

EURO TOURO SPRING Diary PART 1: 2002

But FIRST--A brief public service word of medical caution from OXBOW's lead singer:
"Abuse NOT the Fentanyl!"

DAY 1: WHEREIN IT IS REVEALED THAT KARLA TOMATA IS IRREFUTABLY A MOTHERFUCKER

We never believe it.

Never.

Not until it happens. And it happens in so many discrete steps. So many incremental stumblings that the fact that it happens at all amazes us like the miracle of goddamn birth. Or a papal edict regarding boy fucking. Or something like that.

We mean, one day we're standing on line at Safeway having the courtesy clerk ask us if he can help us out to our cars with our weekly purchase of KY and condoms. And the next day we're in Berlin blinking back the sunlight.

We're not bumpkins. I mean we've figured out that the big silver bird can magically transport us places but it's just dislocating that's all.

Especially when you throw in:

- Shipping equipment
- Booking shows
- Booking shows that stay booked
- Booking shows that stay booked that don't suck
- Getting work permits that we can't get
- Having to sneak into Britain because the cocksucker Karla Tomata won't fill out the paperwork for said work permits because he's too busy sucking all the cocks he can to take the time out to do the paperwork that we'd pay him for that would allow us to legally play England and might help him sell our CDs since he is our goddamned distributor
- Getting on a plane withOUT suicidal pilots, disgruntled aviation mechanics fucking shit up, or politicians in skirts with boxcutters
- Getting on a plane with schedule C pharmaceuticals taped to your body like so many Christmas tree ornaments.

We mean it's a prodigious undertaking.

And the fact that it happens at all is nothing short of astounding and due largely to the brobdinagian efforts of The Pizza Man from Switzerland, Manuel Liebeskind at Splatter who specializes in sighing deeply, massaging his brow, and answering as many questions

as he can regarding the arcane rituals of Teutonic peoples. Rituals like saluting, marching, and building concentration camps.

In any case spirits are high and the schema is that Niko and Eugene go over early to do an OXBOW-ponic Simon and Garfunkelesque unplugged deal at the following event.

OXBOW SPECIAL EVENT SURPRISE SHOW RECORD RELEASE PARTY
!!!!

date: may 4

place: aggregat, im glaspavillon der volksbuehne, berlin (this is a very famous theater of berlin). pictures attached, this is a sort of art gallery, very small, but nice and some sort of popular. type of show: acoustic show, guitar/voice, MAY BE interview or such, 15 minutes show, 30 minutes absolute max. we don't want to compete with the 'real' oxbow show. should be some sort of an in store type event, introduction to the band. volume limit is 75db (!!!). double bill: the same party is the vernissage/opening party of an exhibition of holger emil bange, called 'punk collection'. he shows newspaper/magazine articles and cassette recordings from radio broadcast of 1977/78, the first appearances of punk in germany. oxbow will be a kind of bridge to today's music world...

tv: Viva Plus will film the event and may even suggest some additional things like a new issue of the famous 'eugene robinson show' talkshow series, with special guests niko wanner (oxbow) and holger emil bange (beginning of punk in germany expert).

BUT FIRST: THE PLANE RIDE OF FUCKING DEATH!

EUGENE:

And so it starts. First with the sobbing. And then with the... well what was the sobbing about? Oh God... the life, the love, the lederhosen and the leaving of all of that, that I hold dear into a future fraught with the possibility of violent death in the air, on the ground, or somewhere in between.

Let me live let me live let me live...

Maybe it's the "medicine" I've taped to my body. Maybe it's started to leech into my system.

Or maybe it's Bryan Ferry, Johnny Mathis, and Caetano Veloso all the way in, baby. And throw in the sky sluts, uh, I mean, flight attendants, urging me to "go ahead... take TWO bottles of wine" and you have an air incident (or several) ready and willing to happen.

Another public service word of medical caution from OXBOW's lead singer: "Abuse NOT the Fentanyl!"

Two hours in and so far nothing though. No knives brandished. No planes plowing into Pennsylvanian fields with intrepid Americans mumbling Schwarzeneggerian catch phrases. Nothing. Except for melancholy. And erections. And to make... OK.. the Plane is fucking crashing!!!! It's fucking crashing!!! THIS IS FUCKING IT THE PLANE IS GOING DOWN! IT'S... IT'S...

Shit. Erections. Death and the faces of our loved ones flashing through my head.

Perfect.

The plane lands, finally, we land... in London and the longing of no place, no place, no place until we get to Berlin. THIS plane takes off and lands and Manuel the Intrepid is there, whisking us off to a sushi party in old West Berlin. Swedes, Spaniards, Tunisians, Swiss and us monoglot Americans all in attendance. We eat, drink, play Caetano Veloso and grab our crotches. Make that "Eugene grabs his crotch."

"Make that crutches." (--Eugene)

Drunk as a hoot owl and ready for tomorrow's show.

TOMORROW

Fuck. Drunked and jetlagged and NOT ready for the show at all.

It's a miracle that I manage to keep the piss INSIDE my body while I snooze in the sleeping pill haze of the chronic insomniac's taking of matters into my own hands.

I stagger to in Berlin and realize that this is my JUST reward for 340 days of totally rigid physical culture: running up hills with bags of gravel, avoiding sugar and processed foods, and lifting weights like a big ol' fucking sissy. My reward: 3 weeks of excessive excess.

Well thank you too.

Now get me a goddamned steak.



Fun Boy Three: Niko, Eugene as The Man With the Gray Suit, and Manuel

MR BANGE: THE WORLD'S FOREMOST AUTHORITY ON FUCKING HOT SPANISH WOMEN!

"Looking too cute in my two piece suit, mashing, flashing, looking for a prostitute." - S. Dogg

I'm sporting The Gray Suit and walk into the gallery where the show is to be held to be greeted by the track-suit sporting Holger Emil Bange.

He looks at The Gray Suit.

"Well THAT'S not very punk."

I look right beyond him to his girlfriend.

"Excuse me. Is there some a hanger back there I can use?" I give her the Dracula eye, working the psychic love magic like Manson.

"It's punk enough for you my friend," I say before finally looking at him.

"I mean it's either the suit or the cock."

"Umm... yes."

Good answer.

The suit stayed.

But something happened to me at some point. I'm not quite sure what it was but it happened between last tour and this one: I've embraced a complete and total lack of concern for approval that leads anywhere other than my cock.

Like it or lump it.

She passes me the hanger, a glass of a nice chianti, and I peruse Mr. Bange's exhibit. Karin Blaser is there filming for Viva Plus TV, as well as American Documentary filmmaker Christian Anthony who's decided that the world needs to see what happens on an OXBOW tour.

It's my strongly held opinion that the world in fact doesn't need to know what happens during an OXBOW tour. But he will learn this the hard way.

So the show begins and I begin hitting the chianti and Mr. Bange is doing a fairly sterling job of describing how his bank president father encouraged him to listen to punk rock because his tailor grandfather had chastised the father for listening to so-called "nigger music" back in the 30s. In answer to my question regarding his grandfather's political affiliations. In Germany. In the 1930s. He remained, not surprisingly, mum.

But Manuel had let me know that the TV producers were not grooving on my whole Dick Cavett-smug and smirking genius smack and wanted a little more Carson Daly. A little more MTV. A little more YOUTH CULTURE. Which means "asshole" it up.

Oh. If only I could swing it like a real MTV VJ swings it. All teenage insouciance and brio.

Well I try because I want my cock sucked and it seems that the clearest media truth is that if you're an asshole you will get your cock sucked. So I spin it like a Solid Gold Dancer. And Bange gets OFF. He's waving his hands, laughing and talking about punk rock history and even dodges my cynical "Isn't this all a bit like being a deadhead?"

Perfect.

I interview Niko and the liquor is starting to kick in and next thing I remember we're in the room and the room is packed with people either to see us or to read 25 year old punk fanzines.

We rehearsed this. Sort of. Which means 4 times. Which means not enough times to blast through the drool of a man unaccustomed to drink.



Lucky Strikes! It's Toasted! Much like Eugene, appearing here with the handsome Mr. Bange who, it is clear, punches like a girl.

So I sing. And there is an encore. And I get a call on my \$5 a minute cell phone in the middle of the show. And I answer it and tell whoever called that I loved them. Because I was full of love. And chianti. And love. Especially if by love you mean copious amounts of semen (or bullshit - editors). And our swedish friend Kicki walks in the right at the end with her baby Killian and I demand that she bring me the baby! And the show ends.

Well not really.

The "show" didn't end until the next morning when I found myself on the dance floor at some rave club doing all the new dances the "kids" are so fond of - the snake and suck, the scrod grabber, the pole vaulter - with 19 year olds in bell bottoms and tube tops emblazoned with the word PORNSTAR on them... in rhinestones.

Do we need to say that "medicine" was involved here?

In any case the real OXBOW showed up the next day and I was already slammegasted. This was a good sign. After 18 years of relatively rigid sobriety, I think we all can agree. Well maybe we all can't agree. Well I mean I think, this was a very good fucking sign. So says Dino Martino who appears to me and only me in moments of high stress always saying the same thing: "Go ahead kid... I won't tell nobody!"

Isn't it good? NORWEGIAN WOOD!!!!

So we hit the death ferry to Scandinavia. I'm not at all prone to seasickness so I search the ship for signs of imminent collapse while Greg starts identifying receptacles capable of holding his vomit (ashtrays, fire extinguisher crannies, my suitcase).



Greg, struggling on the Death Ferry with seasickness and creeping concerns about his sexuality.

We get there and drive through the totally fucked and Nazi complicit country of Sweden that saw fit to deny OXBOW any sort of shows at all. So all hail the Norwegians!!

Lille-Salen - Chateau Neuf, Oslo, Norway

The first show. Our hotel is across from an aggressive pack of completely unregenerate fucking junkies. Twelve of them shooting up on the steps of the bank. We guess that they are bank employees because come morning they're all gone.

Us: We'd like to transfer some cash.

The Tellers: Ummm... yeah.

Us: Now. Perhaps.

The Tellers: I'm sorry. What was the question again?



Niko in the Green Room

And so it goes.

The hotel is either a military barracks or some kind of demented Village People thang. Dudes in military colors wandering around.

Bombs bombs bombs. This is the first place to go. Shit. I need a drink. Or some heroin.

We hit the club and everyone is noticeably polite. So polite we fucking think we're in Canada.

The club is an old theater. An old-large theater. The sound guy is trying to barter a t-shirt off of me.

Him: Gimme a free shirt.

Me: I'll fight you for one.

Him: You want to kick my ass?

Me: I'm GOING to kick your ass anyway. You might as well take the shirt.

Him: But I make you sound good.

Me: NOBODY could make us sound GOOD. But stick around. I may give you a shirt yet.

So we play. It's the first show thang. I'm not saying it sucks. It's like fucking someone for the first time. It may not suck but you're probably trying waaaayyy too hard.

Which means we hit the stage and fucking explode.

The audience inches back and back. And back.



Eugene in the pre-game focus mode



First show with the audience keeping its distance

I make them come up so I can give them website cards. And to get a look in their fucking Norwegian eyes.

They extend their hands. Slowly.

I want to fuck them all.

We have no idea if they think what we do is of value but afterward they buy tons of shit and then this: everybody is on cellphones.

They're calling their friends in Bergen, telling them come to see OXBOW play. Or at least that's what they tell us. We will see.

In the same building we find hordes, especially if by hordes you mean a few drunken dudes, in full blown Mariachi gear inviting us to Tequila party. I tell them, one of the stage hands in fact, that we will attend knowing full well that I need to stay away from Tequila or as we like to call it at my house "Fight Sauce."

But leaving we run into the same Mariachi'd stage fella and he is in fact stealing our cab which he graciously extends to us while jabbering to the cabbie in a language that we're guessing could be Norwegian. Or could be just DrunkDude-ian.

Him: My girlfriend's...

Me: Did she come to tonight?

Him: Wha? No. She's gonna be pissed... she...

Me: What's she look like?

Him: Oh. Beeeeeg fucking titties, you know fucking NORWEGIAN!!!

Me: Actually I DON'T know. You have a picture.

Him: Nahhhh. But she hates music so I leave her alone.

Me: She ain't alone.

Him: Wha?

Me: She's probably anally rimming a sailor now but we're thankful you like rock and roll enough to abandon her to the ministrations of your plundering Viking maritime forces.

Oh. Here's the hotel. Toodles.

Garage, Bergen, Norway

We drive through the semi-arctic wasteland of Norway and hear tales of Snog Boiggen, The Norwegian Nanook and have snowball fights and I see a fucking wolf. We hit another death ship and we're there.



The Norwegian alps



Fortunately the riot gate held

Bergen is Berkeley to Oslo's San Francisco. And that's alright with us.

Let's just cut to the fucking chase here.

The club is packed that night. Death metal dudes. Gloom          des. Black metal dudes. And yeah, even their distaff corollaries (Translation: bitches in da hiz-ous).

And a smoke machine.

Our contract stipulates SMOKE AND LOTS OF IT. We're going for that Vietnam affect. Or that animal brain fuck and kill affect that strikes when your sense fields start shutting down and there's nothing but noise noise noise.

Apparently the cell phone calls work and people are there. There was even a rock and roll steel fence in front of the stage.

The promoter quoted to the OXBOW Documentarian: "He [Eugene] looked at me with murder in his eyes."



Oxbow puts it out for the Dark Metal crowd

And we meet Liv. And the next day she takes Greg and Niko on a tour of Bergen while I sleep until I wake to find myself in the midst of a Norwegian wedding. Well it was at the one unburned church across the street but given that I was stroking myself in the window in full view of the wedding party it was almost like I was part of it. Part of it but not enough part of it to see not so much the tour of Bergen but the lovely lovely Liv pointing out points of interest in Bergen. Which would have served me poorly anyway as my interests are, um, very, very, very proscribed.

Yeah that's right. Yahtzee. I'm a BIG Yahtzee fan. Especially if by Yahtzee you mean anal sex.

But we make the next Death Ferry to England in just the nick of time.

DEATH FERRY TO ENGLAND WHEREIN IT IS REVEALED THAT KARL DEMATA IS IRREFUTABLY A MOTHERFUCKER

This ferry is huge and it runs 24 hours straight to England. We have no work permits and if we get braced for them and DON'T have them we get turned away, forfeit all the shows in England and lose our 750 Euros besides. So we devise a plan that involves

- Splitting up
- Shredding evidence that we're a touring band
- Taping "medicine" to our bodies
- Creating a cover story that explains the 5000 pounds of musical equipment

We get a cabin and notice a sleeping bag in the corner.



Another Death Ferry

A few minutes later a woman comes in. About 62. Kind of old but I figure good for a hummer.

She: Have you seen my daughter?

Us: Daughter?

She: Well that's her sleeping bag.

Us: We didn't kill her! (well that's what we wanted to say, instead we said NO).

She: Oh. She's going to be excited to be bunking with you all.

Yeah. Sure. We expect to not see them again, but the girl returns.

About 22. Kind of young but I figure good for a rimmer.

Niko: would you like some of our whiskey?

Her: No.

Me: Lesbian!!!

Well I didn't say that but it was increasingly clear to me that the prospect of this party taking on a railroad motif was increasing low.

So out I went. To the lounges.

"Hey baby... My name is Alky..." There are women all over this boat with viking helmets on and bands playing unrecognizable covers of unrecognizable covers... The Ship Beats doing Britney Spears doing "I Love Rock and Roll." Most guys make the mistake of chatting or trying to the Viking-hatted college girls.

Suckers.

The smart money goes for the 54-year old wait staff. Stuck on this fucking Love Boat 24-7 and thinking about how awful lonely it gets on these cruise ferries at night.

Yeah.

I sleep fitfully back on the floor of my cabin next to the hippie backpacker with the lightly lilting scent of lentils on his malodorous breath.

We get into England with Manuel being the only one that is hassled.

Ostensibly because he had too little money.

Well that will fucking change for sure.

1 in 12, Bradford, Great Britain

This show was fucking GREAT. Bear with me.

First of all it was an anarchist collective.

Second of all they were vegetarians.

And thirdly they were some former members of Crass there still rocking the crusty punk shit.

And lastly we weren't even supposed to be on the bill anyway.

All the bands were late. We were supposed to play early but one of the bands made the claim that since they were using the same drum set that they should go next. Except their drummer was a left handed drummer and had to reconstitute the whole kit.

CAN YOU SMELL WHAT THE ROCK IS COOKING?



Eating with the Anarchists

That's right. I start a slow burn. Free magazines that are 10th generation Maximum Rock and Roll rips, extolling the virtues of non-competitive living and the cooperative nature of vegetable eating, peace signs, and flyers for pro-social anarchic marches (an oxymoron if I ever saw one) of all sizes and stripes.

And it becomes painfully clear that tonight shit will get fucked up.

PHYSIOGNOMY OF A TYPICAL OXBOW STORY

1. We interact with an unsuspecting member of the general public
 2. They make a slightly uncomfortable discovery: maybe these guys are crazy
 3. We win them over by convincing them that though different we're fundamentally OK
- Joes
4. Everybody goes home happy

This is how it usually goes.

Except when it doesn't.

The key is tripping the numbers on the combination that will open the door to what happens on the stage happening all over your ASS.

And THIS is what's happening. The show is moving along nicely until a few wags near the front make a move to mouth my cock.

I see an open mouth that close to the stage and I want to fuck it. You would too. These guys were tough but apparently not tough enough for any forcible acts of sodomy. They

splash their pint glasses at me. I smash the pints all over the floor and still the question remains unanswered: contrivance or actuality?

With one song left and a smattering of applause one rather large wag approaches the stage with crude pen and ink drawings on his stomach that mimic my tattoos.

"Uh Oh," thinks Greg. "I've never fought an ENTIRE bar before."

And it is on.

I yank his hair and slap him into a mata leao. Also known as a rear naked choke. Or a sleeper hold. And this motherfucker starts to SLEEP before the valiant Ecstasy-riddled former member of Crass/Dirt vainly tries to yank me off of him.

Which in actual fact just makes the choke tighter.

The band plays on and I watch him as he tries to hit me and I start to lean into the choke, twisting his head slightly with the intent being to render him totally insensate.

The blonde-dreadlocked anarchist strikes me again and I let go and grab HIM and shove the mic in his face and scream... "You got something to say? Then say it?"

"Would you PLEASE give another band a CHANCE????!?"

Hahahaha... jay-zus. I can't hear him at all, the rest of the band later tells me what he said, and I turn and a glass flies onto the stage and I now know like I know that the sun will rise tomorrow that this place is quickly edging toward, ironically enough, total anarchy. Especially if by total anarchy you mean murder. I mean someone is clearly going to get hurt--and I'm not talking about feelings--and it's NOT going to be OXBOW.

He begs into the mic again and gesticulates toward my bicep as though to say "don't be a fascist, macho ass." I grab the mic away from him and say

"Thank you very much."

And we launch into yet another song.

And then we're done.

I jump off the stage and get dressed and make for the stairs so I can keep the van tires from being stabbed out just like they would have been in America.

The guy from the band after us Pale Horse says to me. "I saw your show. I didn't quite fancy it." I laugh and make back for the stairs to make sure our equipment is not being torched.

It's not and so I sit in their midst and it only takes a minute before 3 women make their way over to me and shake my hand and say

"We just wanted to thank you for being probably the worst band we've ever seen and totally ruining the evening of almost everyone here and especially fucking it up for a really good band that's playing after you."

"Well thank you, your sarcasm notwithstanding."

"I mean how can you justify that horribly sexist spew. God it was awful. It had absolutely NO redeeming value at all. Maybe you should print up a flyer explaining that to people. As like a public service. But as a woman I felt very threatened."

Another public service word of medical caution from OXBOW's lead singer: "Abuse NOT the Fentanyl!"

They said this still clutching my hand. The hand that until very recently had been lovingly cozying my cock. Their small, sweating hands still lodged in mine.

And we talked for an hour. Through the other band's set. The band that they liked so much. And at the end there was one woman left and she hugged me and told her friends "he's not so bad. We're mates now." And I was enjoying this lovefest immensely and even more so when a guy slams out the door and screams at her

"I'm LEAVING!!!!!"

It was the sound guy, friend of the blonde-dreadlocked fella I've come to understand as a 42 year old man named STICK, and apparently boyfriend of Christine, the woman who's been leaning into looking for all the deeper meanings in the OXBOW oeuvre.

Downstairs Greg hears him shout at her "THEY WERE THE WORST BAND EVER!!!" as they went off fighting down the street.

And then it was the Big Mick. The guy I choked was apparently from Belfast, taller than me and probably outweighed me too. Which is why he had done what he had done in the first place.

"For fuck's sake. You almost killed me! Jay-zus! I was just having a little fun!!!"

"Well so was I. You don't look too bad now though."

"Look too bad?!? You almost killed me!!!"

"Well a man in your condition," I say, quoting Eastwood from *The Good, the Bad and The Ugly*, "If he saves his breathe, might make it through something like that."



The alley in front of the 1 in 12 where a gathered collection of young toughs wait to ask Eugene if he'll lead them to the promised land.

It goes back and forth until we take off but Greg says it best.

"ANARCHY: FUN IN THE STREETS! NOT SO FUN IN YOUR LIVING ROOM."

Another SUCCESSFUL show.

Later when showering at Promoter Ewan's house he sees me wandering around trying to find him to help me figure out the completely bamboozling British shower system and he says...

"For fuck's sake. Are you naked AGAIN?"

"What do you mean AGAIN, man? I'm as naked as the nose on your face. As an azure sky. As a..."

He backed down the hall. Slowly.



When an epileptic named Wayne (pictured) offers you drugs, take them!

But we stay at his friend Wayne's house and Wayne is a prince. Not literally. Figuratively. And an epileptic and an hour before we play the next night's show he pulls out his crusty wallet and produces a tablet. Two in fact. "Let's take them." I take mine, he takes his and away we gooooooooooooo.....

Packhorse, Leeds, Great Britain

Well the club was packed, yes, the Packhorse was packed and it is a 5 band bill and we're playing last and it's like a midnight curfew and a few of the bands that played last night are playing tonight and so we can see the writing on the wall.

The writing that says "perhaps YOU will be begging to let another band have a chance tonight wise guy". I can see it in the quickly averted gazes. The deliberate set ups and take downs. The Brit bands are going to have a good ol' time with OXBOW.



Mad Cow, my ass. Eugene eats beef. Manuel waits for the inevitable.

Uh hunh.

But do I have to go into the fact that the time "cock up" (see... you're in a Britain two days you start using words/phrases that would get your ass kicked in America) the night before in regards to time had nothing to do with us playing a long time and everything to do with

1. All of the bands starting late
2. Bands being slow on the changeover
3. Me scaring the shit out of the audience by almost murdering an audience member
4. And the fact that they were all heavily dosed on Ecstasy and NOT being ready for the OXBOW show

Anyway, it's 11:00 and the third band is sort of finishing and the room is like a fucking sweatlodge. The Devils have a lead singing duo who are collectively great front men. Their drummer is the 42-year old fella named STICK from the night before. Their bass player is the one that told his girlfriend that we were the worst band ever (his girlfriend is nowhere in sight and I imagine at home chained to the radiator with a chastity belt on). Their music is perfectly fine but their calling card was their Abbott and Costello front man duo. They finish up at 11:10.

Pale Horse, the band that played after us in Bradford is playing right before us in Leeds. I like these guys as well and they play well and they play until 11:40. Not out of malice I now detect but just because that's what they needed.

OXBOW is grousing. Should we cancel? I mean there's no way we're getting a good fucking in in 15 minutes until we remember that WE'RE GODDAMNED AMERICANS AND THE SAME CAN-DO SPIRIT THAT'S RESULTED IN DENTAL CARE ADMIRER ALL AROUND THE WORLD CAN GET US ON AND OFF IN UNDER 15 MINUTES.

Like Prince in Purple Rain. One song. Maybe two songs max. And then off into the waiting arms of a heavily mascara'd dude. Or some such shit like that.



Dan, grinding it out in the heat

We get on stage at 11:50 and HIT it.

HARD.

The audience from Bradford is there (I found out who threw the glass the night before and said to her quietly before we played...

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Yes?"

"Will you be throwing glasses at my head again tonight?"

She laughs and says "No." She has no idea what kind of massacre that nearly precipitated)... and I see a few of them lurking toward the back while we play three songs

like we were about to be shot. A kid is near the door and screams downstairs, a scream comes from downstairs and he says "Play one more," and the audience is cheering and so we do and we finish and they cut the power and having snatched victory from the jaws of defeat we sell merch, pack shit and hit the Kebab shops.

But where's Wayne?

"I saw him staggering around outside," says Greg, looking into my eyes like Dr. Trips. "Mumbling. Waving his hands. What the fuck did he take?"

"I don't know but whatever it was I took it too."

"Wha?!? How do you feel?"

"Me? I'm as naked as the nose on your face. As an azure sky. As a... I mean I feel fine."

Stoke on Trent

Let's right away dispense with the "I'm stoked on Trent" jokes. They're not fucking funny. We play on a bill that's pretty solidly a heavy metal bill.



Greg, soundcheck

Midway through the show I hear screaming and look over to the bar and see this woman pointing to the bartender saying something that sounds like

"Him...him...him..."

And I feel myself slipping into the auto-pilot that has me exiting the stage, leaping over the bar and stomping him into the rubber matting behind bar back. And I start moving that way before I see two women pointing at my cock and my animal brain resets from FIGHT to FUCK and the song ends and I hear what the women are saying.

"The Full Monty!!!"

"Yeah. That was a great movie."

"No. Take it off."

"What? My underwear?"

"Yes. Yes. Oh god YES."

"YOU come and take them off."

They hesitate.

"Come on. I won't hurt you. I'll just fuck you a little."



Niko



"I won't hurt you"

And the women come up together, the more adventurous one tugging her friend, both of their hands tremblingly outstretched. I grab their wrists and pull them into... like a car wash chain... into the healing powers of my cock.

And they make a good show of getting away but I notice only after thoroughly rubbing my cock.

"Great. Now how about putting it in your mouth?"

Well, while this stuff might work on the dates I go on, it doesn't fly stage-side Stoke-on-Trent and they flee.

I remember nothing else about this show.

New Cross Amersham Arms, London

Now comes the real sad and weepy part of our tale. And the part that's wholly responsible for our Anti-Fetanyl Public Service Announcements.

Well I can't go into details without recalling that real wake up and stagger Clockwork Orange kind of nausea, and sweating, and trembling, blurred vision, and fevered chills and swirling dropsies.

And the best part about it. The whole fucking punchline is that the person who gave me this shit TOLD ME IT WOULD DO THAT!

She said "I took it and was violently ill for three days but I hadn't eaten and had been consuming other, um, 'medicines'."

So naturally I would be exempted.

Naturally not.

I stagger through London and try to get the wind in my hair/head and straighten up before the show while cursing my hubris.

I try to go into a store to buy some batteries for my "personal listening device."

The guy watches me with a mix of pity and revulsion and he uses a pencil to sweep my change into his change drawer.

I wander back into the club.

GET ME A GODDAMNED MAKE UP WOMAN!

And Manuel the Dutiful does and she holds my face while applying copious amounts of eyeliner and mascara because nothing goes with a scalp-ripping downer high like Maybelline.



Eugene and Fentanyl: Alone again. Naturally.



Famous Steve Gullick tries to catch the last photo of Eugene alive.

Our British Patron Saint Steve Gullick is in the audience and we play well. Steve's photos of NIRVANA, NICK CAVE, BLUR, JANE'S ADDICTION and SOUNDGARDEN will be now joined by photos of OXBOW and a near death OXBOWIAN experience.

Another public service word of medical caution from OXBOW's lead singer: "Abuse NOT the Fentanyl!"

Barfly, Cardiff, Wales

Great promoter, great show, the Fentanyl is wearing off. I feel almost GREAT again.



Outside the Barfly

Dan picks up a homeless bagpipes player. Well he MAY have a home but when Dan found him he was wandering the street in a skirt with the bagpipes blaring.

Dan catches me in the street and says smiling ear to ear "He's going to play with is tonight!"

The Fentanyl has worn off almost enough so that I can fully appreciate the bad idea status of this particular burst of non-linear thinking.

A drunken skirt wearing bag pipe player who most certainly is insane as part of an OXBOW show?

Genius.

In the bathroom prior to the show while I huddle in a stall and consult my "medicine box" I hear the bagpiper call through the door.

"You're the singer, eh?"

"Yes."

"Do you want me to go on with you?" He asks, correctly sussing my crap ass mood.

"I want you to hand me some fucking toilet paper." Which he does. And while I sit there I hear the band begin to play and him along with them.

I wipe, hit the stage (AFTER washing my hands) and we break into song and that's the last I see of the bagpiper who it should be noted had been heard to ask earlier while quaffing a pint or 10 if we could hit him with some ska beats.



With the spirit of Tom Jones

We stay that night down the street from where TOM JONES had his debut and the guys that we stay with are fucking Kings. Real gents.

The Verge, London

The show was packed. Steve Gullick sent some photog friends who come back stage before the show and ask us

"Do you suck?"

We say "we don't think so. Stay and if we suck feel free to let us know."

The beautiful Italian drummer for one of the bands playing tonight helps me with my make up and her hands are strong and true.



The Verge

My cousin is in the audience too I've been told.

As is a woman that saw us play in Bergen, Norway.

We play and somebody falls onto the stage and all I see is a jumble of red hair and a hole and so I jump on and start fucking. I remember very little else of the actual show.

The magazine that sponsored our tour in England, Terrorizer, is there, as is their Editor in Chief. His eyes are shining after the show and I can see he's glad we didn't suck. Guys from NME are there and they ply me with flattery and a variety of white powders. The British tour promoter who heavily thought we sucked was there too and was apoplectic, sputtering his approval and almost apologizing for his previously unstated inability to BELIEVE in OXBOW.



A new (and excited) Oxbow victim/fan getting an autograph from Niko that begins "Kiss me, I'm Polish!"

It was turning into a party. The wine was pouring. Asses were grabbed. Party favors were proffered.

We stay with this fella Paul and smoke up a bunch of salvia, which proclaims the need for a "Tripsitter."

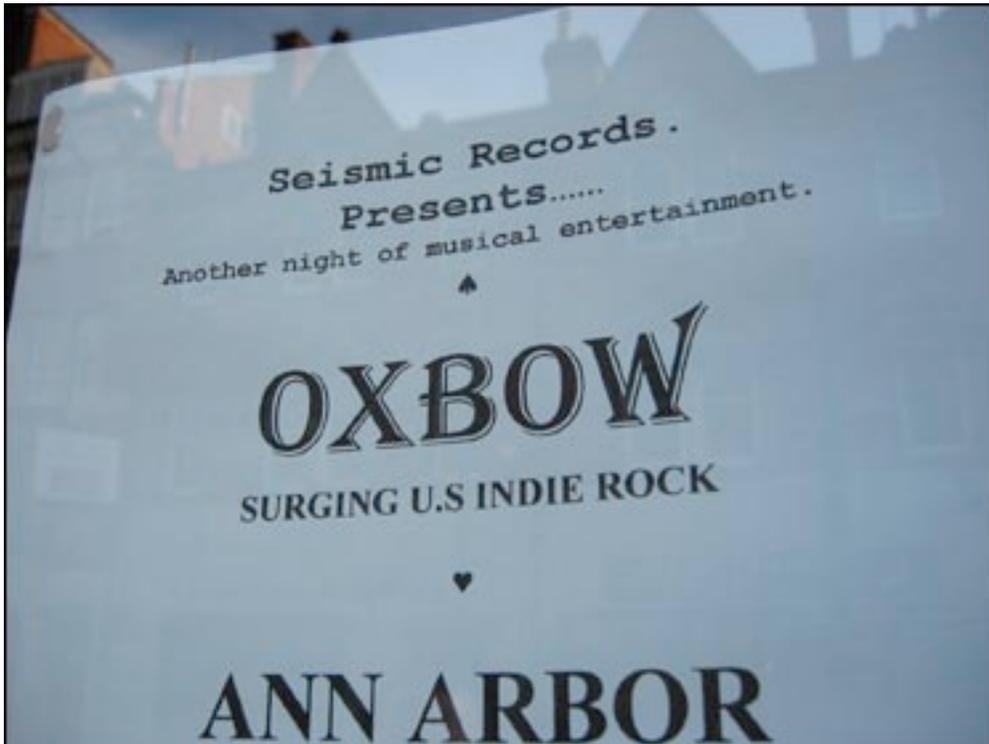
Fuck that. We pass out and I drift off listening to Veloso sing about Giuletta Masina.

Perfect.



The traditional post show falafel run

Lamplighters, Leicester, England



THE ONLY FUCKING SURVIVAL GUIDE YOU WILL EVER NEED

Life may deal you some weird blows but if you do nothing but remember the following easy to remember rules of the road everything should be A, OK.

DON'T FUCK WITH

1. A man singing MY WAY
2. MISTER ZERO
3. A guy with a knife and a hard-on

Tear and save.



Eugene: before the beating, sodomy, and tears.

We start to play and I notice a few things.

- 1) There's a woman in the audience from London. Not surprising in and of itself, but London is 4 hours away. And yeah sure I'd drive to LA from San Francisco to see a show (approx. 6 hours) but that was in the hardcore heyday. Not NOW. And not for OXBOW.
- 2) The kids that open for us are cool and are influenced by At the Drive In and I'm sure they'll be hugely famous in a year.
- 3) There's a guy sitting by the edge of the stage that smells like trouble.



The lovely and talented Nendie makes Eugene even handsomer than he is already. We mean if that's even possible.



This is not The Strokes

He sits. First facing me. Then facing the audience. And I can feel his mind work and when I see the entire front row's eyes swing behind me I know he's made his move and I

turn around and see him with his cock and his balls jammed between his legs, his faux vagina shining bright, and his arms raised to the heavens.

I don't know what he's doing but I know what to do with a pussy when I see it and I am subsequently disturbed to discover the hard way t❖❖❖ □ he wasn't a woman at all but was merely masquerading as one and then when he began to fight back well I had no choice but to choke him into unconsciousness.

Or at least as far into unconsciousness as I could before a friend of his stepped up and drew me away from him by trying desperately to get his own assfucking.

After the song ended he screamed.

"You HURT me!"

And I said, "maybe you expected us to be more like The White Stripes or The Strokes or something like that. But you are sadly and now painfully mistaken. I suggest you find a band like that and perhaps they will treat you a lot better than we just did. Good evening."

The crowd cheered and so encouraged was I that I Mike Tysoned another audience member's ear.

And it tasted like caramel.

Packhorse, Leeds or Why This Shows Promoter Is a Dirty Whore

We squeeze onto another bill. Though this bill DID use us as a primary drawing card when they described us as "a chicago band and Steve Albini's pets." Same club, different promoter, same curfew.



More fun at the Packhorse



Equipment check

The bands that play before us I don't see because I'm passed out in our luxury Mercedes Benz travel van.

But right before we play I get to the stage and find a full hissy fit has broken out. Not only that but I'm braced at the door for a fee by the guy in the band who is also the scumsucking promoter.

"I'm in the band."

"Oh. Well your drummer is having a problem."

I look over and Greg looks like Greg and so I ask him "what's the problem?"

And he points to a fuck whose look I immediately don't like. In sports you call guys like this "Clubhouse Cancers." Slope-shouldered malcontents who can't figure out why they're universally reviled (Quick Pick: YOU SUCK.). He's moving s-l-o-w-l-y and I watch my wristwatch and see that we're fast approaching the curfew and so I repeat.

"Is there a fucking problem?"

He says nothing and slinks off the stage.

The show proceeds and it goes beautifully with the exception of the cock-blocking audience member who protects a passel of his female friends from some of my more personal attentions.



Eugene making an inquiry concerning the whereabouts of his pants, shirt, shoes, and socks at The Packhorse.

After the show we all kiss and make up with the whore's son of a promoter and his band and things seem peachy.

Until we get a panicked email from the UK tour promoter and he says "Are these rumors true?" And it appears the fucking rich kid jerk offs have taken to the email online ether and are spreading invective a la

OXBOW are

- 1) Assholes
- 2) Ejaculate on the audience
- 3) All around thankless pricks

I join the email fray and tell the guys that the scumbag brush he's attempting to use on us is better employed by the men of Leeds on his mother, that if we wanted any more crap from rich kids like them we'd squeeze their heads, and finally, that he should pray to whatever junkie god he worships that we never meet again.

THE CATAMARAN OF HIGH FLYING DEATH AND VOMIT ON THE
HIGH SEAS aka GETTING FROM THE OFFWHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER TO THE
BURGHERS OF CALAIS IN ONE STOMACH ROILING STEP

The ferry or the catamaran. We weighed all the variables (speed, price, smoothness of ride) and decided to go with the CATAMARAN. Figuring for smoothness of ride.

Hahahahahahahahaha.

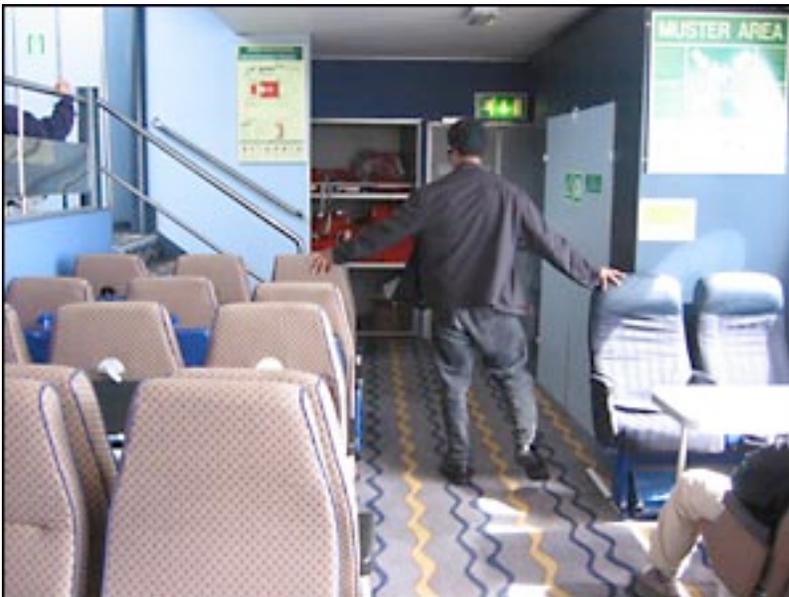
If you were to throw yourself off of a building several times in a row you'd have a ride that closely approximated the Sea Cat.

The Sea Sluts make a vain attempt at professionalism but the boat is pitching and yawing like a rodeo bull and it's all anyone can do to hang onto a succession of seats and hand rails to stay upright.

A klatch of kids clings to their parents at the food bar where I'm ensconced chowing down and on cue they start to spew geysers of vomit that begin sluicing all over the floor and down the aisles.



The final Death Ferry



Riding the Rodeo Bull

I smile beneficently in the belief that if this fucking tub sinks I can swim. Forget the logistical impossibility of me swimming the English channel fueled with nothing but some wine, cheese, and sporting nothing but dirty laundry. I could make it.

And we do.

On to Hasselt.

Muziek-O-Droom, Hasselt, Belgium

Belgium. Land of waffles, vigorous resisters of the Nazi wehrmacht, and speakers of one of the more incomprehensible languages around. We see several reviews in the local lingo and Niko says "it's easy. It's just like english."

Well ain't that doorsenrojes worstjes! I mean gesmeck vonhoofgnen!

In any case the club is totally pro and we breathe a sigh of relief to be in a civilized goddamn country (so long sweet Albion).



Manuel, Philippe Thiphaine from Heliogabale (who played an improv set with OXBOW minus Eugene to replace the missing McCluskey), and the beautiful Esther wishing it were ALL over.

The food is great. The staff is great. Phillippe Thiphaine from Heliogabale shows up with three French friends of his and McCluskey is playing with us tonight.

So far. So good.

But the box is whispering to me. And I heed its call and starting huffing some smigjees. You know, dropping some digjens. Boxing the borkles.



Civilization, the backstage has a porch



The magic box

But I see McCluskey and they play competently and like any number of Touch and Go bands. I talked to them before we play to dispel that wearisome interband tension usually at play prior to playing.

They say to me...

"We're from Cardiff. My girlfriend went to your show there. She said you guys were wild."

"Your girlfriend?"

"Yeah. She was the blonde one."

"Yeahhhhhh... she was a hot fucking bitch, man."

"Uh. Well. Uh. Thanks."

"No. I mean it. She was a niiiicccccc piece of ass. I talked to her for awhile. I asked her what kind of man would leave a woman like her all alone. For so long. I mean what kind of man could this be? Now I know. Well we got a show to do. Tell her I said 'miss you.'"



"We're sorry Missus. There's been a terrible accident outside and one of my friends has been horribly hurt. Could we use your phone?"

And we play just as everything becomes everything and the show is cool AND we have SMOKE AND LOTS OF IT (and by SMOKE I mean the artificially produced stage smoke and not cannabis related activity since we despise potheads).

I, however, remember nothing else.

4AD, Diskmuide, Belgium

We've played here 2 other times. The fucking hardest working man in Belgium Patrick Smagge and Katherine, as well as the other folks that are part of the company, have a cool deal here and it feels to me like playing San Francisco.



Our mighty Mercedes Benz luxury Highway Tiger.

Cool and homey, homey! And this time they outdid themselves. They're bottling their own beer here. And on the beer label there's an OXBOW poster.

I'm not a beer drinker but Greg says to me, tears glistening in his eyes, "I never (snif) felt famous until now..."



Niko

The show?

No one got choked, beaten, or sodomized.

Despite my best efforts.

But good show, good people, great. Really.



Eugene



Dan, jazz explorations

Oh. Oh yeah. McCluskey was supposed to play this show too but they canceled because they collectively came down with laryngitis. Either that or they needed to go back to

Cardiff to see their girlfriends. Either that or they were so offended by the OXBOW experience that they figured: why bother?

We suspect the latter.
My suggestion?

More push ups, men!

Gebraude 9, Koeln, Germany

Another great show. Repeat OXBOW fans who dragged their friends to the show. CDs shoved into my hands of bands that are cool (you three? Yeah you three? I DID listen to your CD. I liked it. Now all you have to do is remember how to play the shit you improv'd again and you'll have something).



Back in Germany

But I'm into the liquor, though I do know that I don't recall seeing a single woman at the show with the possible exception of the opening band's drummer's girlfriend.

I don't know what, if anything, this means. I just know, well I just know we need to start doing some fucking ballads soon if we don't want an OXBOW show to start looking like a soccer match. Or a gay bar.

Or a gay bar soccer match.

Gleis 22, Muenster, Germany

The official worse show of the tour. Promoters? Nice fucking guys. The club? Nice fucking club. The city? Nice fucking city. The hotel? Nice fucking hotel. The food? Genius fucking food. The show? Shitty fucking show.

It's the kind of show we've been warning the documentarian Christian Anthony about. I mean when one show has 25 people and IS a good show and the other show has 25 people and is a BAD show, how do you make heads or tails of it? It's hard we know but there ARE subtle differences and they all have to do with the soul-sucking power of absolutely NOTHING happening in the room outside of us and you have the most infernally unsatisfying jerk off session ever seen this side of Studio 54.



Eugene about to make the man in the yellow shirt "part of the SHOW."

Guy: Are OXBOW "noise" or are they "experimental"?

Tobi Wan Kenobi: Um. [How do I answer this idiot?] Um. They're experimental.

Guy: Good.

After 3 songs.

Guy: (squinting) It takes some getting used to.

Tobi Wan Kenobi: You moron. You asked me and I told you "experimental" and now you say you have to get USED to the experiment?!?!?

And so it went. Tobi was apoplectic and provided the one other redeeming piece of genius heard tonight.

Tobi's Old Lady: I love you Tobi.

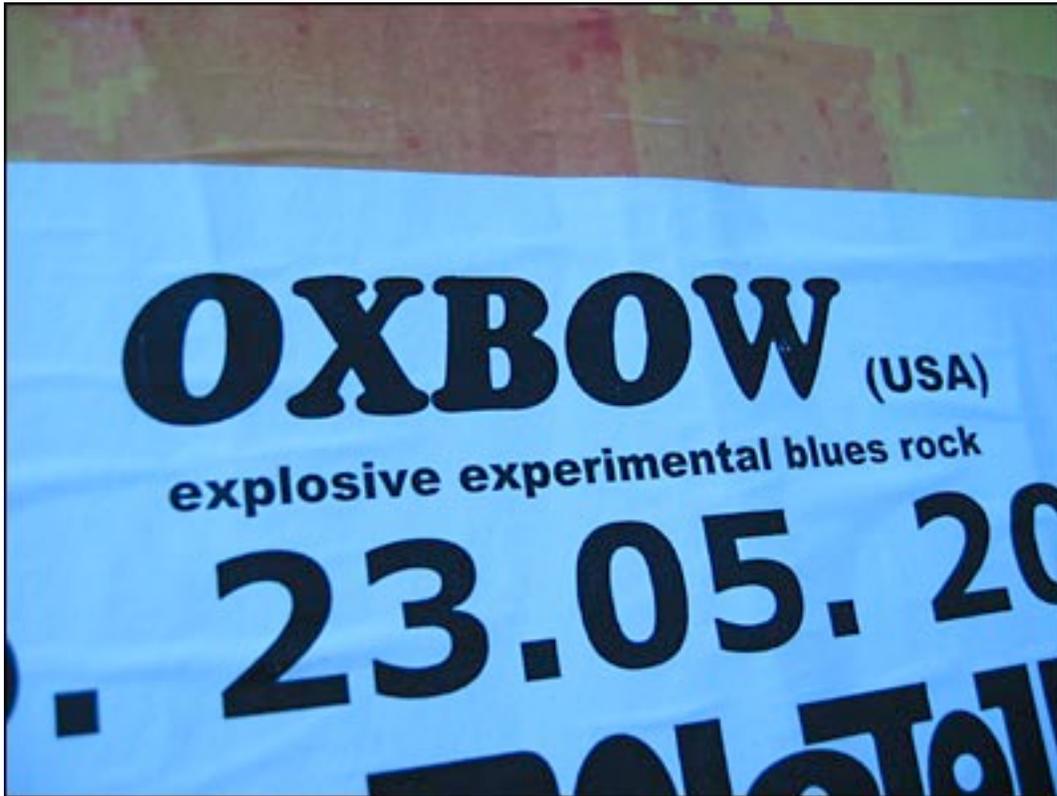
Tobi: So what?

Molotow, Hamburg, Germany

And as bad as Muenster was, Hamburg was genius. I mean genius. Start off with the fact that the American Ex-Pat and current Hamburg resident Rich Burnette aka The Perry Mosdromo of Hamburg! was promoting the show and move into the fact that it was finally at Molotow, notable for its prime placement in the Keeperbahn. That is pronounced "Raper Bahn" and it fulfills all of the promise abandoned by Rudy "SuperWop" Giuliani when he tossed New York's 42nd Street to those vultures at Disney. That's right, Gentlemen's Clubs for non-existent gentlemen, hookers and hos and plastic dildos.

Like I said, Genius.

My tribe. My people wherever I went. Freaks, fairies, junkies, welcome to Weimar.



Just don't say 'punk'

But first a little history. Rich had tour managed Zeni Geva and the first show we played with them in Copenhagen in Christiania was full of stoned out cross-legged sitting and squatting hippies and Rich stalking back and forth in front of the stage when we played.

WHAT HE REMEMBERED

Rich: "So after you played you said 'hey Rich. Come here. Now you get close to the stage like that again and I can't guarantee your safety. You MIGHT get hurt. In fact I KNOW you will get hurt. So just stay the fuck away from the stage.'"

WHAT I REMEMBER

Me: "Listen man... don't walk back and forth in front of the stage when we're playing. It's bullshit, distracting and disrespectful. And you might get hurt."

Rich: (smirking) "You're going to hurt me?"

Me: "Only if you do THAT again."

WHAT HE DID FOR THIS SHOW:

"Yeah. I remembered what you told me from before so I warned everyone. 'DON'T get close to the stage when these guys play. The singer will fucking kill you. He threatened to kill ME.'"



Pulling it together



The front row

So for the first 3 songs there was this semi-circle of isolation around the stage.

But call it tour-itis or call it the hot bitches in the first row but I actually made a personal entreaty.

"Come here. Yeah. You and you and you. Closer. Closer. A little closer. Now lick your lips..."

I remember Chuck Dukowski said he hated to hear bands ask their audiences to do anything but then again Flag in it's prime was having parties galore with railroad motifs so I felt justified. And just as I was feeling full of justification some woman walked up and hit a double biceps pose.

After we played I saw her by the bar and said

Howdy.

And she said.

Hi.

Turns out she was Argentinian. Well actually a GERMAN whose family had migrated to Argentina. During the late 1940s.

Yeah.

Quite a common migration pattern I understand.

But the show was great and then it was over and then it was to an Italian restaurant and then to an after hours club and past the phalanx of whore houses (called "Puffs"... genius!) and the passel of pussy for sale.

We made it to the club, the U-ground I think it was called and I fall in with the Molotow club manager who also bartends here and Anna, the back up singer for her band of female Elvis impersonators. And Niko of course starts buying me drinks and yeah I'm not much of a drinker so NEXT THING I KNOW... I'm fucking drunk on the liquor. And I'm telling Anna that another Elvis impersonator band is the most artistically significant thing she could be doing and then I see the guys from the Norwegian wrestling and rock and roll band The Stoner Kings that had played the previous night. And THEIR singer is sleeping drunk on the floor by the bathroom and they're trying to roust him up and out and I try to have a band conversation with the guy that quickly devolves.

Me: Stoner Kings? Well that name seems somehow both strangely prophetic and completely apropos.

Bassist: Yeah.

Me: So where are you guys going now?

Bassist: To get a blowjob.

Me: No. I mean where are you playing next?

Bassist: Blow. Job.

And blowjob they did. When we last spotted them they were trying to negotiate a group deal with one of the street nuttens on the grounds that the singer wouldn't get it up anyway but they didn't want to leave him behind.

I have no idea if they were successful as the rest of the evening was spent stumbling into and out of K holes and swirling abed with visions of bad Euro MTV dancing in my head.

But the best part of Hamburg was going over to the offices of the biggest label in Europe. Universal Music to meet our former label guy Michael Krell. Disgusted with the industry he was planning to leave and told us this tale.

"We had an artist. Called 'Biscuit Boy.' We made him a video, gave him a recording budget. The whole fucking 9 yards. And in the end he sold 130."

Us: well 130,000 is not bad.

"Yeah. If only. He sold 130. 1 and a 3 and a 0. That's it. And that's bad."

"ANYtime. I mean ANYTIME you want to give OXBOW \$150,000 to record let us know as I can GUARANTEE you at least 200 records sold. On my word, my friend."

Nato, Leipzig

Another great show. Multiple encores. Tons of people even up against a Bad Religion show across town. Great food. Great hotel.



East Germany meets Oxbow

Best exchange of the evening.

Christian Anthony to the anarchist promoter who had begrudgingly attended the show: So what'd you think about the OXBOW show?

Anarchist: The singer? Why does he pose so much?

The Anarchist's Girlfriend: Mmmmm...



Posing

Bastard, Berlin

We haven't been able to get ahold of the show's promoter. Days go by and nothing. A week and nothing. And when we finally do we find out where she's been. Yeah, you guessed it. A mental institution. She had a nervous breakdown BEFORE seeing OXBOW play.



Bastard

And I can't see how OXBOW will save her but she seems strangely invigorated by OXBOW being back in town and I remember that we've never had a bad Berlin show and this one would be no different.

But first! MEDICINE. Well Razi, the most connected man in Berlin, he of the band The Golden Showers and he who introduced Monte Cazzaza to OXBOW (though I could have sworn that was Bambi from No AB), is gone, so we rely on French transplant Sylvain for whatever watered down pharmacoupables he can find and I repair to his house for some vodka and redbull and whatever else I can jam/stuff/huff or gobble.



Torture

But First: INFIDELITY: A CAUTIONARY TALE

"Well we had a dog and my wife was very fond of walking the dog. Sometimes for hours. Well one day it had rained for two hours and she came back from her walk and as I was fixing dinner I happened to glance down at the dog and the dog was... bone... dry and..."

"I DIDN'T FUCK HER!"

"What? No. I know. She told me who it was and it wasn't you."

"Whew."

"What?"

"Nothing."

COCKSUCKAGE

So it's back to the club and a great show and possibly the longest OXBOW show ever at 2 hours. Encore after encore and the steel stage is drenched with sweat, spit and piss and it's as slippery as a gallow's ramp and as I'm wandering through the crowd I hear all manner of indecent suggestions.

"I want to fight you." This coming from behind me.

"Well my back is turned. Give it your best shot. HOWEVER if you don't knock me out you can rest assured that you will rest assured."

And this totally genius exchange as I'm swigging redwine and blue ruin.

"Eugene?"

"Yes."

"Can I ask you a serious question?"

"Sure. Go ahead."

"Would come with me to the bathroom and..."

Is it coke? Is it speed? Is it heroin? Is it...

"...and suck my cock."

Hahaha... well Bon Scott said it best "It's a long way to the top if you want to rock and roll."

"Well if you have your girlfriend suck my cock first, if I'm not too spent afterward, maybe..."

"NO!" He's scandalized at my suggestion. HE'S scandalized?!?!

"Okay. How about this then? You beat my ass, kick out my front teeth and then it's all yours..."

He looks crestfallen.

Jesus H. Christ. You play a 2 hour show and that's still not enough. What the hell do these people want?

Cocksuckage I guess.

"My advice is that you seek out the toe nail polish wearing fellas in that band there TOOL then..."

And so it goes and so we go. We leave behind the sold out club, and head over to Tegel. I tape the new found and unused "medicine" back to my body and next thing I know we're back on the plane.

Dan laughs.

"If they could see where we had been just 5 hours before we'd be somewhere stripped searched right about now."

"What the fuck are you talking about?" I'm indignant. "I look perfectly respectable." And I step into checking out my reflection and The Gray Suit DOES look alright but strikes an increasingly discordant tone with the copious amounts of mascara and eyeliner that I'm sporting. So I don the shades in the mistaken belief that it will conceal my totally gooned out eye thing and of course this makes it worse.



OXBOW on the way back to the glorious land of opportunity for full-blown homosexual activity, San Francisco. Manuel, sadly, remained in Berlin where he was resigned to a future of furtive and trembling attempts at all manners of unspeakable love.

Well that and the last tidbits of medicine coursing through my system. There's nothing quite as irresponsible as a man in the grips of multi-pharma high and so it is with my amazement and delight that I'm whisked right through customs while Christian Anthony, documentarian and all-American looking Joe, gets braced, stripped and searched.

Fuck man. I'm a goddamned AMERICAN TAX PAYER!!!! And I feel GREAT!!!!

Tony the Tiger Great. We come back to play the Dour Festival in July, and France, Belgium, Berlin and London in September and I hope against goddamned hope that I've figured out a few things before the autumnal shift. I hope to Mogwai that I've figured out who wrote the book of love by then, how many fights CAN I win, and exactly HOW to administer Fentanyl the RIGHT way. I mean I can only hope.

A final public service word of medical caution from OXBOW's lead singer: "Abuse NOT the Fentanyl! Maybe."