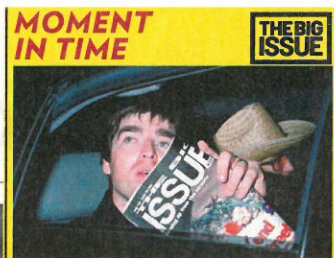




MY PITCH



MOMENT IN TIME
THE BIG ISSUE
GOING SUPERSONIC
April 1994
Oasis name check The Big Issue in their debut single as both band and magazine go Supersonic.



Donato Barbieri, 70

VICTORIA STATION, LONDON

“The Big Issue gave an old man like me a sense of purpose again”

FACTS ABOUT ME...

WHERE I LIKE TO GO

The British Museum – there is so much to see and explore there. A wonderful place in a wonderful city.

MY UNUSUAL HOBBY

Coin collecting – I’ve collected since I was a boy. My favourite coins were the British ones. I had nothing valuable but they were special to me.

I’m still alive, after all my troubles – that’s what I like to tell people. I’ve been through the mill but I’m still standing. That’s the important thing.

I’ve been selling the magazine here at Victoria station since January this year, and it has been good for me. I had been homeless in London for a few months before that, having left Italy in September last year. I left Italy because life had become very difficult for me there and I needed a fresh start. So London seemed a good place to come because I lived here many years ago as a younger man.

I grew up in Turin in the north – a very industrial place, where they make the Fiat cars. Not many tourists but a good place anyway. When I was a

child I grew up in an orphanage, and I was beaten up there by the nuns and the priests. Later, when I went home, I was beaten up by my stepfather. So my troubles began.

I moved around a lot. I went to Australia as a young man. I worked as a fitter and metal worker there, then I worked in the nickel mines. Australians are rough people – big drinkers – but I got on well there. I came to London in the mid-’70s and worked as a waiter for a couple of years. Then I worked on a cruise liner, a P&O ship, before going back to Italy to become a salesman for a time.

But life became hard because of a relationship with a woman – I would rather not explain – so I came back to London for a new start.

It was difficult at first. I slept outside, then found shelter at a Methodist church in Chelsea. Then, when I started selling The Big Issue, I found it gave an old man like me a sense of purpose again.

In February I began to share a room in Whitechapel, so things are getting better. I have a fantastic pitch here inside Victoria station, organised by The Big Issue and Network Rail.

The nice people in Caffè Nero bring me a cappuccino each morning, and I really enjoy speaking to my wonderful customers.

So life is good. After all, I’m still alive.

Interview: Adam Forrest
Photo: David Tett



ON MY PITCH...

I’m in Victoria station Monday to Friday from 7am until 2pm.