

Chris Frantz's Eloquent Memoir: Remain In Love, Talking Heads-Tom Tom Club-Tina



Like a legendary song, a well-written memoir has the ability to transport its audience back to a specific time and place, but with the added benefit of hindsight and reflection. Chris Frantz's recent memoir, *Remain In Love*, does just that. It invites his audience to relive, reconnect or connect for the first time with the thriving New Wave music scene of the 70's and 80's, particularly as it unfolds at CBGB's on the lower East side of Manhattan.

Chris treats Talking Heads's rise to fame with equal regard as he does the people he meets along the way. For Chris, the two are one and the same, which is what the New Wave Music Scene was largely about: people connecting through music. He devotes a great deal of his memoir to his young self, from growing up in Kentucky as the son of an army general, to attending Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) where he meets his musical peers and co-founders of Talking Heads, Tina Weymouth (bassist) and David Byrne (lead vocals and rhythm guitar).

He goes on to chronicle the band's metamorphosis from a "psychedelic garage band," formed to entertain friends, to becoming one of the most popular and significant bands

of all time. Jerry Harrison (keyboardist) joined the trio after they moved to New York. Chris's recollections of the band's gigs at CBGB's and hanging out with Andy Warhol, Lou Reed, Deborah Harry, Patti Smith, the Ramones and many more artists and musicians that showed up on the Punk/New Wave scene, are fun to read, as well as anecdotal.

After ten years of living in New York City, Chris and Tina became parents and bought a house in Fairfield, CT, where they raised two sons. They were attracted to the town's quintessential New England beauty and good schools and thought it a better place to raise a family.

Moving to the country didn't slow the couple's career down. They still recorded and toured with Talking Heads, and also with their newly formed band, Tom Tom Club, which became famous in its own right, considered to be one of the first Hip Hop bands with chart topping hits like *Wordy Rappinghood* and *Genius of Love*.

Chris and Tina continued to experiment with African and Caribbean beats in the Tom Tom Club's music, as they did for Talking Heads, creating diverse rhythms for Byrne's unique vocals and phrasing. Before Chris was born, his parents lived in Puerto Rico and traveled to the Virgin Islands and Trinidad, listening to calypso and mambo. The records they collected influenced his musical taste, as well as African artists such as King Sunny Adé, Manu Dibango and Fela Kuti.

Chris and Tina have always been generous in giving back to the community, organizing and sometimes performing at benefit concerts (oftentimes with sons Egan and Robin) at the Fairfield Theatre Company. They are the founders of the *Emerging Artist Series* at FTC, giving new artists an opportunity to be heard. Tina recently donated an autographed Fender Mustang bass to raise money for the FTC, which has taken a hit during the pandemic.

Chris hosts the monthly radio show, *Chris Frantz: The Talking Head* on WPKN, which is

on hold temporarily, but archives are available on the WPKN website. Every Fourth of July, he leads the Pequot Library Children's Parade in Southport, CT, with a marching drum. The children follow closely behind on their decorated bikes, wagons, skateboards, and scooters, or march along side to the beat.

Remain in Love is exactly what the title suggests: an ongoing love story with Chris's Southern heritage, family and friends, the New Wave music phenomenon, and above all, making music with his wife, Tina Weymouth.

After reading his memoir, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to ask Chris a few questions, which are discussed in more detail in his book.

I know that you are still active in the NYC music scene and also very active with Fairfield Theatre Company. How is it for you and Tina, being musicians and not able to attend or participate in shows during Covid?

Chris: *We miss getting out and about. We love going to shows at Fairfield Theatre Company and to parties and openings in New York City. We miss our social life, but we are of a certain age and both of us have underlying conditions. We are doing fine, but we're not taking any chances with this virus.*

What did you love most about the new wave/punk music scene of the 70s and 80's?

Chris: *The scene we were part of in the 70's and 80's in New York City was so vital and exuberant. Every band we knew was excited to get it on and to make their mark in music history. Of the bands we knew from CBGB's, each had their own unique qualities. No band sounded like anyone else. There was real value placed on originality and artistic credibility, and there was no real money involved. All you had was your reputation.*

You and Tina were members of one of the most popular bands of all times

(Talking Heads), and then, moved on to form another wonderfully popular band (Tom Tom Club). Why do you think you and Tina did not get consumed by your fame as some other musicians did?

Chris: *To be fair, we did have our challenges along the way, but thanks to our families we were pretty well grounded. Tina and I were both children of military officers who believed a person should be judged by their merits, not by their looks, social status , or the amount of money they had accumulated. You were judged by your real accomplishments. We were taught to be self-reliant and to work hard at our art form or whatever else we did.*

How did you and Tina maintain such a sense of “normalcy” raising two children, and living a happy and healthy life together?

Chris: *It wasn't always easy. We had to be on the road quite a lot and leave our boys in the care of their grandparents and nannies, but we were always in agreement that family life came first. Knowing that, as the boys grew older we toured less often and for shorter periods of time. Three weeks at a time was the rule, and no more than that. Whenever possible, we would bring the boys along with us. They loved the touring life and still do.*

What do you love about the area in which you live and raised your two sons?

Chris: *We moved to Fairfield on October 1, 1985. Our wise accountant advised us to buy a home. We had been living for many years in a loft in Long Island City where Talking Heads also rehearsed and conducted business. Our older son, Robin, was three years old, so we were starting to think about schools, and we'd heard there were great public schools in Fairfield. Also, we found a home here surrounded by natural beauty, wildlife, and good neighbors who never complained about loud music, in fact, they encouraged us. After living a rock and roll lifestyle, traveling the world and then moving to Fairfield, at first we thought, “What have we done? Have we put ourselves out to pasture?” Then we began to make new friends and learned to appreciate the good life. We love the*

rolling hills, stone fences, forests, and the Long Island Sound. The New England ambience and architecture has great appeal to us, too. We like a place with a sense of history, and Fairfield is one of the oldest towns in America. Also, Connecticut is a Blue State, something that is more important to us now more than ever.

Can you tell us a bit more about the Fourth of July parade you lead in Southport?

Chris: The parade I've led with my marching drum in Southport is the Pequot Library Children's Parade. It's very traditional, in the best possible way. The kids decorate their bikes and wagons and ride down Pequot Avenue to the beat of my drum. Of course, they immediately pass me by, so I'm usually the last one to arrive at Pequot Library for ice cream and lemonade. It's a great pleasure for me to do this. Hopefully, next summer it will be safe to do this again.

What do you miss most about the punk, new wave, Andy Warhol days?

Chris: I miss the wildness. I miss the feeling that anything is possible. I miss staying out all night until the sun comes up. I miss my friends who are no longer with us on this earth.

What is your current philosophy on life, now that those days are a part of your past?

Chris: You could say that I try to practice a "live and let live" philosophy. I respect my neighbors. It may sound naive, but Tina and I still believe in the golden rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I may not have very many wild nights these days, but I do have some lovely mornings, afternoons and evenings.

What did you like most about writing your book and the writing process? Did hindsight and reflection while writing about your life experiences and fame

bring more clarity to your life presently?

Chris: *I've long been a person who has a need for self expression. I started writing poetry when I was fourteen, and for a long time, I've seen that writing goes hand -in- hand with painting and music. These are simply different formats, but it's all art, and I'm an artist. Making art still gives me a thrill. I'm so excited to have finally written and published my memoir, *Remain In Love, Talking Heads -Tom Tom Club -Tina*. It's a true story, and I hope you enjoy it.*

Remain in Love, Talking Heads-Tom Tom Club-Tina is available in hardcopy or audio (read by Chris Frantz). You can purchase a copy at Macmillan, Amazon or Barnes and Noble.



Chris Frantz in his Fairfield, CT studio



• Playing drums at Trestel Plage. Brittany, France.



Pequot Library Children's Parade