

EURO TOURO SPRING Diary PART 2: 2002

Goddamned Day 1:

BUT FIRST A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT: IF THE PREDICAMENT OF 4 SWISSMEN TRAPPED IN A MUSICAL WORLD OF PAIN WITH A HIGHLY VOLATILE NEGRO SPUN OUT OF HIS HEAD ON RED WINE AND REDS DOESN'T APPEAL TO YOU SKIP DAYS 1 THROUGH 6

Well like Tina Turner, at the behest of the coked out and slappy happy Ike Turner, said, "we could do things nice or nasty... we choose nasty." I'm paraphrasing anyway as I don't have any ready recall of very many Tina Turner quotes but you know what the fuck I mean. I mean Jesus Christ everyone knows Proud Mary, but the point is this: is the ontological connection between sex and commerce as pervasive as it now, post-An Evil Heat, seems to me to be?

Okay. Forget I asked that.

The radio churns away: "That's the time I feel like making love to you."

Okay. Don't forget I asked that.

I'm in the cab on my way to the airport. The cab driver is a 60 year old, 260 pound, beet-red faced Irishman whose high spirits at 5 in the morning seem to be causally connected to high spirits. The song is on the radio and it doesn't take but a minute for him to get around to what's clearly been on his mind for like... oh, weeks.

"Where you going?"

"Well I'm going to this festival in Bern, Switzerland, to sing for some band named STEAMBOAT SWITZERLAND and it's..."

"Yeah, I'm going to Thailand next week." Pause here for morality reading. Finding no resistance from King Crank, he continues. "Yeah. Thailand is, uh, great."

"Well yeah, I've heard that..."

"I mean the girls over there REALLY know how to treat a guy. See I got this friend over there. He pays for everything when I get there. All I gotta do is get there."

"That's a good friend, where did you..."

"You can say that again. Last time I saw him to say goodbye I wanted to say goodbye to his girl and he said 'she's right here.' I looked around and didn't see her and he backed his wheelchair out and sure enough she was under the desk sucking on his cock. Beautiful. Couldn't been more than 18. Yeah. He treats me right."

"Seems like she might too."

"I was married once. Said fuck that. Ball-busting battleaxe. Fuck it. I work all year for my two weeks in Thailand and believe me it is WORTH it. Well here we are."

I stagger from the cab my head lit with images of this Santa Claus fuck and his cocktail frank prick sweating and shaking over some girl working HARD for the money. Every single green American dollar of it.

Welcome to An Evil Heat Universe. Fuck.

But what is this? Morality in the morning? Nope, it's not morality, it's vanity that fires my low level contempt. I mean if he was just a bit more handsome this would make a good story. If he, well if he, well you know if he looked like, uh, ...ME. Then, well then we could enjoy the story and all of a sudden it's imbued with all KINDS of deeper meanings.

Like an old girlfriend once asked me "what's the difference between you and a scumbag?"

In this instance: 30 pounds, 30 years and a fucking tan, baby.

WHERE THE HELL IS OXBOW?!?!?

But I'm on the plane and it's flying and if you read that last tour diary you can probably guess that I'm panicking thinking of death in the air but there seems to be a different vibe here. I'm sitting next to some oil rig chemical engineer from Baton Rouge who is heading over to Lagos, Nigeria and he, in a weird deja doubling moment starts in almost as soon as I sit down...

"The girls in Lagos REALLY know how to treat a guy. Why for \$10 you can get your FILL. I got six kids and a wife in Baton Rouge but lemme tell YOU, the women in Lagos KNOW how to treat a man." And I'm entertained by the prospect of him fucking all of the third world hookers he can get his hands on and then stopping back stateside to vector all of what he caught to his wife who will pass it on to the milkman, the utility fella and whoever the hell else stumbles by their trailer. Yeah. I was cool with it but the conversation inevitably veered into "but no place is as great as America."

"Yeah. Our fucking hookers are the best!"

That shut him up long enough for me to hit The Magic Box and grab some "medicine." For uh, motion sickness.

But the sky sluts are CRUISING me and all of a sudden I'm in some kind of coffee, tea, or me scenario and "the sexy stewardess" is grabbing me by the face, both hands on either side, "ooooohhhh... you're so cute."

I was spastically reaching for my zipper hoping that this would translate into the kind of personal service Thailand, and apparently Lagos, is well known for when she says... "we thought at first that you were Lenny Kravitz."

Yeah. Great. Flying fucking Coach on American "You'll Be Lucky to Not End Up a Fucking Gargoyle On A Skyscraper" Airlines...

But I get great service from here on out and so I go with the Lucky Lenny thing and my ride over to Zurich is replete with me sketching crappy pop tunes on the backs of napkins being flowed to me by the Hangar Harlots, but fuck that the point is this: I'm going to do this modern jazz vocal thing for another band, STEAMBOAT SWITZERLAND, and another composer, Michael Wertmueller (16-17, ALBOTH and a bunch of other bands), and after reviewing the 60 pages of musical notation and listening to the 56 minute CD that accompanied it, it has become aggressively clear to me that I have no idea WHY I'm here. I mean at the end of this we start OXBOW business but now it's something that walks and talks and crawls like something that I've never seen. Or at least I've never seen it done well. I don't know, I don't know, I don't know. Like LITTLE RICHARD singing for the London Philharmonic. Shit. I don't know.

The Swiss men will know though. Yeah. They will know.

DAY 2: THE PIZZA MEN FROM SWITZERLAND

"Where's your score?"

We're walking down the street in Zurich. The sun is shining and I'm happy as a fucking clam.

"Oh. That. I don't fucking need that."

"Yes you do. You NEED it."

"Relax. I can't read music anyway. I'll figure it out."

"No. You WILL need it. Go back upstairs and get it."

I smile at him gently figuring it's the language thing.

"It's in California."

"You didn't bring it?!?!?"

"Fuck no. I'm a genius. I don't need no fucking score. Let's go."

He shakes his head and quietly begins muttering in Swiss German.

We steal a train ride off of the Swiss government and get to practice. A farm house of sorts and the keyboardist is there. Smiling and affable the tall Dominick Blum says hi and after a few minutes of general niceties we hit it.

I have no idea what I'm doing, what I'm listening to and what's expected of me.

At odd points I KNOW something IS expected of me because they're chattering away in Swiss and looking at me and while my german language skills are passable, Swiss German is a whole nother animal and they seem to forget that they ARE speaking a language that I don't understand and that like a dog I only know that I should pay attention when I hear "Eugene." Which I finally hear.

"You were supposed to come in there."

"Where?"

"After that keyboard part. Your rhythm is rubato."

Jesus. By some strange coincidence I had just looked this up a few weeks ago. So while I knew what rubato was I had no fucking idea about the rest of it.

Michael drank some wine and said. Forlornly. "well. It'll come together."

Except it doesn't. The whole band eventually shows up and while THEY get better, I, well I'd say got worse if I had any idea what I was supposed to be doing at all.

And I don't. Not the slightest. Not even fakeable.

End of Day 2 ends with the masks of civility gone. Michael screams something at me and is muttering like a fucking outboard motor some shit in Swiss and I'm smiling because I KNOW how this ends. I mean it starts with the screaming and ends up with the sobbing and someone else gasping for breath. But they got a great guarantee of my continued civility: against my better Chuck Berry instincts I don't get paid until AFTER the show. So I TAKE it because I'M a whore and money is good.

DAY 3:... WONDER WHY... SOMEONE ALWAYS HAS TO DIE...

So now we're in Zurich. Fred Frith is here and in a band with this fella Alvin Curran and they're opening for the STEAMBOAT thang. The hot bitch who used to play cello in Kronos, Joan Jean Renaud, is here, some queen of Swiss free jazz, Irene Schweitzer-

something or other is here... Alex Buess, the whole cognoscenti of supposed art cool. And me. Barbarian at the gate. Ball scratcher. Sneak thief. Scumbag.

"Hi. My name is Eugene."

Our rehearsal room at the venue is full of about 10 people in work casual dress. Not musicians but as it turns out professionals celebrating a colleague's 40th birthday. A Rutger Hauer looking fuck staggers over to us and says...

"You are the musicians! But we are Swiss and we can't sing Happy Birthday. Please play it for us."

Well under OXBOW circumstances I'd know exactly what to do here: pull his pants down, spit on his tie, feel up his girlfriend.

But I was trying to follow their lead. Their deal. Their lead. I'm just the guest vocalist.

But composer Michael Wertmueller is a long hair in the 1950s sense of longhair and starts militating about how we were musicians and not monkeys and how he's spent 5 months of his life writing the music we need to rehearse as soon as they abandon our dinner theater rehearsal room and how...

Fuck that. I, eyeing the table full of women, and being fully aware of my long tour loneliness, which of course begins the second you say the words "I'M on tour", see some horse trading in the works here.

"Tell you what I'm going to do: I'll sing happy birthday to the birthday girl if she'll sit on my lap while I sing it."

"She's Swiss too. She'll sit on no ones lap."

"Haha. Yes yes I forgot. A nation of people that fuck in the dark. Okay. What do you guys do for a living?"

"Well I'M a doctor. A gynecologist (insert mental image of me laughing a big ol' fucking horsey laugh at his chosen avocation). But they're all dentists. Except for him there."

He points to some humpty dumpty shaped man with a beard and a beautiful 25-year-old Asian wife.

"He's the boss."

Apparently the women of Switzerland also REALLY know how to treat a man right.

"Well I have some medicinal needs that if met might be worth a birthday song. I mean I need some steroids for, uh, a SKIN condition I have. Do you think you could hook me up with some sustanon and a few other things..."



10 Hours of free jazz fun fun fun. Note the Swiss Bastard Torture Artist Michael Wertmueller (Bottom Right) making sure the torture lasts.
Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

But before I get very far with this a Swiss man with the totally genius name of Peter KRAUT, one of the festival organizers, jumps up on the stage and plays Happy Birthday. They clap and are happy and I'm screwed out of any sort of reasonable bargaining position.

But the rehearsal breaks down. Well it might. We've been doing 10 to 14 hour rehearsals and I'm no closer to being closer to anything that sounds reasonable than I was the second I got off that plane.

Championship Exchange between The Almost Beaten and The Almost Beating:

"What the FUCK are you doing?!?!?!"

"I DON'T KNOW what the fuck I'm doing!!!!!"

"WHY DON'T YOU KNOW?!?!?"

I start advancing on him. Straight to the lip of the stage. "I DON'T KNOW WHY I DON'T KNOW!!!"

We break for a break and if I could kill him I would. I mean strangle him dead on the floor and then I remember how funny I thought the interaction was between the temperamental Spaniard Jose Carreras and Leonard Bernstein who was composing a piece that Carreras had sung. Bernstein was mercilessly heckling Carreras and Carreras finally split the scene cursing like Ricky Ricardo and jumping ship while Bernstein smiles in his wake..."seems like our young man has a few mental problems."

Funny in your living room. Not so funny on the fucking stage.

But these are all good signs because they mean I've moved from NOT caring to ACTUALLY caring. So maybe a few more days of 12 practice hours will yield more than my running jokes about the Capezios the drummer Lucas has in two different colors.

"Say... did you know that there was a time in America when only bad heavy metal drummers wore shoes like that? And they were beaten for it? With great frequency?"

"I need them to drum in."

Hahahaha... hah... ha. The Swiss actually DO have senses of humor. And I swear one day I'll find them.

DAY 4: CALIFORNIA ASSHOLE!

At dinner the night before:

Michael: How's Manuel?

Well Manuel had actually told me that Michael was disappointed at my woeful lack of preparation.

Me: He's fine.

Michael: He's NOT 'fine'! Why is it with you California assholes everything is fine?!?!

Me: 'Fine' is just another way to say that we're all fundamentally strangers to each other and the plight of each other's threadbare existences and that we will die miserable and cold in a hole in the ground dug by someone who in all likelihood held us in stunningly well-informed contempt. But you see it's just easier to say 'fine.' Besides I'm a native New Yorker.

He sputters away from the table and into another conversation on his cell phone and when he returns I ask "who was that?"

"My friend Mario."

"Well how is he?"

"She. Well she's fine."

"Oh! It's okay for your friend to be 'fine' but when my friends are 'fine' I'm a shallow asshole? Haha... You're the asshole my friend."

And strangely enough he agrees and the dinner mellows and we start today with a renewed sense of well, a renewed sense of urgency to get and stay as fucked up as possible. THIS is my resolve to that whore muse of artculturecommerce.



Helping Hans the Great
Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

Manuel shows up later too and his presence cheers me. Hans the Great is around and inviting us to dinner at his house with all of those art names and the practices start to blur and I think I'm actually doing the right thing or at least what feels like it to me as we get closer and closer to the right thing. Strange and different from OXBOW where the right thing is the thing that FEELS most urgent to do at any given moment, but cool to be channeling shit through HEAD instead of HEART.

But fuck these Black Flag-ian 12 hour practices.

Off to dinner at Hans where I discover he has two different types of sausages AND chicken and risotto for dinner. And a beautiful 18-year old daughter. And a house full of very cool books and records. And a bunch of art world regulars at his table and vodka, red wine, and well, ME.

Jesus. I feel like I broke in. I keep flinching at the odd diner's hand gestures expecting a beating that never comes. I hang with Willie Winants and he cops to having been turned on to OXBOW by MIKE PATTON and I ask him if he's ever met DUANE DENNISON and he says "yeah" and I launch into a hateful and drunken screed about how I'm going to paint his ass red and make him do push ups for me when next I meet him. The room grows quiet. It is, I'm being told, time to leave. And the Man Also Known as Peter KRAUT drives us back to the Hotel Continental and I swim in drunken enjoyment of the evening's passage.

DAY 5: JUNKIES JUNKIES EVERYWHERE BUT NOT A RIG TO BORROW!

I've started to feel soft. Around the middle. Cheese and bread and bread and cheese will do that too you. Oh yeah and the 25,000 calorie meal I ate at Hans' last night. So after another death march rehearsal I decide to forgo the seemingly obligatory consumption of alcohol to run back to the hotel. All uphill and around the base of the Bern parliament building. I almost die but it's worth it and I resolve to take the same road back the next day, which I do.

Except NOW the staircase around the base of the parliament is jam-packed with junkies and they spread down the stairwell, a few every few stairs, and look up at me fearfully. The one closest to me mumbles "sorry," and I smile like Mr. Rourke on Fantasy Island and say "Don't be! Enjoy yourselves and don't mind me!" And as I walk by each stair clutching dope fiend they all plunge, stick and shoot RIGHT BEFORE I get there like some crazy Esther Williams synchronized swimming deal. It's only later that it dawns on me that I should have borrowed or stolen both their money AND their drugs but by the time I remember that I'm back to the rehearsals.

AND OF COURSE THE SHOW IS TONIGHT!

Yeah it is. And I'm ready. I think. The set actually sounds like something and I'm a lot less lost and drawing fewer "oh my fucking god we're ruined" looks from the band and things are seeming A-OK hunky fucking dory. Except I can't remember this 5 bar melody I'm supposed to sing. I remember it at first. Then someone walks by whistling an Eminem tune and it's gone.

And the theater fills with fucking long hairs (in the 1950s sense), you know, "Art" lovers and I feel a mix of evil delight and dread. Because I know that they THINK they know what's going to happen but "I" know that they're in for a surprise.

Alvin Curran and his band with Frith, Joan Jean Renaud, Shelly Hirsch, and Winants are playing first and it is cool. I mean they SEEM like they belong here. The evening before when they played with Alex Buess and his group Cortex, well shit, CORTEX, most known for their music for SURVIVAL RESEARCH LABS, seems like they belong here too. But when Curran's thing finishes up I'm doing my pre-show prep work behind the floor to ceiling black velvet curtains which amounts to, as you might have guessed, yes, pissing in cups of juice and beer on the catering table. I don't know how I fell into doing this but Niko says it best when he says NEVER DRINK OPENED BEVERAGES BACKSTAGE AT AN OXBOW SHOW.

So STEAMBOAT starts and they play the first three songs without me and I can feel behind the curtain where I'm working my cock, I can feel them settling into the music and its complexity like an old shoe. This they understand and then there's my cue and I move out onto the dais screaming and doing some lines from OXBOW's song 3 O'Clock and I can FEEL the fucking vibe change, and it does.

I'm walking all over my sheet music that I've spread all over the stage in front of me (yeah I broke down and made copies) and I'm singing some of my words, some of Rilke's words and doing that fucking audience the way it should have been done. With a nice firm, uh... hand.

One, two, three people are hitting the exits, making their dash when my back is turned and I see them disappearing down the vomitoriums to the bar. But I neither pay further attention or care because I have my Waterloo coming up: that fucking melody.

And it comes and it goes and I don't blow it and when we finish the audience goes nuts and gives us four curtain calls and I'm channeling Miss America and clutching my chest, eyes raised nauseatingly to the ceiling all full of faux modesty and in my mind the video is spooling out all over my/our humble triumph over modest circumstance and genius talent. And it's great.

Truly.

Wertmueller's former composition professor comes up to him and says "your composition was genius... too bad it was ruined by that... singer."

Hahaha.

Good of him to say "singer" when he really meant "Negro."

But Biba Kopf from Wire is there and he later says "well I was bored my whole time thereŠ.and then YOU came out..." Well I don't remember what else was said after that

because sensing my imminent removal back to the hardscrabble world of OXBOW I was looking for something to steal, eat, fuck, drink or urinate in while I still had the chance.

TOTE SHEET

*One (1) stolen copy of WIRE. Victim: Fred Frith. He left it around little knowing that I make it a habit to steal magazines. And girlfriends though fortunately for him he was flying solo.

*One (1) bottle of red wine. Victim: unknown. Consumed on the spot.

*One (1) creeped out comment to Joan Jean Renaud.

She: "I really liked the show."

And I look at her and then look away and then say a skosh too intimately: "I've been looking for you."

And I look at her because I sense that this might require some explanation but she's just waiting and watching me and so I explain in total living room comfort: "we want you to play something on one of our records. We've actually been wanting you to do this for the past 7 years. But, well I mean, we never really asked you."

She: "If you have something that you want me to do just let me know."

I nod and wave goodbye.

Whew. That shouldn't have been that hard.

DAY 6: WELCOME TO BERN NOW GET THE FUCK OUT

So it ended with all hugs and kisses and I don't know whether the feeling that I'm having of dreading the loss and separation is because I'm going to miss the STEAMBOAT fellas or Michael Wertmueller or my briefest of dalliances with being treated like a real musical artist instead of a derelict, felon and suspected moron, but I AM feeling something. Sadness at leaving the hotel for a future of uncertainty with Manuel my trusty Swiss companion by my side complaining about his fucked up luggage, the state of the world, and existence, just goddamned existence.

HOOKERS, HOOKERS EVERYWHERE AND NOT A BUCK TO BLOW

So onto Basel and that nothing waiting that drives lesser men mad. Niko shows up in a few days and we do the HALF-OXBOW ALL ACOUSTIC deal in Milan but first we hang in Manuel's hometown (that is, hometown after he was driven from pillar to post by the Nazis out of Poland... well I don't mean HIM. Manuel's relations with Nazis are fairly

cordial, but his grandparents of course) of Basel. Where all the great pharmaceutical companies are.

But I'm staying with Chris who used to be in Mercury 4 and is now in a stoner rock unit I mistakenly think is called FACED but is really called PHASED. Chris is a Swede, his father writes books on reincarnation and he's an all-around good guy who gives me a room overlooking some backyards and just as I'm about to settle in to some diary writin' he makes the totally tragic error of explaining thusly...

"If you happen to be sitting at the computer and you see a naked woman over thereŠ" He points to a building kitty corner to where we are, "don't be alarmed. They're prostitutes and that's a, how you say..."

"Whorehouse!"

"Yes. A whorehouse."

And it is ON. Like Poe's raven I sit and sit and sit and stare and stare and stare and wait for a sign of hookerage. There are a few scantily clad women loitering around but they appear to be housewives. They do a lot of cooking. Mostly for the guy who sits on the balcony smoking cigarettes and reading the sports pages (Euro Sports Page: SOCCER, SOCCER, AND EVEN MORE GODDAMNED SOCCER). He drinks a beer. Smokes a cigarette. Talks to the aging whores. He's got a great job and I'm guessing that job would be PIMP.

Well we plan our spoken word/acoustic show, do a photo session for our sensitive Morrissey-esque pop project, go out with friends, hear those self-same friends marvel at Niko's ability to take incredibly long showers, walk all around Basel, hang out with the members of the Motherfucking Cocksucking Ass Orchestra (real name, I swear to God), drink, bother Alex Buess, and finally after we resolve to leave despite my waiting, waiting, waiting for Godot, the hookers, or something, anything to happen.

Manuel's calling from downstairs. It's time to go to Milan and as I'm walking down the 5 flights of stairs I stop off in Chris' bathroom to take a leak and look out the window and see two women, naked, and eventually doing each other's hair as they stand out in the sunlight of the fading day and prepare for work and I'm damned near, near tears standing next to my luggage, pissing and of course, moaning.

Goodbye Basel. I still hate you AND Switzerland.

SWITZERLAND END NOTES:

*The woman in the audience who after I came out to do STEAMBOAT's fourth song sat up and exclaimed after having finally realized, "Fuck. That's the guy from OXBOW."

*Sandro the Great's appearance. Sandro was the only guy to want to book OXBOW in Bern back in 1995 and our appearance there rent the community in half, turned brother against brother, and had the sum total effect of getting Sandro's ass in a sling and us banned from Bern. He came up to me after the show and said "I know you all hate Switzerland but..."

"Well it's not that we hate it. The money's great. People actually turn out for the shows but the Swiss are just a nervous and trembling people who want to like OXBOW but fear us instead and it ends up just being a drag for us to play."

"Please, please, please, please come back."

"Okay."

Goddamn it. I gotta work on my bargaining skills.

*Peter KRAUT saying "I saw you play in Bern. But what are you doing now?"

"Well we just put out a record."

"Oh." And away he walks. Immediately.

*Yodeling, yodeling, yodeling

VIVA ITALIA

We ride the train, get to Milan and go to the house of the beautiful and talented Olivia. To Via Gennaro Ferrari, past the tranny hookers, and upstairs to her 5th floor apartment where we find here being all cute, amusing and Italian, which is like saying the same thing. There is no such thing as a too broadly drawn caricature of an Italian. Cruising around Milan in the coming days we see a scene that is repeated often. A car accident, a man standing by his wrecked scooter sobbing, the car's inhabitants standing by smoking and laughing. It's a genius city and I think of Hitler's dismissive comment about parliamentary politics being like a "country run by Negroes."

Milan is a city built by and inhabited by Negroes.

I mean of course the funny thing is that Italians who have white skin THINK they are white and clearly distinguish themselves from ME, but that's only because they haven't been hepped to the fact that by American standards white Spaniards, Italians, and Frenchmen are not fucking white at all. Maybe it's the language, maybe it's the handwaving, but whatever it is, I feel like I'm home.

We go out, eat, young girls hand me condoms on the street, we go to La Scala, El Duomo, shopgirls waving at us the whole way over.



Omigod, It IS Lenny Kravitz. Wave... Hi!!!!
Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

"They think you're Lenny Kravitz," Manuel says smiling but I believe he's right and so I ride the Lenny wave.

In bars, stores and on the street I try to cultivate that insouciance that only comes from writing really bankrupt music.

And it works. Especially if by "works" you mean "makes me hate my life... AND my haircut."

But pretty soon the great man with the great name Mirko Spino, which I like to use interchangeably as in Spino Mirko, shows up and we're off to the club called BLOOM (www.bloomriot.org/live/oxbow.html) where we meet Niko and St. Elisabeth.

The club is cool, Niko and his patron saint make it there alive, and I sit at a table and enjoy the food, the drink and suffer through soundcheck.

Later at dinner that night they ply me with grappa and in my joy I start smashing my fists on the table causing the red wine to stain me, the table, the cloth, our faces, my eyes, and it seems to me that this is just the beginning.



Mirko Spino, Me, St. Elisabeth and her religious duty, Niko.
Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

BUT FIRST: Practice.

Jesus. Practice makes perfect but who gives a fuck about perfect. I mean we occupy that place in space anyway. We own perfect. Why bother acting like things are any other way, but Niko won't be persuaded otherwise so instead of staggering around the club where I belong and using my little bit of Italian to embarrass myself I'm back stage practicing with Niko.

I mean my hopes for this show aren't great as:

*we're 15 minutes outside of Milan

*our host had never heard of the club and

*who the fuck wants to hear OXBOW songs sung acoustically (as one wag noted "that's like seeing SLAYER unplugged)?



Hermes Trimegisthus: When in fucking Rome
Photos: www.bloomriot.org

But St. Elisabeth drops a local weekly paper on the table in front of me and it has the show announced (right under Ronnie James Dio's concert announcement) in the datebook and she says also, "it's packed."

And she sure as shit is right. The show opens with Manuel's soundscapes, then Niko and I come out and bang out 4 tunes, I break into a spoken word piece about discovering that my girlfriend had been a hooker, we finish with 2 more tunes and finish with a Niko and Manuel soundattack.

Spino/Mirko/Mirko/Spino is ecstatic and says "280 people."

I'm shocked and after an encore even more shocked. And then finally as shocked as I could be when hearing it described by various and sundry as great and intense. It dawns on me at this point that probably what the deal is, with Switzerland and a lot of other places, is that OXBOW is just too much. An old girlfriend of mine used to delight in the fact that her subsequent boyfriends found her "too much. Too big, too smart, too beautiful, too sexy..."

"What about 'too crazy'?" Yeah, well, someone had to say it.

But yeah, the amplitude, the frequency, the fucking noise, spectacle and danger are just too fucking much. Maybe the acoustic thing is just right. Maybe.

But there he is, looking for all the world like Mark Barsotti, the self-proclaimed stupidest man in my high school.

"Fuck. That was great. You were great. America is shit but you are great. I went to America and wanted to watch Willie the Fresh Prince. You know that show? And I wanted to watch the Houston Rockets and my host family said 'fuck that nigger shit!' Can you believe that? 'Nigger shit'."

"Well..."

"But I study philosophy here..." He swigs off of his bottle of beer and through misted glasses, he stares at me like he's trying to find me, though I'm standing, of course, right in front of him.

"Well philosophy... like who?"

"Who?!?! Well the great philosophers."

"Like who? Like what are you reading?"

"Bukowski!"

"Ahh..."

And he trundles headlong into EVERY thing... but he ends up, as is growing disturbingly consistent with this trip, on hookers.

"There are NO Italian hookers."

"What?!?! I can't believe that."

"No. None. They are all Ukraine. Or African."

I laugh and laugh and laugh pretty sure that the 6'3" tranny hooker who lives and works downstairs from Olivia's IS Italian but I drop it. Let him keep his fantasy about the perfection of Italian womanhood.

We're finally interrupted by Mirko/Spino/Spino/Mirko and he says "yes, Eugene, my girlfriend will drive you home."

And he looks at me and I look at him. And then I look at his girlfriend. And then I look back at him and he says...

"MY girlfriend."

Hahahahaha... "That's your fucking problem my friend. Anyway, let's go baby. The night is fucking YOUNGGGGGGGG!!!!!"



Me: Hey baby. Once you go Black, you never go back.

Her: Yeah. For seconds.

Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

He watches us fretfully and as me and Manuel and Mirko/Spino/Spino/Mirko's girlfriend pull away from Niko and St. Elisabeth who he's taking home, I give him a wave that tries to say "don't worry. I like you. I won't fuck your old lady," but due to the unexpected nature of my solicitude perhaps this did not reassure at all, I imagine, but did the exact opposite.

But they drop us off and Manuel gets out of the car and surprises the shit out of me by going all Italian and kissing both of the girls goodbye, on both cheeks, and so of course it seems I must follow suit but while the first kiss and the first cheek go okay it's just getting past the mouth to the second cheek that requires A WHOLE LOT OF FUCKING CONCENTRATION. I mean, for ME. And amazingly I managed it and we're off to bed.

And I wake the next morning to thumping and bumping noises that seem to indicate that... YES... Manuel has locked himself in the bathroom. I yank the door open for him with the few words of advice, "never underestimate the transformative powers of violence," and I go back to sit bleary-eyed on bed edge and watch Milan rush below, below me.



Jerking Off, Scrambling Eggs, What's the Diff? The Onanist's Apartment minus The Onanist
Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

Staring across the street into apartments below I can see the outline of a guy who I imagine is cooking eggs. His hands are furiously scrambling them and it seems he's watching TV when he's doing it and this I buy until it dawns on me that he's in his bedroom and not the kitchen and he's not cooking eggs but jerking off.

Genius.

An analogue for how I'm spending/wasting my life. I watch him disinterestedly for a bit and realize with no small amount of sardonic shrugging that I'm looking into a goddamned mirror.

ITALIAN HOOKERS? WHY, NO!

And so cruising over to the train station with Mirko/Spino/Spino/Mirko we drive past scantily clad women "waiting for buses" and we ask him about the existence of Italian hookers and he confirms that they don't exist.

"So those women are really just dressed in their underwear waiting for a bus?"

"Yes. Or they're Ukraine."

St. Elisabeth queries, disbelieving, "but what about Nights of Cabiria..."

"Well that's a movie."

"But yes, but it must have been based on fact, no?"

"No."

I believe he is insane.

But we wend our way through the city and over to the train station and he tells us that Mussolini sucks (a contention I have a very hard time believing as well), that his friend Maurizio who called me a "nigger" is an okay guy (well to his credit he never did so to my face, but in a discussion with a friend of mine), and that when he quizzed his girlfriend about the ride back she said "oh nothing happened."

So I left him with words of reassurance. "When your lover says 'nothing happened' it means 'you're goddamned right something fucking DID happen. But when your friend says it, it means almost the same thing. Lucky for you we're not friends.'" So I hug him and I feel like I'm going to miss him like a brother and we make plans to meet again in the spring with the full band and we're on the sleeper train to Paris, our date with destiny with the rest of OXBOW, and seven shows of near apocalyptic perfection.

09/23/02: Zoo Bizarre: Bordeaux, France

We play with the Boston hardcore group CONVERGE. We're supposed to headline but we were late and we never fight about that shit anymore. Fine. Fuck it. I mean whether we fuck you NOW or LATER makes little difference to us, as long as we, and this is important here, GET TO FUCK YOU, we're fine.

But I stumble headlong into a rock and roll pouting match when I discover that the contract has not been followed and the poison-free men of CONVERGE have, along with my vegetarian band mates conspired to keep meat off the fucking menu.

I dream of stabbing the promoter in the face with a fork and my mood grows darker and I grow more morose as I sit like a stain at table end and glower at the fucking straight edge fucks that ruined my meal.

And I, in total puerile fashion, refuse to eat.

But I'll drink goddamn it and whatever fucking happens, will HAPPEN.

Trying to head off a Bradford before it becomes a Bradford (see Euro Tour Diary 1 under "BRADFORD") Manuel tells the promoter that it is absolutely necessary that I have meat and the promoter makes the mistake of asking me if this is true and I stare at his face for what feels like a minute before saying, "well of course not. Don't bother yourself about me. I'll just sit here and eat wet cigarettes like a dog, if you don't mind."

But I do insist on going to the hotel first and we do and on the way through the streets I ask our guide.

"So where are the French hookers?"

"Oh. There are no French prostitutes."

A familiar refrain at this point. Either the male populations of these countries are totally in the dark about this or we're just confronting the kind of xenophobia that's made Thailand and Lagos such great places to visit.

"And the mayor of this town, is he a fascist?"

"Yes. He cleaned all the buildings."

"Good."

But by the time we get back to the show it is packed. As in sold out. As in people having to be turned away, 400 people plus inside. We are in shock and backstage we go where we move around the dressing room with CONVERGE and I search for a mirror.



Niko and the guy from Converge after having eating some legumes.
Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

I find it and wander back into the poison free room and sit on the couch between two members of CONVERGE and put the mirror down in front of me and it dawns on me that this looks like I'm about to start cracking and cutting up lines and I feel them waiting for their straight edge moment, a moment that's only broken when I pull out my mascara and eyeliner.

I stared humming Lou Reed songs and the irony is all over the place.

But we play, it's great and because these guys are under 30 when they played after us instead of folding they ratched things up and it was a great show, they were great and had me longing for SSD and 1983 again.

Afterward in the post-show glow they tell me who they're friends with (the guys in Isis who we like as well) and we promise to stay in some kind of touch and I'm surprised that an experience that I thought was going to be so fucking shitty (Anarchy signs always put me in that mood), actually did not suck at all very much.

But there's something else disturbing afoot. Something brought about by the meat pout earlier. And that's that while the rest of the band is fresh and new and strong because they just got here, that I am soiled and old and weak because I've been here sitting around, thinking,, thinking, thinking and getting morose about my place in space and almost everything else attached to it. In the face of 10 reasons to the opposite I'm feeling suicidal.

The realization of which, unaccountably, I find cheering.

09/24/02: Poste a Galene: Marseille, France

Well we wanted to play Marseille because

*It was the stronghold of French fascist LePen

*It's a port town with a port town's politics and personality and the possibility of full-blown fisticuffs

*and Gene Hackman's Popeye Doyle got fucked up on heroin in full cinematic glory here



The Shaft and the Band about to get it (post-show, with assorted helpmates). Welcome to fucking Marseilles.

Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

But I knew we were fucked when I found out that the terms of the contract were:

NO money if attendance is under 60.
50 Percent if it's OVER 60

This feels like a rape job. And I guarantee you that no matter what the count I bet the count is always 59. Our French booking agent said "Marseille isn't even a PLACE," but we persisted and now we will pay.

The band that opens for us is great, Nnacke Pack or something like that. Obviously big Mogwai fans, big Shellac fans (or as Albini says Shitlac) but there are 14 people in the audience. I sequester myself in the computer room and try to answer emails and my mood grows crappier.

When I emerge the club is actually full and we play and I teeter on the edge between murder and suicide as I watch the totally (I imagine) sound guy fume over the damage I'm causing to his equipment.

And the show ends and I feel dead. A guy comes up to me and claims to be friends with a band we played with a few years ago named Bedhead. He says...

"They are quiet guys and they were, eh, TRAUMATIZED, after playing with OXBOW and now I see why."

"Are YOU traumatized?"

"Well yes. But why do you grab your sex so much?"

"My sex? What?!? You mean my cock?!? Look, in America we call this a COCK..."

"A COCK?!?! We give up!!!!" Well I imagine this last part though I in no way want to impugn the fighting spirit of the French whose well-timed advances to their rearward lines paved the way for surrender jokes for years to come.

But his blather goes on, what feels like the same discussion. And I track down the club owner and the evening's count is 57. I offer to BUY the remaining three tickets so we can get our 50 percent and he says,

"Well you'd have to buy 4 since it has to be OVER 60."

"So I'll buy 4."

"Then I could give you 50 percent of that ONE ticket over 60."

And he shrugs his shoulders and looks me right in the eye and I know I'm in the presence of a man who should have his club burned to the ground.



"You look like Nick Cave!" Great. Now take your clothes off.
Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

But I'm bored with him, bored with his club, the dude who keeps following me around and wants to ask me questions about my cock and I'm bored with myself. The dude from Pandemonium records comes up to me with a woman who just had to meet me and she says "You remind me of Nick Cave," and I find that less than boring since it's never been said to me and I wonder if it's just code for, "I want to suck your cock," but of course it's not and we have to leave early anyway and so we trudge back to the hotel and I finally clue into why I'm so fucking morose. I just got an e-mail that says I got a new job. So gone are the lovely peaceful afternoons of unemployment. Gone are the leisurely days in the sun running up hills in sweatsuits with duct-taped bags of gravel. It's all gone. Gone. Like a vampire my existence has gone subterranean again. Work out at night, write at night, no sleep at night and of course work during the day and luxuriate in those days spent in fucking traffic and on the roads and the wages of wage slavery and emasculata robota, are returned to me.

Foolish man that I am I should not weep but should instead count my blessings. Especially in this time of mass unemployment.

Yeah. Well fuck you. I'm fucking feeling sorry for myself for no good reason because at least as things work now at least I can afford drugs again. So yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm going to silver line it baby.

So fuck Marseilles. On to...

ST ETIENNE



Niko stabbing Eugene in the groin. Repeatedly.
Photo: Jarring Effects

Well we had NO show outside of some instore in Paris until our friends in St. Etienne came up with a last minute booking. So yeah, how good could it be?



VALERIE! WHERE'S MY BACON?!?!? BRING ME MY BACON!!!

Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

Well it was fucking GREAT. We love St. Etienne, always, have and always will it seems and with one day's notice and a deli tray on arrival to boot these fucking guys pulled it off and the club was packed, sold out (before we start sucking each others dicks it should be noted that the club Mistral Gagnant is not that big to begin with) and we played like our hair was on fire and my misery was somewhat mitigated by the arrival of Valerie, who had been our cook in 1995, our promoter in 1997 and was here from Rotterdam where she recently moved to help book this show and a big concert later in the year.

She works for an animation company and they're going to make an OXBOW claymation music video which if that's half as great as it sounds should be totally genius. The guys who used to be BATON, the French OXBOW showed up and they are all photographs or otherwise art professionals and they all look hale and healthy and their girlfriends look as hot as fucking ever and they still won't talk to us, which given our predilections is A-OK.



In search of Miles Davis: Where the fuck did the audience go?
Oh. Sneak up behind me will you?!?
Photo: Jarring Effects

But my mood's so improved that I immediately start drinking again and rather than sleep that night I stay up until 4 in the morning watching *Pleasure Heads Must Burn* and some Robert DeNiro movies. I even stumble across a rock magazine that has a big feature on my friend OLIVIA (www.oliviaxxx.com) in French and I feel alright, baby.

Yeah. I feel alright.

In fact I feel GREAT.

Which means I'm rollercoasting through the manic-depressive pavilion.

Put your hands in the air and yell Ouuuuuuuuuu...



Dan about to stab Eugene in the ass. Repeatedly.
Photo: Jarring Effects

09/26/02: Instant Chavires: Paris, France

Now comes the real sad and weepy and happy and joyful part of our tale.

Like Henry Miller said, when you come to Paris anything can happen, and in a general way he's right; but he's right not because of Paris but because of Parisian politics, which is to say, the reality of cityscapes. I mean jam 10 million people into any specific section of space and town and you're going to have intersecting stories every 10 feet and so Paris is no different. But the main and most earnestly functioning difference here is the presence of The Doctor (having become a serious and respected member of French life he shall wear this sobriquet to protect his innumerable interests from his envious peerage), an old and dear friend who I hadn't seen in years.

I was bleary-eyed from my adventure from the evening before and for my sins he would give me a cleaning and after it was over I'd never want another.

But we were playing at Instant Chavires where we had played twice before. We were playing with the psychic and powerful Heliogabale doing their first show in two years, incidentally the amount of time it's been since their singer Sasha became a mother. They had asked me to duplicate the song experience on stage that I had created for their last record in the form of the song GUTTED, which I wrote and sang. I had demurred because I didn't want to play before it was time for me to play and because well I have to get back to The Doctor.

He showed up as my friend from Terminal Cheesecake used to say "with his pockets full." And full they were. Two bottles of a nice red wine and a wallet full of little pictures on brown paper. There were no cautions to stay away from the brown paper and so it was

that we were gobbling acid and drinking wine and having a fine old time in a city that someone had prophetically dubbed The City of Lights. Hot damn.



Waiting for the end of the world. In pimp socks no less.
Photo: Scott Walter

We wandered over to his hotel and back to the club and I watched Heliogabale play the last half of their set and they were great and sounded good and, uh, COLORful and Sasha starts screaming about "that fucking Eugene Robinson... where is he?" and I watch from the top of the ladder all of the lights like knives and I raise my hand.

"Here I am."

"Come down here."

"No. You... you don't want me down there."

"Come down here to sing this song."

Her voice was commanding and I needed but the slightest suggestion to begin with.

Yeah yeah, Tina Turner and Mick Jagger. Whatever.

I climbed down the ladder and moved through the crowd and we sang the song or as much of it as I could remember but I could remember very little and in any case the sea swell of proximity to her was easily much more significant to me and I could tell by her

restraint that her man was in the audience but fuck it, she had been warned and my hands did my hands thing and she stiffened and I cared not at all because her eyes were like inkwells and I was bent: over the mic, next to her, and out of shape.

The song rolled to a close and I scrambled back up the ladder and watched OXBOW right the stage and later when we finally started and the waves of everything started sweeping over me, hard hard hard. The songs like lightening rods for the places and people that had given birth to them and The Doctor in my mind and in the audience, observing, notating, witnessing what would become of me when I became undone and from my left a voice.

"She's a lady, whoa whoa whoa..."

Was that Tom Jones? Shit. There's always that guy. That guy that thinks

*It's funny to request

a) Freebird,

b) Stairway to Heaven, and

b) anything ELSE that's NOT on your set list

*It's even funnier to request it again and again and again.

This Frenchman's variant was to scream out the lines from the Tom Jones song until he got my attention.

And he did.

And it's a blur sort of but I remember choking him, kicking him, making him sit on my lap and sing and slapping his face before finally losing him and then chasing him off with a kick that didn't find its intended target because of a shoelace untied and the desire to have my foot kick him and not lose my shoe in the process.



The LSD Monologues: Underdog's Underwear

Photo: Scott Walter

What else I remember: I remember a woman's face finding me through the crowd and her mouth warm on my face while her boyfriend tried to face mask me and separate us. I remember a long and tearful tribute to The Doctor.

And as if this wasn't enough I remember Sasha coming back to sing on an OXBOW tune and me groping her and going across all the obscene boundaries and then I remember it being over.

Me wandering through the crowd looking for The Doctor, finding him and knowing that all was all right with the world at least right now. My victim and fellow Tom Jones fan fled, though to my chagrin his retard cousin followed me around for the remainder of the evening mouthing and then shouting the words BOO. Had he been anything less than what I thought was a horrible figment of my state of mind, I would have given him The Treatment but alas, no. I was free. Or at least I thought I was. Or rather I was until The Dude made himself known.

Now I didn't know who Sasha's man was but I knew I'd know him when I met him and I did. Frenchman, steely gaze, firm handshake, anger in his eyes.

"Hello."

"Hello."

Perhaps he spoke his name. Perhaps not. But he made it clear that he was The Dude and Sasha never spoke to me again, which also made it clear that he was The Dude and I wondered if he wants to go, make a poke, take a chance at the merry-go-round of wonder and hit me, but he just wanted it known and I now that I knew I also knew that I didn't give a fuck as I had a mission: wring the fucking rag dry.

So dressed and unmessed, me and The Doctor wandered the streets of Paris, past the hookers and techno pimps, onto the boat where my fear of the gendarmerie and my lack of command with the language sent a sense of fright through me that drove me off the boat and back to his hotel where we held forth on the impermanence of love and his refusal to accept anything other than its permanence and my total and overriding belief in the Church of the Received Blow Job and how I've abandoned integrity as a personal standard leaving it to fellows like Rollins, Biafra, McKaye and others who have a much better handle on shit like that than I obviously do.

I stated my intent to, in total James Brown life and death fashion, embrace experience and then I gobbled a handful of valium and sleeping pills and nodded into dreams about Mexican temple gods whose names I cannot pronounce nor do I think I should.

It was heavy.

So heavy it's really going to take some time to talk about.

PARIS END NOTES

*I wander into the bathroom to take a crap and when I return The Doctor is reading my Witkiewicz book.

"This is fucking horrible," he says and I grab the book from him, a gift from the Mad Pole Robert Iwanik and I read right to where my eyes have fallen and Witkacy, as he was also affectionately known, was holding forth about suicide, suicide, suicide and it suddenly dawns on me that sort of maybe, possibly my downer mood was owed to Witkacy.

Maaayyyybbbeeee.

I mean it's easy to make him my Christ and so I do. It's his fault. I'M fine. Everything's great. HE'S the one who cut his throat. Me? Well I'm, well I'm... fucking lost and adrift and I blame no one and nothing but my crippling dependency on destiny. Well I mean that and my total lack of fuck action.

09/27/02: Astrolabe: Orleans, France

Big theater, another hardcore band opened for us. It was crowded. I pissed in a cup. My one and lasting memory: the Frenchman who screamed and waved his hands through the entire OXBOW set, staying at the lip of the stage where he had been during the set for 40 minutes AFTER the set, screaming at the top of his lungs.

He was committed.

Or he should be.

I'd like to say more about this show-the folks who booked it were cool, the food was great, the meat was gourmet fucking quality-but I could feel my noose on the loose leg of reality just slipping away and so the rest is reportage. This is the journal. I'm the journalist but I'm not too sure of almost anything else.

09/28/02: Jardin Moderne: Rennes, France



Instore appearance in Nantes. Note the wonderfully engaged shoppers in the background as they search for the new Ya Lo Tengo record.

Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

On the way here we stop in Nantes and do another Acoustic Show with the whole band this time and we draw 50 people. It is cool but we need to rush to Rennes so we don't miss sound check and we don't and we get there early and everything is okay except for my state of mind, which is like the edge of the knife I carry: serrated.

But we have a special feeling for Rennes. Like St. Etienne we have a love affair with it. Inexplicable this collectivism but it's there and so is our friend Sylvain from Rennes who now lives in Berlin and who introduced me to Red Bull and Vodka as an aperitif, his ex Sandrine who I'm deeply in longing for, Xavier, and a few others, and everything feels okay.

There's meat on the table, a toilet in the backstage room (hence no piss in a cup), and at show time a fucking whole crowd of people.

We play, no one gets fucking hurt, and after the show we make the decision to drive all the way to England tonight and NOT stay at Sandrine's place and she starts crying and my cock gets hard and she says she loves us and wants us to stay, and we promise to come back and when she goes to give me that two cheek Euro-kiss thing I almost embarrass us both. What do I mean BOTH?!?!? Hahah... I'm sort of well beyond being embarrassable it seems but I feel for her discomfort at my slipping the generalized intent of her feelings of sibling-like affection off of me and going straight to my cock commitment. That is to say: I wanted to fuck her like I wanted to draw another breath but it was on to Calais to catch the ferry and all of my longing and not sleeping and glowering at Temple Gods and playing this music, always this music, catch up to me and I go to sleep in the back of the van to the very old feeling strains of Reservoir Dogs, the video of which we've drug along.

09/29/02: ICA: London, England

I wake up on the ferry and eat and stagger back to the van to sleep and when I wake long enough to see the white cliffs of Dover (again), I dream of my murder and I don't wake again until London.

The rest of the band is gone and as I stand peeing against a garden wall I wonder where I am and more specifically what I'm doing there/here/wherever, but sleep claims me again and I sleep for what seems to be about 17 hours of morpheus blankness.

But Manuel returns with Dan and we drive to the club or as close as we can get considering the streets are blocked off for some display of military strength near where we are playing, which is apparently a pretty swank venue, owned by the Queen Mother, and we have to jump out and move road cones to get our huge Mercedes van into the parade grounds and next to the load in door. And in about 30 seconds and with Greg inside opening the doors and Manuel wandering around, I'm braced by some fucking Bobbies with walkie talkies and guns.

"What are you doing?"

I stare at them and through my duct taped glasses I can see them eyeing the van's innards and then I notice that they have guns and actually are NOT bobbies but some sort of special security detail and I open my mouth and my voice comes a'croaking that we're loading and they're not satisfied with this.

"How'd you get that van in here?"

"What? You mean besides driving it?"

"WHO let you IN?!?"

I smile and say, "well some guy dressed like you helped us move the road cones."

They stare at me and I stare at them and they watch me slowly tracing circles in the air with the toothbrush I held in my hand and then they made that supremely wise tactical decision to fuck off.

Perfect.



London The Morning After, the Night Before
Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

But we load in and are wandering the club looking for things to steal or piss in when our tireless and completely driven promoter Nendie Pinto-Duschinsky comes back stage and she's on fire.

As in hot.

As in her brobdinagian efforts at letting people know about OXBOW to the tune of 7000 promo fliers being mailed out, a piece in Time Out London, interviews with WIRE, VICE, SLEAZE NATION, and ID magazines, and her hammering at all the people who purport to give a shit about good music, have borne fruit because here we are and the place is going to be sold out she's convinced of it.

Which to us is a sure sign that failure is imminently within our grasp.

Because we're nattering nabobs of negativity, because we distrust good fortune, because god help us, what the fuck would we really do if someone actually WAS interested in our fucking drama?

We don't know and later backstage Greg comes in and hands me an article that declares me the handsomest man in rock and roll and he says like he's hypnotized "The club is packed," and so it seems that Nendie's dream has become a reality and my nightmare. The Great American Schoolyard, that most feared of institutions where the wheat is chopped from the chaff, has arrived here in the form of an audience of cognoscenti of all varieties of cool whose jaundiced eyes watch here only to be able to continue to justify their cool by being above just about everything always in everyway.

I could be reaching here but I'm just listening to my heart and I feel a lust for fuck and kill that I haven't felt in a long time and when we walk on the stage I know that tonight someone's life will be changed.

And when we play we play like the 15 minutes AFTER the last 15 minutes of your most favored love affair and we channel loss and lust and the songs LIVE for me like they did when I lived for THEM and it goes along swimmingly until I feel what I've been waiting for: the wag.

The person who needs to, wants to, is unable to be anything other than part of the show.

And the thing I hear first is his laughter. And then he throws some lemon on stage. And a cigarette butt and I jump over the monitor wedges and into the audience and I feel them recoil and I hear the knife in my hand whisper all kinds of filthy things to me and I search the faces for a sign of guilt, regret, stupidity and all of those other things that I smell like I might smell shit in a stew: hot, hot, hot.

But he decides that Today is Not the Day and quiets himself and I crawl back on the stage to what feels like a collective sigh of relief and then I feel a rising in my shorts and I want to fuck them all. ALL.



The Cock? She is Large.
Photo: Emma Porter

And the photographers in the front row are turning their machines at me and I grab them and kiss their faces and hold them tight to me and it's glorious and I feel like the God Triumphant and the show ends and the encores end and then I'm standing down on the floor and women are crying at me and thanking me for the show and it's done.

We load, Greg and Miss Holly leave for America, and we go back to the Columbia Hotel where Led Zeppelin once stayed and I sit in the bar with a bunch of guys from the band Nought that opened for us (them and Noxagt were great too incidentally), some folks from the promo company Big Smoke, some photographers and unfortunately some fucking stupid ass British band named Datsun who are constantly drawing my attention by singing drinking songs and acting like they've really gotten someplace that other than this place.



The nervous DJs Dave Grohl and his boss. Notice she wore the "sexy" shirt that day.
Photo: Manuel Liebeskind

I take a quick shower. The night ends and tomorrow we do our last shows. A live radio acoustic performance on Resonance radio and an acoustic HALF-OXBOW deal/spoken word thing at the Arts Cafe.

THE FINAL SOLUTION

The radio thing is amusing as the radio programmers were so worried they were getting Band Assholica (see: Datsun) that they had worked themselves into a fever pitch of concern and worry and we came and banged out our songs, I sang a Lee Hazlewood tune and we were done. One hour in, one minute out and the DJ said like she was surprised "well that was quite nice."

Well you keep it nice and we'll stay nice. Just like Tina Turner said.

And we hump our shit over to the Arts Cafe and we do our deal and we talk to WIRE and then some folks from SLEAZE NATION accost me.

"See. The thing is: we want to run a piece on you guys but my editor wants me to take a picture of you without your shirt on."

"What am I wearing now?"

"A suit."

"Right. What was I wearing at the show LAST night."

"Well not much of anything I understand."

"Which means you need to have had your camera there last night."

"But we won't run the piece without it."

"Well that's your fucking call. But I'm a vain man and I've been eating cheese and sleeping in vans for a month. Unless fired by the demon beast of inspiration my clothes stay on."

"Well. I guess that'sŠ."

And watching her twirl her hair I recalled a friend of mine who said that every time she twirled her hair she was thinking about fucking and I was INSPIRED.

"But I have an idea. I'll take the picture if you sit on my lap. I'll open my shirt and you sit in my lap."

"OK."

And she does. And my cock wants to know her name and when she rolls all over me and then looks at me and asks, "still no shirt?" I can see her pupils are like fucking saucers. "I just don't know if we have... you know? Enough."

"Well why don't you just take some photos of my hardening cock and she says "OK" and so it's in my hand and she's rolling and snapping and snapping and lolling on the floor and I say "what a minuteŠ.let me get closerŠ" And I get closer as she arches below me and I rub my cock on the camera and grab her hand and put it on my cock and just as quickly as the photo session started it was over.

"Um. Thanks. I have enough I think."

"No. You don't. But that's okay."



It's okay. It'll be okay. Just don't sit down.

Photo: Emma Porter

And she goes and then we go to a birthday party for my favorite NME hack, Ray, and I start choking Steve Gullick and since Steve is a goer we roll around for a bit before I catch him in what's called a Head Chancery and while I'm choking the CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES honcho, his friend Ray is hitting me and I'm laughing and choking back vodka and then I let Steve go and teach him the choke and in a domino explosion of drink and violence every one attacks everyone and Steve and Ray are rolling down the stairs and a girl named Katie is attacking me and everywhere is everyone fired with fight and Emma whispers in my ear "look what you started. Are you happy?"



Welcome to the Head Chancery!
Photo: Emma Porter

And I realize in a sudden burst of joy that I really fucking am-drugs, drink, fights,
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE on the stereo.

Jesus Christ, I'm in heaven.

And then I'm on an airplane.

And then I'm back in California trying to figure out what happened.

And I still don't know. I just still don't know.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"We are not a woman after the show but we are white!" - Jeremy, St. Etienne

"Quick! She needs medical attention... cock to groin resuscitation." - Greg

"Bedhead were traumatized. WE are traumatized!" - some guy

"St. Charles? Well he's the patron saint of suits." - Eugene

"Well who's the patron saint of Boys with Erections?" - Greg

"Aren't they all." - Eugene

"Hey! Don't tell me you're going to look at us all night and not come over to say anything!!!!" - Marco in Milan to a table full of married women who hadn't even realized we were alive