

# **Keith Cross and Peter Ross – Bored Civilians**

## **An Essay by Andrew Keeling**

### **Background**

Whilst at Oakham School in 1970, where the underground music scene served as a goldmine for myself and school friends, I came across an L.P. by the young British power-trio, T2, after it was mentioned in the music press. This was the time of King Crimson, Fairport Convention, Free, Deep Purple, Nick Drake, John Martyn, Black Sabbath, Hawkwind and many others, whose music was released by small independent record labels such as Island, Liberty and Transatlantic, as well as major label subsidiaries such as Vertigo (Phillips), Nova (Decca) and Harvest (EMI).

T2's album, *It'll All Work Out In Boomland* (Decca), came as a revelation to me, with its psychedelic cover-painting by Peter Thaine and lengthy songs, juxtaposing rock with classical together with the fine playing of Keith Cross (guitar and keyboards), Bernard Jinks (bass) and vocalist/drummer/songwriter Peter Dunton. Unfortunately, I failed to see the band 'live' – I stupidly declined an invitation to see Deep Purple at Leicester's De Montfort Hall, not realising T2 was the support band – and an appearance on BBC TV's late-night music show, *Disco 2*. Later I read Keith Cross had left the band leaving Peter Dunton and Bernard Jinks with the unenviable task of finding a replacement which failed to work out. In the end, Jinks would also depart, leaving Dunton to recruit new members. Keith Cross went on to form an instrumental band called Sunburst, whose *Sound of the Seventies* session included three pieces (*Two Finger Funker*, *Cheesewire* and *Dickey Bird*) I was fortunate to hear on Radio 1's *Sounds of the Seventies* at the time. However, Sunburst turned out to be transitional, with Cross joining vocalist-harmonica player, Peter Ross, to record one album in 1971-72 called *Bored Civilians* (Decca). Again, this turned out to be revelatory mainly because of its about-turn in terms of style.

After leaving school in 1971, I read about the new album, *Bored Civilians*, and was struck by the change in style to a folk-rock/country-Americana, something completely opposite to T2. I grew to love the album and trusted Keith's musical instincts; in much the same way I'd learnt to appreciate Robert Fripp's musical decisions for King Crimson. I've written about *It'll All Work Out In Boomland* elsewhere (see *Acme/Lion CD* and vinyl re-release [2008]) so won't refer to it here.

Fast-forward to 1997, I'd read that Acme Records had released T2 demo recordings of what would have become T2's second album, this time simply called T2. This was exciting news as nothing had been heard of T2 and Cross and Ross for many years. As a result, I wrote to both Keith and Peter. Surprisingly Keith phoned me shortly afterwards – we were both now composers of contemporary classical music – and Peter replied to my letter eventually asking me to contribute a flute part to an unreleased demo of a 1971/72 T2 song called *Closing Your Eyes*, eventually released in 2023 by Acme and Cherry Red. Keith and I became friends and

colleagues. He'd even come to hear my piece for string ensemble, Hidden Streams, recorded by Opus 20 at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 1998, later released by DGM Records. We'd often meet in London to discuss music and correspond especially about his involvement in T2, Cross and Ross and contemporary music. Peter Dunton would also become a good friend coming to hear several of my pieces in London. I'd often visit him and his partner on several occasions.

Keith told me he'd felt guilt over leaving T2 on the eve of the band's first American tour, but the volume at which T2 played at, as well as the light-show, had begun to affect his health. Eventually he and Peter Ross would go their separate ways, leaving Keith time to study classical guitar, take a Bmus degree at Goldsmith's (University of London), eventually turning to composition. It coincided with similar decisions I'd taken myself during the 1980s, to quit rock music and follow an exclusively classical music path. Keith also said that later he'd entirely abandoned the guitar in favour of composition, something I wasn't quite able to do myself being a flute, composition and musicology teacher and lecturer.

## **The Album**

Cross and Ross' Bored Civilians was released by Decca Records on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1972. I read a Melody Maker interview with Keith Cross in which he stated the duo had no intention to perform 'live'. The first thing to observe about the record is the cover-art. Unlike the psychedelic style of It'll All Work Out In Boomland, represented here is a grey-black and white photograph. The artists, with backs to the camera, are walking away from one another down adjacent sides of two London streets. The back cover is a photograph of the duo in a taxi; Keith poring over a copy of Melody Maker and Peter asleep, conveying the overall impression of boredom. One thinks of The Beatles' psychedelia of Sgt. Pepper against the more stripped postmodernism of the double-white album. There is also a comparison to be made between the cover-art of King Crimson's third album, Lizard, and the fourth, Islands. King Crimson's lyricist, Peter Sinfield, had told me that the idea was to promptly stop the lavish presentation of Lizard and present a more denuded cover with Islands.

Bored Civilians includes nine songs spread over two sides of the vinyl album: a) **The Last Ocean Rider** (Ross); **Bored Civilians** (Cross); **Peace In The End** (Lucas/Denny); **Story To A Friend** (Cross); b) **Loving You Takes So Long** (Ross); **Pastels** (Cross); **The Dead Salute** (Ross); **Bo Radley** (Cross); **Fly Home** (Cross and Ross). Album production is by Peter Sames – who would go on to produce Peter Skellern's She's a Lady – with orchestration by Tony Sharp. The main influences, as I'd discerned, were Traffic, David Crosby and the likes of Fotheringay, whose Peace In The End, Keith told me, he'd 'brought into the band'. If anything, Bored Civilians, like some other albums at the time, is an English take on The Band's Music From Big Pink and their eponymous second album. British country-rock band influences – for example, Brinsley Schwarz, Quiver and Cochise – had begun to cut-through classical progressive rock, flowering into the good-time, rock n'roll style of pub-rock (Ducks Deluxe, Bees Make Honey, Nick Lowe [Demon Records] and so on) and eventually transforming into punk. Eventually, these influences became a major fashion in the UK, fuelled by the West Coast country-rock of the Eagles, Poco and, especially, Little Feat.

Although difficult to grasp in the second decade of the 2000s, it would become the understated fashion of the declining counter-culture, momentarily providing escape from the jaded pessimism in the UK during the early 1970s.

On closer examination, the opening **The Last Ocean Rider**, reveals close attention to detail. An ocean rider refers to the large ocean-going vessels of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but is here more concerned with a crew member. The multi-sectional structure is grounded in the bright and optimistic key of C major, with C-F-G (I-IV-V) providing the main harmonic pillars. Word-painting is used at places such as ‘...and drift away’ dreamily sung by Peter Ross over Keith Cross’ evocative 12 and 6-string acoustic F major 7, with the guitars shifting rapidly from right to left several times in the stereo sound-field (0:45). The band kicks-in with Dee Murray (Elton John) or Nick Lowe (Brinsley Schwarz) on bass, and either Billy Rankin (Brinsley Schwarz) or Tony Carr (Donovan) on drums, though the sleeve-notes aren’t specific as to whom due to the wide pool of those contributing. No doubt both Cross and Ross had met some of these on their travels in their previous bands. A striking modulation to Ebmajor7 for ‘Rusty anchor you’ve slept too long upon your watery bed’ (1:43 ff.), prepares for the approaching storm. Modulating to F major, Keith Cross’ Fender Telecaster tone – never revealed in T2 – is heard in a country-like solo (2:13ff.). The following verse, now fuller than before with B.J. Cole’s orchestral-like pedal-steel, prepares for the lengthy instrumental coda (3:18ff.), building by gradual accumulation. Here, the vessel and crew are heard ploughing the ocean waves over two previously heard chords (Bb-C) and used as landmarks throughout. During this final section, acoustic guitars, pedal-steel, bass, drums, percussion and Cross’ high, frantic Telecaster parallel 4ths are all used as a sonic metaphor and something approaching a tone-poem. The precision in instrumental performance, vocal delivery and arrangements throughout is a testament to Keith Cross’ and Peter Ross’ skills as visionary musicians. Indeed, Peter Ross’ lyrics provide the bedrock for graphic imagery, allowing a listener to fully engage in the musical journey, with Peter Sames’ experience guiding an exquisite production.

The title-track follows, connected to the first by way of conflict. Over a hugely reduced texture – voices, acoustic guitars, dobro, one electric bent-pitch and strings and French horns – Keith Cross revealed to me that **Bored Civilians** is a veiled allusion to the difficulties of notoriety he’d experienced in T2 and the music industry surrounding it. ‘Millions and millions of silent civilians run after me/Waiting to tear me apart/They’re here today/Thousands and thousands of greedy-eyed falcons fly over me/Waiting in shadows to pounce...’ Beginning with Am7-Bm7 chords in acoustic guitars, over which a single bent electric guitar pitch (A natural to B natural) is heard bathed in distant reverb over Fmajor7 harmony. The verse’s unison vocal melody line comprises E natural-F natural-G natural (pitch-classes [in G major]: 9-10-0). Sustained strings – arranged by Tony Sharp – accompany the vocals and acoustic guitars on the words ‘Waiting to tear me apart’, with legato French horns entering on ‘They’re here today’. The second half consists of a soft classical-like instrumental section, featuring 6 and 12-string acoustics. It closes in G major which, structurally, is felt as the tonic key following the song’s harmonic ambiguity.

Sandy Denny's and Trevor Lucas's **Peace In The End** follows. In a strident E major, it comes as a complete contrast to what's preceded it. Featuring acoustic guitars and Peter Ross' soulful vocals and harmonica, it takes Fotheringay's version to heights the original never quite achieved. With a drum part inspired by Alan White's performance in John Lennon's Instant Karma, this anthemic cover version includes choral-like vocal harmonies from both Cross and Ross along with Jenny mason and Chrissie Stewart.

Keith Cross' **Story To A Friend** follows and is a narrative about possible police harassment. With Peter Ross taking the bulk of the vocals, the song is accompanied mainly by Dm7-G7 harmony, with piano and soft wah-wah guitar, before landing on the words, 'Why do we fall so low into all their lies'. The larger band subsequently enter, featuring Peter Arnesson's Leslie-driven Hammond organ on D-G-C-C/D harmony prior to a sudden cut-off with reduced texture – piano and bass – on Bbmaj7-Am7-Ebmaj7-Dm7. Then comes a long accumulative instrumental central section beginning slowly with wordless female vocal accompanied by Keith Cross' piano Dm7-G7 chords. Keith said he walked into a record shop some years later in London to hear the section of vocals and piano sampled on a techno release. Jimmy Hastings' virtuoso flute solo is the focal-point for the instrumental, now adding Rhodes piano, bass and drums, and eventually picking-up speed. Many years later, I heard from Jimmy, through his daughter, that he remembered the session well. After a varied repeat of the verse, this time adding female vocals, the song ends with the up-tempo rhythmic coda featuring the words, 'Harder, tighter, they're coming down harder, so much tighter', enhanced by improvised female vocals, gradually eclipsed by Jimmy Hastings' raw tenor sax improvisation, bringing the atmosphere of Canterbury prog band Caravan to mind.

Side two begins with the lamenting **Loving You Takes So Long**. Like Story To A Friend, the song is in D minor, providing continuity across the two sides of the vinyl. Keith Cross' soft syncopated Dm-Bb9-G-F chords provide accompaniment for Peter Ross' melancholic vocal delivery, 'Nothing is spoken, nothing is gained/Sitting in silence, it's a strain'. Picking-up tempo, this time accompanied by the band featuring Hammond organ, this short section serves as a bridge for the next slow section. In passing, the multi-sectional nature of the songs alludes to what was going on in progressive rock, with bands such as Yes, Gracious, Genesis and Van der Graaf Generator writing complex song structures utilising several bolt-on sections. In the case of Cross and Ross, lyricism and Americana tend to override what was happening in the English prog scene, but here US and British forms are transformed into a hybrid style which undoubtedly works. The song continues with soft Bb-F piano accompaniment, Ross declares passionately, 'When I found you burning up inside/I was just a place where you could hide'. With the full band subsequently entering, strings well-up over Am7-Bb harmony. 'Find a hole in the wall/I need some reaction' (2:31ff.). This is an emotive landmark reinforced by the duo's harmony vocals over simple D-A7-C-G chords, reaching the song's climax, 'Loving you takes so long' (3:05), over D-G-C-G with fuller, higher vocals and thick texture. This gives way to the soft Phrygian oft-repeated Bbmaj7-Dm/A (F/A) in the piano accompanying Ross' melancholic single vocal pleas, 'I would give you some words to say/I would give you some anyway'. Bass and drums are added with sustained A natural/F natural in the strings.

This emotive, multi-sectional song is a high-point on the album, crossfading with the Keith Cross-penned **Pastels**. Both songs deal with lost love. Here is a fragile pastel-like lament, evoking memories associated with a doomed relationship. Double-tracked picked acoustic guitars accompany the soft voices, with Cross and Ross both singing in unison. It is essentially a chordal loop (Em-Am-G), unusually cadencing on Gmaj7 and Eb/F, finally cadencing on G major. Verse two repeats the accompanying guitars, but now with harmony vocals, and the memory of a plane arriving and ‘searching for the ground’; and, ‘In the daydream/I saw your face without a trace of sadness/Laughing at the sun’ with the repeated final line, ‘Now she’s gone’ over the Fmaj7-Eb/F and the cadential chords heard previously. One single sustained acoustic guitar chord – Bb13/F – together with soft strings, introduce the middle-eight, ‘Diamonds in her eyes/Shining out like yesterday, this time delivered with vocal imitation over simple acoustic guitar Em7-Dm7-G13-F13 harmony. The music paints the words, ‘Reaching out like sunlight in her dreams for me’, sung high over one upward strummed Cmaj7/G chord, along with the introduction of a second acoustic. Double acoustics for the cadential G13, and a simple, decorated Dm/F-Fmaj7 harmony bring the section to a close. Verse one repeats over a fuller texture – acoustics, Hammond organ, bass and drums – playing the introductory chordal loop, intensifying the drama of what came before. The song closes with a thrice-repeated ‘Now she’s gone’ leaving the song to fade away on the opening chordal loop. For me, Loving You Takes So Long and Pastels are moving for their emotive deliveries, performances, subject-matter and lyricism. Keith told me, ‘In T2 I was denied my lyrical voice.’ Here, he has made up for what couldn’t previously be fulfilled.

Peter Ross’ **The Dead Salute** follows by clearing the air. Bright and fast, this pushes the country-like envelope, opening with a picked A open 5<sup>th</sup> on acoustic guitar, moving to D/A the second time it’s heard, with B.J. Cole’s slide-dobro plus bass and drums providing the rhythmic engine. Ross’ vocals enter for verse one (C#-C#-E-C#-A-B-C# [in A major pitch-classes: 4-4-7-4-0-2-4]), providing the clue to the militaristic subject, ‘Heard a line about heroes defending the land’. Like The Last Ocean Rider, the song recalls military action, but this time rather than naval, it’s ground forces. Chordal accompaniment consists of A-Bb7-F#m-Bm7. The chorus is completely memorable, with its upward, soaring vocals, covering the ground quickly with its faster harmonic rhythm – A-D-F#m-Bm7 – and the largely pentatonic vocal climbing to high C# (pitch-class 4) for ‘...we could grow much higher’, underpinned by fast changing chords A-D-F#-Bm7 for the balancing descending vocal line. An instrumental verse featuring dobro is followed by sung chorus. Peter Ross’ harmonica is eventually heard over verse material, with the final verse reinforcing the song’s subject, ‘The military maneuvers going down on the streets/Just remember that soldiers are just people in retreat’, something close to the early 1970s counter-cultural collective mind. A wordless final chorus closes, with a fade-out on dobro over the open 5<sup>th</sup> chord which began the song. There is a sense that compositional unifying processes connect songs across the album at a deeper level. For example, The Last Ocean Rider and The Dead Salute are connected through their pentatonic melody lines:

**TLOR: 4-7-7-7-4-2-0-9-2-4-0-7-9 (O-cean ri-der take your stand u-pon the deck);**

**TDS: 4-4-7-4-0-2-4|4-7-4-0-2-4 (Heard a line a-bout he-roes/De-fen-ding the land)**

In keeping with the overarching American atmosphere of the album, the song **Bo Radley**, which follows, concerns the reclusive character, Boo Radley, found in Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, who protects the childhood protagonists, Scout and Jem Finch. This transforms their perception of him in the process. I asked Keith Cross if he identified with Boo Radley, replying that he did. In the book Boo Radley is not only a recluse, whose strange behavior provokes local gossip, but also mysterious and kind. I also asked Keith how he coped with the pressures of the music press hailing him as 'the new Eric Clapton'. He said he did his best to ignore it. He also told me the song was recorded in one take: 'We just stood up in the studio and did it spontaneously.' It is in a medium waltz tempo (3/4) with a strophic structure, with Peter Ross delivering a plaintive vocal line accompanied by Cross on piano. In A major and beginning with piano figuration on D9-E-A, the vocal part begins on repeated E naturals (pitch-class: 7), rising to F# (p-c: 9) before falling back to E natural and finally down to A natural (p-c: 0) for the words, 'Found a page of a book that was badly torn apart by the wind'. This is repeated for the second phrase, 'I read the lines he'd written for me/Every word part of him'. An abrupt modulation to F major (VI) resolving to E major (V) for the words, 'Float along the avenue where life can begin', closing with a solo piano line of right-hand chordal melody and left-hand arpeggiations, falling A-A/G-F-Dm-A9, the descent heightening the sense of dejection conveyed in the lyrics. After a brief pause, verse two's 'He tried to write down the story that no-one would hear/They took him aside and they said "Bo Radley, you're not what we need," /So the man became a martyr/He would not concede.' The falling piano phrase is repeated, this time ending on a loud, dramatic A minor. This poignant song alone stands as a testimony for the contribution Keith Cross gave to the musical world, being someone who refused to follow the path of notoriety and, instead, following musical vocation. He said it was his favorite song on *Bored Civilians*.

The final **Fly Home** is the sole one co-written by the duo. It is reminiscent of David Crosby's *Traction In The Rain* from *If I Could Only Remember My Name* (1971) in terms of the acoustic guitar and opening vocals. *Fly Home* is the grand playout of the album, and the slow tempo allows time to savor the opening, spacious double-tracked acoustic guitars' Abmaj7-Gmaj7 (one guitar low [IVth to IIIrd position] and one guitar high [XI-X]). Peter Ross' opening vocal, bathed in reverb, begins with a descending Eb major arpeggio before descending to G of the Ab major, as if searching for the 'life behind the wall' expressed in the lyrics and underpinned by F9-C9/E-Em7. The pre-chorus consists of Ebmaj7/Bb-Dm/A acoustic chords played on every beat of the bar, undergirding the high unison vocals, 'To understand the words I planned to get to you' over the acoustic's G9/13 and Am7/G with a soft pentatonic 'maybe' in Ross' vocal line (B natural to A natural [p-c: 4-2]). The chorus', 'Fly home/Oh you're waiting on the wind' is delivered over the two previous chords, gathering sustained pitches in the woodwinds and word-painting the lyrics. Verse two is stripped of accompanying instruments except acoustic guitars, allowing the words to be heard fully, while reminiscent of the previous *Pastels*. Eventually, strings play on every beat of the bar together with the acoustic guitars. The following chorus has oft-repeated B natural-D natural (p-c: 4-7) quavers heard on oboe, with wordless harmony vocals. The guitars drop out (5:33ff.) leaving the coda arrangement – woodwind, harp and strings – until the end of the song, and eventually modulating through E major, D major, C minor, Ab major, F minor, Db

major7 and finally cadencing on C minor at the very end. This connects with the C major of The Last Ocean Rider – although transforming major for minor – and recalling Bo Radley’s A major to A minor. Keith told me both he and Peter Ross weren’t informed of the decision to add the orchestral coda, finding out only when they returned to the studio to hear the finished song. ‘We hated it!’, he said. Nevertheless, the programme has gone full-circle.

Cross and Ross also released two singles: Can You Believe It/Blind Willie Johnson and Peace In The End/Prophets/Guiders. Can You Believe It is reminiscent of Clifford T. Ward, while Blind Willie Johnson Touches on Free’s My Brother Jake, complete with Andy Fraser-like piano and Peter Ross’ soulful harmonica vocals. Clearly Decca were hoping for a degree of commercial success, with Can You Believe It garnering some airplay. The b-side of Peace In The End – Prophets Guiders – is similar to Rod Stewart’s Maggie May/Reason To Believe, complete with acoustic guitars and mandolin.

### Conclusion

I’ll briefly summarise some of the basic concepts found in Bored Civilians as well as the differences and similarities between Cross and Ross and T2.

First, T2’s music has more to do with textural accumulation by volume and distortion, something Cross and Ross continued but in a more sophisticated way. Here the effect is achieved through *addition* by using a wider palette of instruments. Secondly, there is undoubtedly greater lyricism and ‘romance’ at play on Bored Civilians, along with an increase of major keys, whereas T2 deploy more minor modes, but not exclusively. Thirdly, the duo follow the early ‘70s trend of Americana – CSN&Y, Jesse Colin Young and, in particular, The Band – ‘anglicised’ by many British acts of the time i.e. Quiver, Brinsley Schwarz, Free, John Martyn and so on, whereas T2 are progressive rock through and through. Fourthly, there is greater differentiation of musical textures found on Bored Civilians (which also goes back to the idea of accumulation): full band (The Last Ocean Rider); voices and acoustic guitars (Bored Civilians); solo voice and piano (Bo Radley); voices, acoustic guitars, French horns, harp and strings (Fly Home) etc. T2 do employ some orchestration, for example in JLT, No More White Horses and Morning, but this is achieved by trumpets, mellotron and piano. Fifthly, both T2 and Cross and Ross employ improvisation to fill-out songs or word painting, T2 being basically a guitar-driven, psych-progressive power trio and following the example of Cream and The Jimi Hendrix Experience. Bored Civilians is noted for its lush orchestrations (Tony Sharp), sometimes recalling Harry Robinson’s work for Nick Drake and Sandy Denny, as well as Angela Morley (Scott Walker). Sixthly, the keys (modes) used in Bored Civilians are deployed as follows:

<b>TLOR</b>	<b> BC</b>	<b> PITE</b>	<b> STAF</b>	<b>   LYTSL</b>	<b> Pastels</b>	<b> TDS</b>	<b> BR</b>	<b> FH</b>	<b>  </b>
<i>Cmajor</i>	<i>Gmajor</i>	<i>Emajor</i>	<i>Dminor</i>	<i>Dminor</i>	<i>Gmajor</i>	<i>Amajor</i>	<i>Amaj/min.</i>	<i>Gmaj/Cmin.</i>	
<i>I</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>ii</i>	<i>ii</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>VI/vi</i>		
<i>V</i>	<i>i</i>								

This demonstrates a clear sense of long-term tonal harmonic progression from beginning to end, providing the album not only with strong architecture, but also a clear sense of musical flow and listener expectation: i.e. TLOR (Tonic), BC (Dominant), PITE (Mediant), STAF (Supertonic major), LYTSL (Supertonic minor), Pastels (Dominant), TDS (Sub-mediante major), BR (Sub-mediante major and minor), FH (Dominant/Tonic minor). Perhaps this, along with the fine song-writing and performances, has given the album longevity. Furthermore, The Last Ocean Rider, Story To A Friend and The Dead Salute are connected by *conflict*; Loving You Takes So Long and Pastels by *romance*; Bo Radley and Fly Home by *escape*. Peace In The End has the function of *resolution*.

There is also wide tempo and metre differentiation found on Bored Civilians:

<b>TLOR</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>PITE</b>	<b>STAF</b>	<b>LYTSL</b>	<b>Pastels</b>	<b>TDS</b>	<b>BR</b>	<b>FH</b>	
4/4	3/4	4/4	4/4	4/4	4/4	2/2	3/4	4/4	
<i>Medium</i>	<i>Slow</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Fast</i>	<i>Slow</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Fast</i>	<i>Slow</i>	<i>Very slow</i>	

The above diagram demonstrates there is a sense of palindromic metric structuring, with songs two and eight both in 3/4, with the slow Loving You takes So Long placed dead-centre of the album. It is as though the tempi structuring is designed to *brake* with a conscious trajectory of slowing towards the end.

## Postscript

On the strength of Bored Civilians, Cross and Ross were ‘discovered’ by the American duo, Kenny Loggins and Jim Messina, and offered a contract with CBS, although Keith felt in retrospect it had been a mistake to leave Decca saying, ‘Neil Slavin really looked after the artists’. Slavin was responsible for the formation of Decca’s subsidiary label, Nova, mentoring the young musicians signed to it and Decca Records. After completing Bored Civilians Keith commented, ‘We all laughed and said, “when do we actually start?”’ He felt Bored Civilians was a beginning rather than an end. They began work on a second album for CBS, taking a somewhat different approach, reaching avant-garde dimensions and close to some of Tim Buckley’s or Scott Walker’s later work. However, it remained incomplete and Keith left deciding to study classical guitar and pursue a London B.mus degree at Goldsmiths – University of London. Teaching classical guitar for a time, he eventually turned to composing, which was largely the basis of our friendship. He also co-edited a contemporary music periodical for two issues. His piece, Four Years, which he sent me on a cassette is electro-acoustic in style and a very long way from his work as a rock musician, but possibly the logical progression of his work with T2 and Cross and Ross.

I began to lose touch with Keith Cross in 1999 when he moved first to France and then to the USA. He would write occasionally, saying, for example, ‘Saariaho is here’. Kaija Saariaho, the Finnish composer, became important in contemporary classical music circles during the

first years of the twenty-first century, and resident in the California and Paris. She turned from serialism in composition to spectralism after research at Paris's IRCAM, following the examples of Tristan Murail and Gerard Grisey, after initially studying composition with Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus Huber. The influence of Saariaho, and this particular school of thought, found its way into Keith's Four Years.\*

The final thing he suggested I do was to write about T2 and Cross and Ross, a suggestion now fulfilled with the T2 and present Cross and Ross writing. Very sadly, over a year ago I heard he'd died. When I met him initially, he said he was unwell after being diagnosed with MS. Of all the musicians I've met and worked with along the way, Keith Cross stands out as someone who exuded a wholeness in the sense of being a player, composer, teacher, writer and thinker. He was uninterested in celebrity or notoriety, preferring to follow his own star rather than indulge in mediocrity. For that, as well as musical achievement, I owe Keith Cross a huge debt of gratitude.

- (1. \*Four Years has a longer title which I can't remember [it may have been The Four Years Of Christy Puelos?] which Keith had abbreviated to Four Years).
- (2. All quotes are from spoken conversations, telephone conversations and e-mails between K.C. and A.K. from 1997 to 1999).

Musical definitions may be found on the internet or in Eric Taylor's The AB Guide to Music Theory Pt. 1 (ABRSM Publications).

(Copyright, Andrew Keeling, January, 2026. [www.andrewkeeling.co.uk](http://www.andrewkeeling.co.uk))