended to spend many months listening, comparing and painstakingly compiling the different versions into a masterwork. That never happened.

So, what fans had, instead, with the bootlegs, was snippets and suggestions, lots of variant sections and works in progress. From these, we assembled in our imaginations a finished version of an album that never was.

Brian Wilson achieved what he set out to do.

The routing may have been unintended, serendipitous and tortuous, but we had the album. It was a worthy follow up. It was perfect – *perfect* because it could only exist in the imagination of the listener. There, unfettered by linear Time, all variations of any one song, any one section, *coexisted* simultaneously. All could 'play,' all could be known, all could be revealed and assembled in the One Moment. Wilson had broken the Final Barrier, the immutable prison that is the linear nature of Time. I hope he knows it.

When I set out to write this book I realized that this was the key – the way to organize all the components needed to herd the imagination appropriately. This story is designed to be written in the mind of the reader in the way that a movie is 'written' in a screenplay. At the back of the book is a chapter called 'The Back Story.' This too is integral. It can be read first, last or not.

[snip]

# I.

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## AMERICA

## America

I'm an American.

Americans write about America.

It's not a choice.

I want to be clear on this. I'm not an American because of any sense of nationalism. I am an American because I was born into the American geography. It's my geography. The roads and hills, the fast food joints and dry gulch culverts – these are the letters that spell out the name I know myself by. All that I am, as a transient, has been thus codified.

I am become an irritation, a reminder of too many things that reside at the edge of forgotten.

I'm the old man sitting on a bench talking as if to himself, unconcerned, but half hoping, that the world might be listening.

I am the silent, disheveled character slumped over the bar intent on a staring contest with a glass of beer.

I've known what it's like to be free. The knowledge won't let me go. It won't leave me be. I've known what it feels like to get so close, so damned close to the Moment that your fingers brush it – stretching out, they can almost grab onto it.

“Soon I'll be gone too,” I mumble, “And you can all settle down, without any doubts, into the misery that loves company.”

## Last of the Mohicans<sup>1</sup>

The air itself is black.

The parking lot outside the diner is empty. Light hangs like a column from the lamppost. The susurrations of the Interstate become the breathing of an unnameable organism. Fluid smoke expands into the column of light, followed by the silhouette of a hat, a cigarette, a face.

“Yeah,” the face says.

Its voice grabs at my throat.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Last of the Mohicans – A Narrative of 1757* by James Fenimore Cooper, published in 1826. There was no Indian tribe called the Mohicans. Cooper evidently misheard one of two names that sound similar.

I'm the Last of the Americans  
 Which is like being the Last of the Mohicans  
 I knew the Golden Age.

I saw sunlight shine off its polished surfaces  
 I saw the dimness come  
 Even so, I do not regret.

I cross the great continent  
 Searching, riding radio waves, Oh  
 My brother!  
 I too am a Free Citizen of the Lost Nation  
 I follow any signal until it ebbs away  
 Fated background noise.

Inside the babel of proto-life electronic soup  
 Straining to hear  
 Adrift only moments  
 I coax a new carrier wave into amplitude  
 Off I go again, into the night  
 Alive.

Thus I cross the great continent  
 The Unmapped Dark –  
 Ancient mariners journey hand over hand  
 One sighting of land to the next –  
 In the rearview my face is lit  
 Beatific dashboard glow.

*Free, white and twenty-one  
 Honey, you can say you love me  
 But I'm a sonnuva gun.*

Tuned in, I am home  
 The Last of the Americans  
 After us come the barbarians.

## Perfume

We pulled off the highway  
Drove down Main Street till we found a one-pump  
We gassed and assed where the food was  
Like we knew we'd been expected all along.

Lawyer had an office on the second floor  
Reached it from the outside up the stairs, side of the wall  
Looked down the street  
Saw the town disappear into the high plains.

Over the horizon I knew there'd be a valley  
Filled with frozen clouds  
Dust hangs in the air like perfume  
And no one is waiting.

I meant to write down the name of the town  
I don't remember the highway  
Or where we went later  
I do remember the frozen quality of the hours we spent.

I remember the waitress  
And what Tom had to eat  
I remember the faces of the other customers  
Like they was my own family.

And I remember that over the horizon is a valley  
Filled with frozen clouds  
Dust hangs in the air like perfume  
Like it is your perfume.



## Lost Nation Road

From out of the night, into the dawn  
The rose lighted road stretches on and on and on  
Carpenters are knocking it up as we come into view  
Lo! This town grows.

“It’s a façade,” she says  
“Weren’t we looking for streets of gold?”

This may not be the day, but...  
What if El Dorado is paved with clay?  
A voice calls from the burning hot,  
*It ain’t that good but you’ll know what you’ve got!*

There’s always a sign that points the way home  
Then some jackass blows the arrows off  
A shining shotgun  
I knew I’d be running from you.

“Now, how did you know that?” she says  
I says, I’m not the only pawn on this lost highway.

## Letter Home #2

I hadn't heard anything  
The note said he'd gone to work a deal in heaven  
Which had me worried, as you can imagine.

Next thing I get a phone call  
I say, Where are you?  
He says he's calling from a phone booth out in the desert  
and how there's halos appearing over the lampposts  
and a holy water mist is rising from the orange groves  
It was all crazy talk like that.

*Cut the poetry crap*, I say  
He says the bus is leaving, he's gotta go  
and he hangs up.

Next morning, I get a postcard  
'Soda Mountain In The Moonlight'<sup>2</sup>  
On the back he's written,

Yeah

Yeah

Yeah!

What do you think?

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<sup>2</sup> An invented location that's nothing to do with the Soda Mountains of Oregon. The reference is to the hobo song 'Big Rock Candy Mountain.'

## Prepare for the End

Bound up in light  
on Soda Mountain  
I will wave to you.

I'll take a wife  
from Soda Mountain  
and I'd love her too.

I'm paid to dream  
on Soda Mountain  
People are strange.

The stories change  
on Soda Mountain  
Shall I tell one to you?

They tell a story here  
concerning Mr. Broady<sup>3</sup>  
and his soot black companions.

*Shovel on the coal, boys!  
Set the whistle screaming  
Make it up, the time we spent  
on Soda Mountain.*

They found me in the wreck  
My hand was on the throttle  
Scalded by the steam  
I died inside the rain.

All you ladies take a warning  
from Soda Mountain  
Be good unto your man  
lest he's lost unto that mountain.

He will wave to you.

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<sup>3</sup> Steve Broady was engineer of the Old 97 in the ballad "The Wreck of Old 97."

## Mirror Man

Eyes wide as they can  
Blue sand  
River gone black  
Big sky, a pink Cadillac.

How long will long be like?  
Who will? I know who won't  
Who lies to you?  
I know.

See the rearview  
Read the eyes of the refugee  
Know that a man is like a mirror  
Fear the man who's like a need.

Rolling, reeling  
A ghost on the face of the land  
*It's bound to be someone I know,*  
says Haunted Heart to The Narrow Road.

Mirror? Mirror Man.

## Turquoise Fins

Can't  
 We stop along the way?  
 We just passed by a place  
 Called 'Elvis Is Alive'<sup>4</sup>  
 Museum and a shop  
 Where  
 We can get souvenirs and a postcard or two.

Jack  
 Says, Man, it's awful hard  
 To be the one that ev'ry  
 One was waiting for  
 It's lonely in the dark  
 When  
 Media Priests of the Big Lie own all the words.

Did  
 You ever wonder why  
 Your Elvis fans are so  
 Much nicer people than  
 The people who laugh  
 At  
 Them?

Turquoise fins in Pomona  
 In Winona  
 In Alcona  
 In Altoona  
 In West Molina  
 Altadena  
 Downtown Medina  
 Issaquinah  
 West Issaquinah  
 Albany.

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<sup>4</sup> Formerly located in Wright City, Missouri, Elvis Is Alive Museum & Shop is now closed, the contents sold to a fellow who said he wanted to relocate it to Mississippi.

## Nevada!

Come the *John B*  
Grandfather, me  
Nassau Town.

Dry seabeds, dinosaur bones  
Heat cracks stone  
Broke down.

Roust the *John B*  
Mains'l set  
Good days gone.

First mate  
Heart sunk  
She went and cried in the Captain's bunk.

Don't cry, baby  
Don't fly in a rage  
Here's a story about the Golden Age –

Thirty cents a gallon, the superhighway  
Ride the wind through the hollow of the day  
Sheriff Stone, lemme alone.

*Nev-a-da!*  
Don't go to bits  
Get to Reno, we call it quits.

## Montana

In the State of Montana  
In the Year of the Ford  
Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-Four  
People are leaving, driving all night  
Women are crying, frozen in light  
And we roll on the river.

Our river is black  
The river is deep  
Between headlight and moonlight, a space full of grief  
Secrets and heartaches must carry the load  
The heart of the thing is the thing we don't know  
And we roll out the barrel.

Lo and behold, the night is too long  
Anchored in heartache, afraid of the dawn  
Nobody changes  
Truth is all gone  
The bosses have said everybody must go  
And we roll on the ribbons of our dreams.

# XIX.

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## THE BACK STORY

The essays that follow are back story. They're also background and pointers to the hieroglyphic writing method. All, except 'Lessons in Mayhem,' are excerpted and brutally condensed from a larger work, 'The Geography of Sound,' which I fear will never be completed.

- i. Excerpt From 'Lessons in Mayhem'
- ii. Media Priests of the Big Lie
- iii. Report From the Frontier, 1992
- iv. Destiny is in my Right Hand
- v. Digital Sound and Relativity
- vi. Datapanik
- vii The Microphone and Other Stuff
- viii Composition and Improvisation



## ii. Media Priests of the Big Lie

I've checked in and I can't check out. In the morning, I pack. In the afternoon, I unpack. It's not research that keeps me here. Or the quest for understanding. Or even curiosity. It's Deer Time. As in frozen-in-the-lights-of-an-oncoming-car, time.

Three days ago, my wife wanted to see Graceland and I wanted to see 'Star Trek: The Next Generation.' Since I-55 bounces along the edges of Memphis, and since Graceland is right there where you pick up Highway 61 into the Mississippi Delta, and since the Days Inn at the Brooks Road Exit has TV – no messy urban experience will be required. Just hop off Ole Man Interstate; she has a date with Elvis, me with Jean-Luc Picard, and tomorrow we leave early for the Delta.<sup>55</sup>

But now (this agéd third morning here), I tell myself, 'Go now! Today.' Or something weird happens. 'Make the move *now*,' I'm pleading in my head.

I open the curtains to our room, Patrick McGoohan-like, to reveal...<sup>56</sup>

Elvis Week 1993.

At the Days Inn, Brooks Road, Memphis, Tennessee.

United States of America, Earth.

Federation of Planets.

Across a parking lot I see the reception lobby. Elvis People are checking in as early as they can. Confused aliens and sneery-lipped turistas are checking out. By mid-afternoon the in-comers will be assimilated into The Village. They'll take what they're given (stock \$30-a-night-special-rate motel rooms) and they'll do with them what 'Big Daddy' Ed Roth used to do with stock model cars from off the Detroit assembly line.<sup>57</sup> They'll customize, chop and channel, until the Ordinary Thing is transformed, by handiwork and guile, into a personalized Hot Rod Vision.

Except at the Brooks Road Exit, the 'hot rod' is a Lincoln Continental Town Car and the 'vision' is a vanity plate living capsule for the next five to seven days. That's the way it goes at the last outpost of American Folk Cul-

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<sup>55</sup> The Delta is the northwestern part of the State of Mississippi between the Yazoo and Mississippi rivers, heartland of the Blues.

<sup>56</sup> Patrick McGoohan (1928 - 2009), American-born actor who wrote and starred in the cult TV series 'The Prisoner,' 1967 to 1968. At the end of the opening title sequence McGoohan opens the curtains of what he thinks is his London home to discover, not his own neighborhood, but the surreal architecture of a place called The Village.

<sup>57</sup> Ed Roth (1932 - 2001), American artist, cartoonist and custom car builder. He created the iconic Rat Fink character and was a key figure in '50s and '60s hot rod culture.

ture. Strange debris is washed up and the natives make of it what they can.

In The Village, the pool is the town square and on three sides of it are the three floors of the Days Inn. The fourth side is a parking lot and the motel office. Next to the office is a small cafe.

Motel room windows and doors are decorated with photographs, artwork, mementos and handmade tributes. Most of the ground floor rooms are trading dens in the day, with doors opened, furniture pushed aside, and beds covered over with Elvis records, books, collectables, and photographs. The older men of The Village – sometimes bodyguards, employees or musicians who knew Elvis, also writers – hold court. They pass the time over cans of Coke. On the second floor, down at the parking lot end, an Elvis impersonator is dressed in a track suit. He spends the afternoon sitting outside his room in the company of his sideburns.

The area around Graceland is overrun with Elvis impersonators. They shill for business outside yellow and red hamburger drive-thrus like overdressed beggars. The impersonator on the second floor is definitely in the wrong place at the wrong time. The genus of Elvis People at the Brooks Road Days Inn emphasizes the spirituality of the man Elvis. In a virtually Maoist manner, they consider impersonation to be the evil of Personality Cult. The Elvis People don't criticize the impersonator – they don't speak of him – but he has the look of someone shunned.

In the evening, the Elvis People gather in boom box circles around the pool, in impromptu chair encounters outside rooms, or at tables in the motel's open all night Aloha Cafe – renamed thusly because the year's theme is 'Blue Hawaii.' Early in the a.m., deep into the p.m., you see them gesticulating crazy-like over free cups of coffee. All earnestly speak of their passion. Conversations ebb and flow and in an empty space someone will say, "I sure miss him." The words hang in the air. Some nod in agreement. Others sigh.

Outside, two grannies from Maine are parked, Elvis tailgating.<sup>58</sup> They sit in folding lawn chairs beside their customized Elvis Van with a paint job that 'Big Daddy' himself might envy. They're up at all hours with the van doors opened wide and mini Elvis lampshades glowing inside.

Maybe there's an overlap of shifts deep into the night, as the pre-dawn risers make their way past the nighthawk Aloha Cafe to walk to the Garden of Remembrance at Graceland, where they'll listen to the birds wake and watch how the dawn light shimmies through the leaves of the trees of Graceland.

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<sup>58</sup> Tailgating is a social activity to be found at American sporting events and concerts. It's becoming common at weddings and picnics. Many city officials of the social engineer persuasion have tried in vain to discourage it. Tailgaters arrive hours before an event to set up in the parking lots of a stadium. The tailgates and doors of their cars and vans are opened, barbecue grills set up, lawn chairs deployed. Beer is drunk. The activity originated at football games and is most often associated with that sport.

I stand at the window. I can see how the days will cycle around this way, and how the week's events will proceed with a satisfying inevitability, and I say to myself – No, I say to you – You be the judge – Oh, citizens, how *can* I leave the Right Here, the Right Now, when it's all happening *Right Here, Right Now*, gathering momentum – in the moment – moving in procession – in the moment – to a climactic candlelit walk on Graceland, another anniversary of the death of the king of rock and roll?

What does it all signify?

This is Folk Culture. Maybe this is the only Folk Culture left in America. Betrayed by Media Priests of the Big Lie, the Elvis People have handcrafted a culture from out of commercial detritus and strange debris, like a cargo culture discovered on a lost Pacific island. Except remoteness is no longer simply a question of physical distance. That's the way it used to be – granted – but not anymore.

Why Elvis?

Because he was an innocent persecuted and ultimately destroyed by greed and big business. 'He made mistakes, Elvis did, but he had a good heart,' the Elvis People say. You hear it again and again, he is loved because of his spirituality, his generosity, and because he is a man of the people. Watch any Hollywood movie. Read pulp fiction from any pre-postmodern era. The life of Elvis adheres to all essential elements of the template for the American iconography. He is loved by ordinary people and, therefore, despised by the sneery-lipped turistas of Coast Culture.

Elvis is an icon.

He was the first World Star, true.

Those things lie on the surface. The answer lies *below* the surface. Elvis took the moribund folk forms of country western and rural blues, and brought to them the power and universality of Abstraction; customizing a vehicle for the hopes and dreams and fears of the American people, sweeping away flabby alien art forms<sup>59</sup>. A powerful thing.

He was the first Poet of the Inarticulate Voice. In days such as these, wherein all the words of the media and the artists and the wise men are nothing but lies and propaganda – a weapon to be used against the Citizen – why is it so surprising that Folk Culture coalesces around what seems to be the only incorruptible medium remaining? Rock Music, the medium that has no need for words. Why shouldn't people look instinctively to the Homer of the form – Elvis – a man who never wrote a word of a song he recorded?

We live in strange times wherein Order & Meaning are terror osterized, re-

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<sup>59</sup> Standing in Sun Studios with two guys and a dog, Elvis heard in his head all the string sections and horn players that ought to be there. He sang to frame the soundscape accordingly. That was the radical step he took. It was never the hips. The lip curl and the hair and the clothes excited the senseless blather of teenage girls but they were inconsequential.

duced to grist for the postmodernist vacuumizer.<sup>60</sup> Yet in the cracks and seams of the world, ordinary people go about their business, scrabbling Order & Meaning together using the materials at hand. It's a heroic chore – oh, ultimately doomed and maybe empty – but heroic still in a relative way next to the banality of establishment culture/anti-culture, which is just as doomed and just as empty, but must be more reprehensible because of its cynicism, cruelty, and passion for the darkness.<sup>61</sup>

It was chance that we stopped at Brooks Road. The Elvis People last night were saying that it was fate. But I know it was an accident. Like driving down a back road and going through a ghost town and you think *This is the way it used to be* and you never forget because it's a perfectly shaped moment in time and space and like a vision of the future that will never be and you know that even as you dream it. You think to yourself, 'We can renovate one of those old store fronts and move out here.' Of course, you know you never will, but the vision has power because it answers a need.

Some people find what they need in the darkness. Some people are transfixed by light. We checked in and we'll check out. All the deer has to do is blink.

So, what did *you* learn on your summer vacation?

Me? I learned that Elvis People are nicer people than the people who laugh at Elvis People.

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<sup>60</sup> The Osterizer is a blender introduced in 1946. Early models were noted for their sturdy construction. A vacuumizer sucks the air out of a freezer bag so freezer burn can be avoided.

<sup>61</sup> Elvis was white trash. The Media Priests despise rural blacks but reserve a special loathing for poor whites. Elvis, in our time, will never be spoken of without condescension, and Rock Music – the legacy of a lost generation of American black and white trash – will forever be relegated to the status of a disposable phenomenon. Hence the dismissive meme that rock and roll embodies teen rebellion and sticking-it-to-the-Man. The counterfeit currency of the Hollywood James Dean is preferred. The real rebels were playing around with echo plates and guitar distortion in studios, garages, basements and bedrooms. The real history of Rock Music is a progression from the abstract enthusiasm of Elvis, to the maturity dreamed of by Brian Wilson, to an adulthood of ever growing complexity and sophistication of expression. Certainly by the late '60s to sing of rebellion and teen angst was worthy of derision – witness any number of Frank Zappa albums.

## vi. Datapanik

Datapanik is a principle devised by David Thomas and John Thompson in the late '70s to explain The Way Things Are in a society governed by Media. It has these propositions:

1. Information is a sedative drug.
2. Dataflow is an imperative.
3. A junkie culture is inevitable.
4. Judgment is the only evil.
5. Expediency requires that all things must be true all of the time.

The voice of the blood and the sound of geography are masked and muted by the effects of Datapanik. As a consequence it is often the surface, the sexy mask, that prevails. The Hollywood vacuity of a James Dean is chosen in preference to the blood passion of a Jack Kerouac.

Hence the fertile ground found in the relative silence of isolation – whether that isolation be psychological, social or physical.

Hence the protective power of geography.

Maybe it's an instinctive reflex for self-preservation that we turn to that which is beyond words. It's not surprising then that much of what survives of Folk Culture is encoded into the Sound of Musical Activity and can be found in the detritus of popular culture. Musicians operate in readymade insular structures. The male aesthetic provides a sufficiently tough and dedicated core, as well as the requisite dynamics of Brotherhood. Musicians instinctively preserve and protect their geography by encoding it into sound, preserving it in a place safe from predatory media beasts. In the cyclotron, physicists generate rarefied particles of subatomic matter that only exist for nanoseconds before being torn apart. The simple act of observing these particles alters their nature. Everything the Media Priests observe they tear apart. The camera steals the soul. Only a closed brotherhood survives such a hostile environment.

## Biography

David Thomas is a writer, singer, songwriter, actor, producer and director within the self-proclaimed genre of the Avant-Garage. Founder of two legendary bands, Rocket From The Tombs and Pere Ubu, and a multitude of musical collaborations, including David Thomas and two pale boys, Thomas is credited with rewriting the rules of both popular and experimental music since 1975. He is a musician's musician.



“Thomas’s gnostic argument – that art exists to at once reveal secrets and to preserve them – makes sense of a particularly American – or modern – form of storytelling.” Greil Marcus, *Double Trouble* (Faber And Faber, 2000).

His career began as a writer, editor and columnist for weekly magazine ‘The Scene,’ in Cleveland, in the early ‘70s. After years of critiquing, he made the decision to stop writing about music and start creating it. “If I’m so smart, I should do this myself.”

*The Modern Dance* (Pere Ubu) was released to critical acclaim, in 1978, and the group toured extensively, as it does to this day, with a further twenty-two album releases.

Thomas applied his ideas to solo theater (‘*theatre vague*,’ as he calls it) with spoken word and poetry performances, methodically integrating musical improvisation.

Thomas wrote two operas, *Mirror Man* (1998) and *Bring Me The Head Of Ubu Roi* (2008), which both premiered at London’s Queen Elizabeth Hall, before touring internationally. The latter was animated by cult film-makers The Brothers Quay.

In 2002, Thomas costarred in a limited, sold out run of the ‘junk opera’ *Shockheaded Peter* at the Albery Theatre in London’s West End.

London’s South Bank Centre and UCLA Performing Arts staged four and three day festivals, respectively, dedicated to his writing and music. Thomas named the festivals ‘Disastodrome!’ “We call it disasto so nothing can go wrong.” In 1998, The Knitting Factory in New York City sponsored a three day festival of his work called ‘The Fall of the Magnetic Empire.’

The Department of Cultural Geography at Clark University invited him to deliver a lecture, subsequently called ‘The Geography of Sound,’ which led to further requests from architectural colleges in Oxford and Amsterdam, various institutions and academic music conferences.

David Thomas’ groups also compose and perform live musical underscores to cult films. In 2004, Pere Ubu toured the United Kingdom with a 3-D screen-

ing of *It Came From Outer Space*. In 2004, they premiered an underscore to Roger Corman's *X, The Man With X-Ray Eyes* at the festival 'Celebrate Brooklyn,' and, subsequently, at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and other festivals. In 2010, the Brighton Film Festival invited David Thomas and two pale boys to perform an underscore to *Carnival of Souls*.

Thomas has been a featured performer in festivals celebrating the works of John Cage (Barbican Centre, London, 1998), Nino Rota (Barbican Centre, 2004), The Firesign Theatre (Royce Hall, UCLA, 2004), Bertolt Brecht (Royal Festival Hall, London, 2005) and Walt Disney (Royal Festival Hall, 2007).

Thomas was a featured performer in Hal Wilner's production of 'Rogue's Gallery: Pirate Ballads, Sea Songs & Chanteys,' staged in London, Dublin, Newcastle and at the Sydney Opera House. He featured in Wilner's production of the 'Harry Smith Project' (Royce Hall, UCLA, 2001) for which he arranged two songs played by a band that consisted of Van Dyke Parks, Percy Heath, Eric Mingus, Steve Earle, Philip Glass, David Johansen and Bill Frisell.

In 2005, Thomas was invited to perform with the MC5 and Sun Ra Arkestra at the Royal Festival Hall. He has played with the London Sinfonietta and Mondrian String Quartet.

Other projects include The Archimedes Quartet (with Chris Cutler, Peter Blegvad and John Edwards), which premiered the musical symposium 'How I Invented Time' in 2010. He performs with Cutler in the improvisational duo *Musique Noire*.

In 2010, Thomas headlined the 'Sounds Festival' in Brighton in a one man performance of music and poetry. That year he also introduced a series of 'Living Room Concerts,' solo performances of music and poetry in private homes. He has appeared as a featured spoken word performer at such venues as the Bowery Poetry Club (New York City), the Festival Internazionale di Poesie in Genoa (Italy) and the Green Man Festival (Wales).

Pere Ubu's next album, *Lady From Shanghai*, is scheduled for release by Fire Records in January 2013.