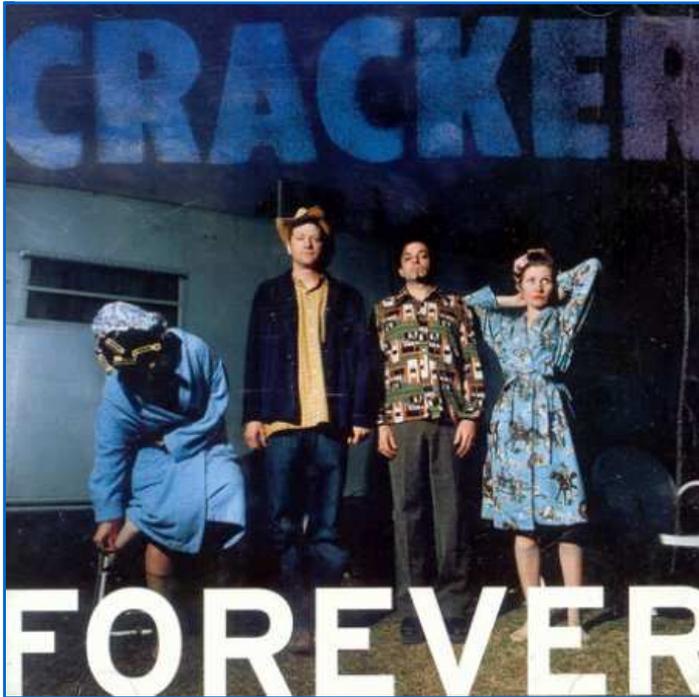


[#31 Brides of Neptune-Cracker. Did the ferry sink? Is this the underworld? Or is it just another gig in Victoria BC.](#)



[01 Brides of Neptune](#)

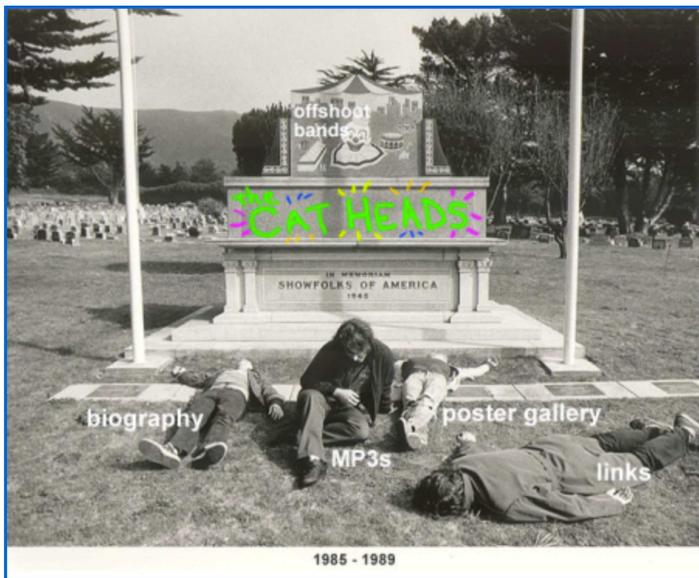


In summer of 2009, Cracker was doing a Northwest run with our sister band McCabe and Mrs Miller (Victor krummenacher). It was 4th of July Weekend. A terrible time to play anywhere in the US except right before a fireworks display. So as we weren't booked at any fireworks displays our agent sent us up in to Canada for the Weekend.

It had been at least 13 years since I'd been to Victoria with Cracker or Camper Van Beethoven. So we didn't really know what to expect. Victoria (which is confusingly on Vancouver Island and Vancouver City is not) can be an insular place. It's a college town/government town. It's only reachable by ferry and aside from provincial government types and college students, the only visitors it gets are those peculiar weird tourists that visit the islands of Washington.

The Northern part of the island is also very wild still. Parts of it can be very Northern Exposure. Our promoter was from somewhere up north on the island. It may or may not be a giant hydroponic pot growing operation. Which is especially weird cause there is seems to be some kind of police training centre on the island as well.

But when you are downtown in Victoria, it's a fairly cosmopolitan place. which by northwestern or Cascadia standards that means there are some Fluevogs mixed in with the Birkenstocks. The couple times we played there when i was in Camper Van Beethoven it reminded us favorably of 1980's Santa Cruz.



A clown cemetery. All sad clowns now.

But back to our story. The ride on the ferry from the mainland was spectacular. We all sat out on the deck took pictures of each other, it was hot by BC standards, 75, and I realized I probably should be wearing sunscreen. How do people get to live in this part of the world? They must have done something very good in a past life: Pushed a pram of quadruplets out of the path of an oncoming bus. damn. Victor Krummenacher and I Reminiscend about doing this same trip with [The Catheads](#) in 1986 or 1987. Mark Zanadreas and I were so hungover we quickly became seasick and ended up vomiting over the railings in tandem. Much to the horror of our Canadian hosts. We were young so I'm sure by 7:00pm we felt completely normal.

But back to our story. When we arrived at the venue in Victoria July 4th 2009 we were a little surprised. It wasn't really in the quaint victorian downtown but on the outskirts of town. It was a pretty weird place. Just a gigantic cinderblock box. It was a combination venue, hotel, and liquor store on the ground floor. Around back in the basement it also had a strip club and a chinese restaurant. We were pretty early so we all checked into our rooms. About an hour after we got to the hotel, the local promoter called Jason our tour manager.

"I just drove down the Island, hey do you mind if I come to your room and take a shower"

And then it started to get weird. There was also some sort of event center in the hotel and it appeared to be preparation for a wedding. And not just any wedding.

I've always marveled at how multi-cultural is Canada. Toronto Ottawa and Montreal are of course famous for this. But the west also has its own pan-commonwealth queens dominion polyculture. I can not think of any proper way to say this that is politically correct. It appeared that preparations were underway for an Indian-dot/Indian-feather wedding. Or at least the two largest pluralities at the wedding appeared to come from these two subsets of Canadians. It was like a Fellini movie, paper mache elephants, people painted blue, heavily embroidered vests and many variations on the bear claw pendent. Cowboy boots and Saris.

hmm interesting.





And when we went into the club it appeared to have a model of the Parthenon for a stage except there were multiple television sets in the walls between the columns. The overall effect was that of a Russian mobster nightclub in Azerbaijan. That night as we began to play to the handful of people who had shown up, I noticed at the door that one of the doorman had some kind of Bulldog or Pitbull Mix on a leash.

It was then that the devastating reality sunk in. We were in the underworld. While crossing the Strait of Georgia clearly the ferry had sunk and we had all drowned. For some bizarre reason in my minds eye i briefly saw us being accidentally torpedoed by the USS Jimmy Carter (SSN-23). (I'd recently seen a clip of it being launched or something.) And now like the crew in the song Brides of Neptune we had drowned but did not realize that we were dead.

The dog at the door? Well that was Cerberus. Greek underworld. Remember the greek Parthenon behind us? Also it seemed that the greek underworld shared space with the Indian-dot afterlife, as i was sure that at some point i'd seen Shiva walking around the hotel. It wasn't a wedding after all!

And now for eternity we would be playing this nightclub every night. Well nearly every night. When Shiva needed more room for a special holiday or if there was a sudden influx of visitors due to a disaster up on the Indian subcontinent: Move over greek underworld! And Hades would summon the ferry. And that ferry would take us to the usual Russian-Azerbaijani nightclub only this time in Elysium, the Asphodel Meadows or Tartarus.



And the reason the ferry had sunk was all my fault. I had not remembered to play the song Brides of Neptune in Vancouver and Vancouver is a port city. This was a superstition that i had developed. Or maybe it was more like an OCD tic: Touch the doorknob twice with my left hand before opening it with my right or there will be a axe murderer in my hotel room when I open the door. That's more of a tic right?

My superstition went something like this. If we don't play Brides of Neptune in a port city, then one of the ships that leaves the next day will sink, or a sailor will drown. I developed this superstition as Johnny, and I stood in front of the Seafarers Memorial in Homer Alaska sometime in 2001 or 2002. I felt so stupid. Some showbiz know-it-all writing about sailors lost at sea. There were over 100 names on the bricks and the population of Homer AK at that point was about 5,000. What did i know about the sea? and the lost seafarers.

Nothing except that i seem to mention the sea and sailors a lot in my songs. And the english side of my family were mostly sailors. And my grandfather was torpedoed either 2 or 3 times in WWII. I suppose that is the reason i mention sailors and the sea so often:

I want everything

Saint Cajetan

Take me down to the infirmary

Dr. Bernice

Minotaur

Be my love

there must be more right?

I also have the sneaking suspicion that i was a sailor in a past life and drowned at sea.

Alas the sea is also some kind of allegory for me. A great and immense sadness. The place where all things are eventually lost. We crawled from the sea in the distant past. But it waits for us in the quick and near future. And now I've mixed Hades with Poseidon. When you die you become a Bride of Neptune. Neptune is just the Roman name for Poseidon.

But i can't help thinking of the sea as the immense sadness when i hear this song. For this is one of the songs that i worked up with Mark Linkous. This is a song that he plucked from a pile of small unfinished ideas i kept on cassette tapes. each titled something like "work tape oct 1997". These were snippets of song about 30 seconds to 3 minutes long. I'd record them onto an old cassette recorder I always kept handy. We were listening in the basement of my studio when we came across this one. "I like that one, let's make that a song". So we did. The only words i had were "brides of neptune cross the waters bring us your sons and bring us your daughter". We created the music first and then eventually the story came to me. And you can totally tell that this is Mark Linkous playing the bubbling gurgling keys and guitars. It's his signature sound.



I think of the sea as this immense sadness in this song because March 8th 2010 Mark shot himself in the heart. He had an immense sea of sadness in his soul.

I don't have that. That darkness. I understand it mind you. But it isn't me. We are all lost at sea, but it's not a tragedy. It's a black comedy. A giant clown cemetery with The Catheads just too damn hungover to dance on our clown graves. While i don't exactly dance around the seafarers memorial in the video, I talk to the lost and dead seafarers. I send them on a inscrutable voyage with monkeys and pot head mermaids. I send the dead out with a mysterious cargo that they can never get near because it's "[guarded by monkey](#)" (see post #3 guarded by monkeys). But they aren't really sad. They are lost but not sad. Understand the distinction?

In the US and many other navies there is an ancient traditon known as [The Line Crossing Ceremony](#). It is a complex ritual in which the sailors (regardless of rank) who have crossed the equator before (shellbacks), ritually abuse and mistreat the sailors who have not crossed the equator before (pollywogs). The simple chorus of Brides of Neptune came to me after my ex-brother in law who was a young US navy officer related to me his ordeal during his first crossing of the Equator. It is too complex to explain here. But your best hope is that you become a Bride of Neptune.

Finally we come to the [Horse and Cow](#). I am not far from the Horse and Cow Bremerton WA as i write this. The Horse and Cow is a bar frequented by Submariners. Neptune is often portrayed followed by a Horse and Cow. In superstition sailors would

sometimes tattoo a horse and cow on each ankle. So they wouldn't be sunk at sea. In WWII this was especially common. The fear was very high that they would be sunk by a submarine. Somehow the submariners adopted the Horse and Cow as their symbol. Both of the related artists i have mentioned in this post, Sparklehorse and the Catheads worked Submarine into their album titles. Both albums i produced.

Also i distinctly remember Mark Linkous telling me that the spanish flotillas would throw there horses and livestock overboard if they thought they were in danger of sinking. And consequently spanish sailors believed the sea to be haunted by ghost horses. (see reference in the song Be My Love) i've googled this but to no avail.

However I am superstitious. A clear indication I must have been a sailor in a past life. I am going out now to get a horse and cow tattooed on each ankle.