

Sparklehorse Spring 1999 tour diary part 1

The South Rises Again?

This tour diary is entirely the fault of one musician, and is not sanctioned by Sparklehorse Inc. You may believe that the characters are fictitious if you like....

Well, it all starts with a show in San Francisco, Victor Krummenacher and Alison Faith Levy at the Hotel Utah March 6th 1999. I played a couple songs with Alison and then the whole set with Victor, we got back to Victor's at about 3am, so I dozed in a chair 'til 5 when the shuttle came to pick me up to take me to the airport.

a short layover in Chicago, many people stranded by the weather there, but I got safely to Richmond, VA. where eventually I got picked up by Scott Minor and Mark Linkous in Mark's old diesel Mercedes wagon. Out to the farm in Dillwyn to rehearse. On the way we pick up a new instrument for Mark, a nylon string guitar that he is having a pickup put into. Already at the farm is David Dreiwitz, our new bass player. I met Dave originally many years ago when I was playing with Camper Van Beethoven and he was playing with Tiny Lights, but recently re-met him while doing shows in NY last fall with John Kruth. Dave also plays with Ween. So the band is Mark on guitar and singing and other weird sounds, Scott on drums and sampler, Dave on electric and acoustic bass, me (Jonathan) on guitar, violin, keyboards and glockenspiel, with both Dave and I singing background vocals.

During the rehearsal days, Dave walks in the woods every day with Barko the dog, one of four dogs there, but he makes the mistake of thinking that Barko can find his way home if he wanders in the woods; one day he gets lost and ends up on an ostrich farm! When Teresa Linkous goes to pick him up it turns out that they want to start up a vet's office there and she may get a job!

Rehearsals are fairly smooth, weather changes all around us, snow and such. Mark has gotten a sponsorship from Vox amps, and since our tour budget didn't allow me to buy a road case for my Fender Deluxe and we couldn't find a Deluxe in Virginia, I get the third of three new Vox AC-30s delivered to Static King, two with green speakers (25 watt speakers vs. the 30 watt amp) and one with blue (15 watt speakers vs. the 30 watt amp). I get one of the green ones, Mark uses the blue as his main and the other green as his extra overdrive kick-in. I have a lot of trouble over the next week trying to get a good midrange tone for my guitar and violin. Fuckin' vox. even one of Mark's AC-30's brilliant channel doesn't work...

Our new guitar tech shows up, Paul Dillon, replacement for our beloved Duncan Swift who is still busy with Ash (I think, could be Radiohead, his usual employers). Paul is a young Irish guitar player who works in NY at Kim's (a huge alternative record store). He gradually learns to understand Mark's bizarre set-up of guitars, effects, Dr. Sample ["I didn't go through five years of sampling school to be called MR. Sample!"] and tape decks in connection to the pair of Vox AC-30s. The remaining members of the crew are stuck in transit awaiting work visas! Eventually, the day before our first show Ivor Knox and Matt Johnson, our Front of House sound man and our tour manager get into the USA and by varied methods get to VA. Allan Hickey, the driver arrives with our bus, we load all the equipment into the trailer and head off to the Cat's Cradle in NC.

Our bus is vintage 1970's rock bus. It's got wood interiors and little personal space. Sleeps 8. Has a huge space on the sides with Saturn and a satellite, which I see as personally

significant as i use the magsatellite email psuedonym when i travel.

the touring crew's nicknames are mostly established from previous tours. Scott is known as "Stoney" Minor, referencing the prodigious amounts of marijuana that he is able to smoke, and yet remain alert. or mostly alert, anyway. you'd never know. Mark is known now as "Stinky". it used to be "Smoky", or "the Smoky Link" (on account of his smoking unfiltered cigarettes all the time of course) but somehow it became "Stinky" Linky. Matt is really responsible for these nicknames, and his has always been "Judge" to the other bands he has toured with, but after viewing 'Dr. Stranglove' we have decided to call him "Mandrake". Ivor, due to strange food allergies that allow him to take no protein from sources other than cheese, is known affectionately as Ivor "the cheeseman" Knox. Occaisionally. Early in the tour Matt decides that Dave looks like an english comedian named Barney Dodd (i believe that's right) but somehow Dave takes it as being Barney from the Simpsons. nonetheless, Matt insists on only calling him Barney, to the point where most of us call him Barney as well! fortunately or unfortunately, Paul and I have no good nicknames, they write "Seagull" on itineraries and such, but that joke is so old it never sticks.

North Carolina at the Cat's Cradle, we meet Varnaline, our opening act for the tour. Anders plays guitar, Jud plays drums and John plays bass, their tour manager and sound man is Jason.

Anders has a big beard, we're a little scared. first show is a little weird, we're still trying it out. small audience, but appreciative. the local record store guys tell us that after the inital shipment of "Good Morning Spider", they sold out and haven't been able to get any more! I say, gee mark, I could run a record company like that..... er... anyway after the show we leave and experience our first try at sleeping on the bus and waking up in a new town. I realize right off that I ain't gonna sleep much on this tour.

we awaken in Atlanta, completely bypassing south carolina. (yay, sez I, for personal reasons.) we're playing in a new (to me) club called the Echo Lounge. as we spend the day drinking coffee in the local cafe and pestering the music store full of ethnic instruments, we find that danelectro has finally manufactured a baritone guitar, but they don't have one. haven't seen one yet. i want one. the music store has various flutes but no suling flute (Indonesian) but as i explain to the clerks about Indonesian music stuff, they offer me a job teaching there (!?). well, can't just yet, got another job at the moment.

The Echo Lounge is excellent, a new place put together by Janet Ridgeway. It houses a bar, club and a record label ([Echostatic](#)) that puts out film soundtracks to Hal Hartley's films among other things (bands like Dura-Delinquent and Super 5 Thor.) they apparently show films there as well. they also happen to have the most beautiful bartenders this side of New Orleans (which, coincidentally, is where they happen to be from. i've gotten in trouble before for noticing these sorts of things, but hell, it's my tour diary...) unfortunately we leave after the show again and drive to Alabama.

set list for the Echo Lounge Atlanta

- Spirit Ditch ---- same arrangement as last fall's tour
- One Man's Blood --- fairly new pop rock song, lots of guitar
- Saturday ---- slightly new and sparser arrangement, no Sophie on Cello (!)
- Sad & beautiful world --- now i'm playing violin instead of guitar, it's way more beautiful
- My Yoke is heavy -- a Daniel Johnston song!
- Sparrows - same arrangement
- Rainmaker - totally reworked as a rock song. i get to play guitar solos even!
- Sunshine - now with sampled strings (from Dixie Babylon actually..) mixed with the

strings that dave and i play at the end - full orchestra!

- Hammering the cramps - the rock number. this seems to be the barometer of the show, whether or not Mark says "oh Yeah" in the last chorus...
- Junebug - same arrangement but i'm learning the BV's while doing the key parts...
- Can't forget the ghost - wow. dave on fuzz bass, sampler, drums we got it all. distorted guitar and keys...
- Happy man - always the rock song.

- Abundance - the old Camper Van Beethoven instrumental, violin jam. funny to see if people recognise it.
- All night home - now with mark playing either acoustic guitar or just sampler.
- Pig - trying different ideas for the middle noise section...

I think we played weird sisters after this....

as far as Alabama goes, I have to say I don't think the south is going to rise again anytime soon, unless it's due to fermentation.

We arrive at some motel near the civic center and Dave and Paul and I take a cab to little 5 points, "where the bars all are?" asks the cab driver. actually we're looking for something to eat, and coffee, i'm going into food freak mode. we get there just in time for the pancake house to close. i hate this place already. fortunately there is other food, and records stores with scads of Marilyn Monroe picture postcards....

the Nick, where we play, is the same as it was the last time I played there, in 1988 (where CVB battled drunk audience who kept spilling beer on our effects pedals. i called on one guy from the stage to find out where he worked, but he wouldn't tell me. his girlfriend eventually told me he worked in a supermarket, i said, hey i don't go spilling beer in your till, do i? he got pissed and threw a pitcher of beer at us, David Lowery jumped off the stage and wrestled the guy into the exit door which was unfortunately locked... meanwhile Greg Lisher starts playing Sweet Home Alabama... anyway...)

well, a small audience, but it's ok cuz we're still learning how to play the songs anyway. none of us feel really comfortable yet. we're starting to learn Varnaline's songs a bit, which ones we like...(Hammer Goes Down, No Disciple, Tonite..)

with a day off between here and texas we decide to go to new orleans, even though we don't have a show there. Allan is from there and would like to do some errands considering he didn't even know how long the tour was going to be when he arrived and hasn't done his taxes or anything and we'll be out 'til late april.

not sure what happens to everyone here. all i know is i found a guitar store and got a new strap, got some voodoo talismans... at night dave and i saw a freaky jazz band with drums, bass, two bass clarinets and a flute at a great little bar that had many cool areas for watching the band or sitting or smoking or watching traffic... as it turns out Dave is into the pot drug as much as Stoney, we may have the most relaxed rhythm section in the south... Dave has some friends in a band called Royal Fingerbowl there who sport him a bass stand for his upright bass.

next stop, houston. st. patrick's day. we are prepared for a drunken obnoxious audience as we're playing at a pseudo-english pub, but they are actually fairly well behaved and we get to play some quiet songs too. the opening act on this bill is the Blacks, a chicago

based americana band with 2 girls and 2 guys, and incredible graphics (i am wearing one of their t-shirts as i write this - the bassist girl is the artist.) all the guys are interested in talking with the two girls in the Blacks, i mean the bassist is a six foot blond girl who paints naked ladies on her bass... the shirt depicts a man with his head below a woman's short skirt and she is either displeased by his performance or (i choose to believe) is extremely pleased and so overcome that she accidentally discharges a pistol into his head. it reads "the blacks blow your brains out." yeah!

our bus has a rotating placard on the front with many different choices. here it says Alice Cooper, which we think is all funny and shit, but the locals outside the club are pretty hyped to see Alice, they're yelling threateningly from their porches, "where's Alice?".

Varnaline seems to be changing their sets slightly toward stretching out rather than sticking with the rock songs... our sets are still slightly awkward. can't figure out why. i'm still struggling with my AC-30 for tones i want, when i try to get the guitar to feed back it jumps to wrong overtones. very frustrating, not predictable like my fender.

of course when we unload the amps in dallas the next day, mine doesn't even go on. we send it out to a repair guy who determines that not only are the contacts to the power tube not soldered (from the factory!) but in fact 8 contacts to the tubes aren't soldered! now fixed it has at much more oomph, more to play with.

the show itself however, well... the Galaxy club is huge and our audience is small and that's not inspiring. at least my friend Curt Haworth is there, a dancer with the David Dorfman dance company from NY who are in Dallas for two weeks. but he couldn't convince any of the other dancers to come.

next stop is Austin and the South by Southwest Music music and film festival schmooze-a-thon. like when we were at CMJ in NY last fall, where the cost of life is cheap, the cost of a musician's life is cheaper. We are on a bill with great bands, but it's a nightmare nonetheless. there were bands playing when we got to the club, La Zona Rosa, i can't remember which ones, but i went out to the side of the stage and watched Grandaddy before us. they were excellent, we've been playing their cd before our set for awhile so i knew the music really well and it was a treat to see it played. then Mercury Rev played, i couldn't hear the singing very well from the side and they jammed out with long noodly guitar solos on chord progressions repeated, very swirly. i watched the bassist, he had a beautiful old Fender Precision and he looked like he loved it. he rocked. they played a long time and the changeover was rushed, our set is getting songs knocked out of it before we even start. the stage crew have been dealing with so many bands every day for a few days already, they don't care. we set up as fast as possible, but now we can only play for 30 minutes, right as we're going on i notice no leads from the keyboard are set up still... and monitors? well, we're trying to play, there are idiots yelling "play faster" and that sort of thing. everybody's drunk. we're cutting whole verses out of songs in the middle, skipped the second verse of 'Sunshine', but while that may be easy for most of us, Scott has a sampler with the drum pattern to contend with...anyway, we play some nice songs and they are telling us to stop but Mark is ignoring them and we blast the end with 'happy man'. they want us off so bad the stage crew is trying to pull my instruments out of my hands when we finish, which pisses me off, especially with the violin. i end up being so pissed off i don't even stay to watch the Flaming Lips, whom i love.

I met one Capitol person there, Donna, who seemed to me to have a very punk rock music ethic, a refreshing person in the world of major labels... meanwhile all our management and A&R people are having words about who allowed us to play a set like that and whatever else. the PR people are all drinking with the journalists they pitch to,

paying them petty cash to perform stupid tricks (showing their relationships in perhaps the truest light! and you wonder how to get your records reviewed...) well, for this i missed seeing Seagulls Screaming Kiss Her Kiss Her who were playing at another club. when i go outside of the bus, the Vox representative is there handshaking.....heh...he promises more amplifiers...

we got to see Dilly Gent, the woman who was the creative video rep for EMI and got Sophie Muller to make those excellent films for the new Sparklehorse videos (available on the Capitol version of the CD!), she's now independent and in Austin promoting the Radiohead film, "Meeting People Is Easy" which she produced.

so we stay in Austin for another day, it's heaven for Mark cuz he gets to go see two of his favorite musicians - Tom Waits is playing at a theatre and Guided By Voices are playing for free in the park. Dave and I decide to get high and go look at the state capitol building, it's very pretty, then head over to the park. we see Spoon, (liked them) the Gourds (hated them) and the Guided By Voices. GBV is a difficult band to me. Mark loves Robert Pollard, gets hooked on occasional songs and plays them loudly and often over and over, lately one that goes "i've got bones of skin" or something like that and "i am produced" or something like that. well, it always sounds like second tier seventies bands to me, like listening to Mott the Hoople when you could be listening to David Bowie. when they played it was such a microphone-swinging rock show spectacle thing that it really gave off that Mott the Hoople vibe even more. I really want to like this band, but I just can't. it still all sounds fake. he's a great craftsman, whatever.

[!!!**new info**!!! i have gone to the Guided By Voices records to discover that the song is actually "I've Got Bulldog Skin", which just goes to show you how my hearing is lately. or Mr Pollard's pronunciation...]

so Dave and I left and ran into Liz Penta, who manages Medeski, Martin and Wood, who may tour with Ween in the summer, so we go off to see other bands and get food. first we saw Asian Dub Foundation, which was very cool, then we ate, then we saw Right Said Fred WHO ROCKED without even a drummer. best show I saw for a while. then we went back to the outdoor place and saw the Original Parliament, who played all the Bomb hits, with the original vocalists (I think). we danced. at 2 we walked over to the Spin party with the full intention of seeing Built to Spill and the Flaming Lips ('til 4am..) but somehow couldn't stay and went back to our hotels to sleep.. I heard later that Paul did stay at that show...

left Austin and drove to somewhere where they have famous chicken fried steaks for breakfast for the limeys to get a taste of the true texas....driving, more driving, more driving, the best parts are watching Ivor as he sits in front rolling a cigarette while allan tells him about all the motors on the American cars and trucks going by, or his own Corvette, while Ivor just nods and says, "yeah..." i don't even know if he drives...

Allan knows we like motorcycles so he stopped at a huge Harley dealership in El Paso. let me take this opportunity to explain a bit about Sparklehorse and motorcycles: we're into European bikes. Mark and Teresa own several old Moto Guzzis and a Triumph basket case, Scott (the pro among us) has owned several different Moto Guzzis and BMWs, now not only owns a Guzzi Le Mans mk.1 but also a Benelli single and a Ducati 750 GT. During february when we weren't touring, Scott was racing little Italian singles at Daytona! I have owned several sizes of old Ducatis and Triumphs, but through it all still have my Moto Guzzi V65 and two BMWs (a GS and an ST). So, all this said, pretty much none of us like Harleys. In fact we all think they suck. well, it was a nice thought, and at least Matt and Ivor were impressed by the sheer numbers in a row.

We stopped somewhere in New Mexico for a meal, I left the book I was reading on a park bench when I finished it. ("Housekeeping" I think. mostly I try to read as much as I can on tour to keep my eyes and brain active and elsewhere. for a tour like this it takes a lot of SciFi and trash cuz there's not much sleeping and difficulty concentrating. i started the tour with T.C. Boyle, but quickly went to Gregory Benford and then Greg Bear.)

we changed the bus placard to "Deputy Sheriff" but decided maybe that wasn't a good idea for Arizona, so we moved it to "Governer's Staff"...

Our next show was in Scottsdale at a venue called the Cajun House. David Lowery warned us of it... it's a theme park of a restaurant based on bourbon street, a big room that apparently fills up as you play with silicone injected republican nubile on the hunt, waiting for the band to stop so they can dance to nondescript beats. all true! Varnaline had an audience of three, but at least Anders has shaved his beard off... when we play our set is constantly interrupted by the apologies of a drunken Australian who apparently saw us at the Big Day Out festivals in the audience of thousands and can't believe that in our own country people could be so unappreciative. well, that's the breaks, boy. at least they fed us good food there. we flee to the west coast.

Sparklehorse Spring 1999 tour diary part 2

The West Coast:

We awaken to the smell of the Pacific Ocean, on the bus somewhere up north of downtown on some busy street outside some motels, and we stay there all day. eventually we head to the Casbah, a nice small club, maybe the only club in San Diego. I have mixed feelings, I've played the Casbah a zillion times, here and where it was before it moved, with Hieronymus Firebrain, Granfaloon Bus, Dieselhed, maybe every band I played with when I lived in SF. and last summer played with Magnet there, and then tried to add it to the southern California itinerary for the Jonathan and Victor bands with the Container last fall (we played at Spaceland in LA and the Blue Cafe in Long Beach, in between these dates we had supposedly one of the two days at the Casbah, pending which one Cornelius wanted, sez the promoter. he held it for us from august until I got back from the Sparkle Euro tour in november when i discovered that he cancelled us. as a result, neither Chris X nor John Nelson were able to justify staying over the entire weekend to do a monday night show in Long Beach so while we had full bands in LA, in Long Beach it was me and Vic with the Container's drummer Chris Kirschbaum...)

well, regardless of all this, I went out to dinner with another SF-bartender-in-exile, Janine, whom I used to work with at the glorious drunken triumvirate of San Francisco bars (Rat n Raven, Zeitgeist, Lucky 13). she's moved to San Diego and studying to be a real estate mogul. apparently her boyfriend is the son and heir of the restaurant 'Napoleon's' where Tom Waits used to work (as in "after hours at Napoleon's") but being the young stud he is, he's been 86'd from the Casbah.... I am so happy to be near the ocean that we spend way too much on great sushi.

also at the show: Bill Tuttle, Geraldine Fibbers bassist (now with Los Super Elegantes. I think) coming down to see a show avoiding the horrors of a show in LA...

our show goes surprisingly well! we play well, it's all fun, this is the first show that feels really fluid to me.

they tell us that last fall when Cornelius was there they had the same bus and it said Alice Cooper on the front....

so onto LA. we awaken in the lot behind the Hollywood Hills Best Western, which coincidentally is half a block from my apartment! and it's raining! (huh?) I get up and get my mail, luckily being able to pay bills in the middle of a tour rather than dealing with the collectors at the end. this is maybe the first time that has happened. plus my computer! we all get to check email for free rather than paying some kinko's the outlandish \$12/hour rate with the added bonus of having filter that disallow dirty words... plus i had some pot i'd recently found that had been given and brought to Burning Man the previous fall but forgot to smoke it, etc, so i gave it to Dave, Welcome to California!

LA is a nightmare for Mark, besides just the overwhelming Capitol Records thing (their building is two blocks away) and the major press/publicity/A&R/industry overdrive, Mark used to live here when he was in the Dancing Hoods, when they were all major junkies and generally horrifically self destructive, so the psychic weight of LA begins to bear down on him. We want to go to Capitol, we have an appointment to see the folks there and the famous studios in the basement with their famous echo chambers. I'm pretty excited cuz I live so close but have never seen the inside of the building. unfortunately when we get there everyone seems

to be really too busy to deal with us, maybe they are understaffed at the moment or we are too big a group. I suspect they only want to see Mark, I feel like a hanger-on. not very comfortable. but somebody had made cookies! also Perry the press guy from Nasty Little Man is there and he's really nice. still, that doesn't prevent us from telling him that the cookies are loaded after he eats one...met Steve, the Capitol college radio rep, who appears to be really interested in us, and we're going to play the next day live on KCRW...

the studios are a separate entity from the record company, so the people down there show us what they can, but there are sessions in progress and we can't see much. Mark gets to ask a few questions about compressors and pre-amps that he's thinking about buying, but we don't get to see the echo chambers. Perry proves that he can actually play the piano!

after our tour Mark and I take a cab in the rain over to Black Market Music, one of the good used equipment dealers in LA (and SF, although flying in the face of the traditions of the normal world, the guys in SF are assholes and the guys in LA aren't...go figure..?) anyway, nothing bought, we get back on the bus and head to Long Beach to play and in-store at a shop called Fingerprints.

This place is great, Rand, the guy the runs it is truly wonderful and accommodating, really into music, plus they have great cd stock. And they made incredible posters for the show with rabbits and UFOs, which goes along with the masks that Mark wears during encores. we all spend alot of money on cds. (somewhere across the south i broke down and bought a cd walkman at a walmart, so i'm stocking up. I get some Cardigans singles, the new Built To Spill, Neil Young's 'Trans', Richard Buckner's 'Since'). we end up playing a beautiful semi-acoustic set to a quiet and appreciative audience (which i believe was either recorded or web-broadcast!) with a bunch of babies in the front row. Mark loves babies. wants one himself, I believe.... myself, I was drawn to talking with a beautiful local girl.... um, anyway, we almost made it back to LA, but the bus broke a coolant hose and we had to wait somewhere off highway 5 while Ivor and Allan fixed it...

The very next day, well, I could have stayed in my on bed I suppose, but we had to get up at 7 or so to get to KCRW by 9am to load in (if you're not on time, they may cancel! they warn..) and it's all the way across town in Santa Monica. a whole 13 miles. but I know how long that'll take, 'cuz for the year I worked at Danetracks I commuted over there and it took atleast 45 minutes at that time of morning, even on motorcycle!

we get there and Steve from Capitol has bagels and coffee, what a god. our manager Shelby and Dave Ayers, Mark's A&R guy are there too, and i unfortunately insert my foot into my mouth when i mention to her that our Capitol records tour was less than exciting in front of all of them.....oops, typical Jonathan maneuver. this whole tour diary is that way, as seen in next paragraph...

I haven't been to KCRW for years. played there with Camper, and I think they played there again without me later... I had kind of given up on the station in recent years, they always play the hippest of the hip and it reminds me of when I worked at the record store in SF, peer pressure , what's cool, etc... and when I mail out Magnetic CDs, last time I included response cards (pre-stamped) to ask whether the stations liked the cds, whether they played them etc...many stations who are in the boonies or otherwise out of the CMJ/Gavin loop wrote back gushing responses, loved the stuff. most of the stations that used to be the cool alternatives ten years ago are so important to the industry now that they are just like little middle of the dial FM stations... (I hear that KCRW, while on a college campus actually has no student employees (?).. and we all know many of the djs are payrollled at record companies as consultants...) I did get a response card back from them, none of the check boxes checked, just one word written in marker: "PASS".

well, whatever. they have a pretty good studio set up, especially for a radio station, good engineers (if a little brusque)... we played 6 songs of all sorts, loud and soft. I'm sure they're recorded somewhere.

after this show Mark is whisked away by Dave and Shelby for a grueling day of press and promotion.... yuck. Joey Peters came down to the station after hearing it on the radio 'cuz he lives a block away, hadn't seen him for a while. he's back from Grant Lee Buffalo touring for the moment...

we are left to our own devices until loading in at the Troubadour. my crew for this evening will be Clyde Wrenn, the singer from the Container, this evening connived into running our slide show of 60's motorcycle magazine ads....

Sound check doesn't look promising: Mark has been wrung out by overdoing the press and then having to listen to what they want to put out as a single, the new, improved version of HappyMan, produced by Eric Drew Feldman. this is a sore spot with me and Scott (well, mostly me, really; i get to feeling a little weird about spending a year promoting a record that not only do i not get any residuals from but i didn't even play on it in the first place. i joined the band the week it came out in the UK. and now that i've heard the new version i'm wandering what to do about the guitar melody I play because I've been doing it fluidly in the 3-against-2 rhythm over the bar lines of the chorus and on this recording it's all cut up to fit within the bar lines...), cuz we all rerecorded a great version of the song for this express purpose last fall. but apparently not good enough, so Mark went and redid it in december with other musicians... anyway I don't think he's happy with it and the weight of the LA sky is crushing into his brain, he has a major migraine. who knows if we'll actually perform.....

after sound check, Dave, Paul and I walk into West Hollywood to the Urth Cafe for food (last time I was there, Victor and i sat next to Martin Landau who, with his long greasy hair and trenchcoat, was regaling his young actor-looking dinner guests with entertaining anecdotes we could barely hear...) then back to wait in the club. saw a bit of the first band whose name i can't recall, but they had nice gear. Varnaline were slagged in the LA Weekly as being boring and jangly so they included some beautiful slow songs (In Your Orbit,) to seduce the audience. the beautiful girl from Long Beach is at this show too, so I bounce around talking to her and my other friends who live here like Lisa Gerstein (a NY actress relocated.. other guest listed film/TV people don't get the hint that it's going to sell out and think they can just show up late and get in but when they arrive can't get the carload of people they brought in so end up wasting those precious list spots...)

when we get to the stage Mark is overcoming his physical body and our show is spectacular, despite the idiots who keep yelling at us... in place of the CVB cover of Abundance for the encore, David Lowery joins us and we play another CVB cover, "All her Favorite Fruit" - this is the first time I've ever performed this song, despite having been there at it's inception and demo taping, I got kicked out of Camper right before Key Lime Pie was recorded and they threw out all my melodic ideas and got Don Lax to play violin... (except for Matchstick Men and Flowers, which Morgan actually played on..) so this is the first time this song has been played with the melodies I wrote for it, like the demo version, but, well, it's been ten years and was probably a little rusty. nonetheless, a major emotional performance. I think maybe the first time David and I have been on stage together since Hallowe'en 1988..?

I spotted David Immergluck in the audience at some point in the set, but as to whether or not he saw it is anybody's guess. I also saw him at the show Victor and I played on March 6th, but he only stayed for Mike Levy's set....

here's our set list, it's been transforming slowly into this:

Los Angeles-Troubadour

- Spirit Ditch
- Painbirds
- Almost lost my mind - rock song from the 'chords i've known' EP
- Saturday
- One Man's Blood
- Can't forget the ghost (may have dropped this by this time, I can't remember. Dave and Mark started thinking it wasn't sounding right.... eventually it got dropped from the set altogether)
- Sad & Beautiful World
- My Yoke is Heavy
- Rainmaker
- Sunshine
- Hammering the Cramps
- Heart of Darkness
- Happy Man

- All her Favourite fruit (David Lowery- Guitar, Mark on Drums, Scott on glockenspiel)
- All night home
- PIG

I think we did a second encore of 'Someday' (maybe the only time we played it on the tour?) and a slow quiet song like 'junebug' to get people to go home...

One other weird thing at that show was the guy who came up afterwards and asked me if i thought the record company was doing well for us, i had to say, yeah they seem to have posters everywhere we go....he said then that he too worked for Capitol (!) checking up surreptitiously, perhaps?

afterward we partied on the bus, dude. Dave had a couple friends in LA, german girls he knew from Berlin and Dilly was in LA with the Radiohead movie. this sounds very rock and roll, i know, but really we just sat around and drank beer. (or most of us drank beer anyway. i drink fake beer.)

I awoke the next day realizing that there was no way the lay of the road beneath me could be the 580 into SF, so i got up and discovered two things: 1) we had kidnapped Dilly and she was coming with us to San Francisco, and 2) we were on Highway 1 south of Big Sur (one of the windiest and most beautiful roads in California - on a huge bus with a trailer!). this put us at least 4 hours from SF, so obviously I was going to miss a date I had for coffee that morning... I eventually settled into it and enjoyed the scenery, which i hadn't driven over for perhaps ten years. all the brits loved it of course, and many of the americans had never seen it either. we got into SF in time to load into the Great American Music Hall at 5pm like we were supposed to. We reposition the bus placard to read "Journey" for our entrance to the City by the Bay. Victor came down to be crew, Dilly stayed to be our merchandiser. After sound check Victor and I went over to meet friends at El Bobo, had a great dinner and walked back to the venue. unfortunately missed the first band, a French band who live in Tucson called the (something) Amor Duo. I later heard tapes, they're great. many familiar faces at this show, John from MK Ultra, Shiela Schat fom Liar and the New EZ Devils, Eric Drew Feldman, most Magnetic musicians including Jane and Russ, El John and Chris X. Russ informs me that Jud from Varnaline is also Space Needle and Reservoir and Russ has

interviewed him for KALX, the Berkeley radio station... Russ is a big fan..

Our show is electric and spectacular. or at least I think so, I was probably showing off for all my friends. We played a second encore of 'Cow' (maybe the only time on this tour, but not the best version....) I had fun. After packing up I made it to Zeitgeist for last call. during our stay in SF I kept trying to get Sparklehorse into Zeitgeist because I knew they'd love it. it's my home in SF, a motorcyclist bar with a huge backyard and bike paraphernalia everywhere. they show videos of races, that sort of thing. I think Scott made it by for a bit the next day, but they were showing the Simpsons...

a word on San Francisco: I lived in SF for many years, even when I didn't it was within 75 miles. I love it and will eventually go back, I fled two years ago for dubious reasons. it certainly carries with it the opposite of the psychic weight that LA has. As any moral majority member will tell you, San Francisco is debauched. in LA sex is so commodified that I believe maybe it doesn't really exist, certainly no intimacy exists there, but San Francisco, in opposition to LA, is sex-positive. So finds out Paul, also finding that affinity that roadies have for the people who work in the clubs the bands play in, a trend that he hopes will continue. Paul's brother who works at Capitol in NY starts a score chart for the tour....this also proves that despite all rock traditions, it's really the roadies that get the action, as we knew all along.

I didn't get time to ride a bike in LA, but luckily I have one in Victor's garage in SF and we get a day off the following sunday after the show. I spend the day riding spastically around with my friends Zan and Penny, searching out food, getting coffee from Peet's (for the espresso machine on the bus and a french press that i get). racing back to the bus to drop this stuff off, we see Mandrake approaching, who has done the proper tour manager thing and got tickets to see Lisa Germano and the Latin Playboys who are playing at Bimbo's AT THAT VERY MOMENT! we convince Matt to don the extra helmet and we tear off toward North Beach and frighten the hell out of him (hee hee..) and only miss two of Lisa's songs. I should state that I am a huge fan of hers, especially her latest cds... when she gets off stage i have to tell her, so I introduce myself as another violinist, from CVB... and her reaction is the same as mine toward her, she says "you know, i hate the violin, but I like your playing". (actually i like another violinist too, that would be Warren Ellis. but that's it! fuckin' violin....)

when we leave we take Matt on a short roller coaster ride over Gough street, but i kept it fairly slow 'cuz I thought he'd flip out and fall off..

anyway I had a great time in SF and got back to the bus at 6:30 the next morning...before Paul I think... and we left at 7am.

I first awaken to the sound of either the transmission grinding itself to bits or one of the wheels is spinning a bearing... I don't care however and go back to sleep. so I wake up again when i hear metal hit the pavement. getting up, I see that we're on Gilman Street in Berkeley (?) and the bus trailer hitch holder has broken and we're going to a welder's shop nearby. Nearby, as it turns out, is near Fantasy Studios, but when i look for Dan Olmstead inside he's not at work that day. oh well, so much for improvising entertainment in West Berkeley.

several hours and many layers of metal later, we have a new set up for the bus that will hold that trailer on forever, so we're off to Portland... now what puzzles me is that itch in Allan's brain that, despite the fact that we agreed to drive up the coastal route, he didn't leave SF to the north, like there was some bizarre psychic connection between the bus and its driver that said "drive to an industrial area soon..." and we ended up crossing the

bay bridge instead of the golden gate....hmmm.

next day we're up in Northern California, on the coast. the weather is cold, north of Eureka it's snowing on the ocean (i've never seen this in California). Brits are seeing redwood trees for the first time, very exciting. we drive off the coast over the Six Rivers area to Grant's Pass on a winding road in increasing snowstorm, ok, it's beautiful but a little scary in that bus... but we made it to Portland.

I'm not so fond of Portland. it just rubs me the wrong way, like the sketchy guy who's high on too much speed and won't leave your party and keeps swilling budweiser and trying to pick fights...

and we're playing at the Satyricon, which has been there forever, and it sounds that way. it's always too fucking loud no matter what you do. we've used this to our advantage before, the first time there was 1986 on CVB's first NW tour, right after our first jaunt across the country and Greg Lisher quit. so, without a lead guitarist, we compensated by bringing a strobe light and a fog machine and hairspray to light our instruments on fire all the time, and it's so loud, it worked... even recently i've played there to few people with Dieselhead or Magnet and you just can't get the volume down for some reason.

ok, so the Satyricon people are nice anyway, and they have a new restaurant next door that feeds us. Despite that, Dave goes out to dinner with friends. at this show a few familiar people: Larry Crane the former Vomit Launch bassist and studio god who runs Tape-Op magazine and [Jackpot Studios](#), which if you don't know of and you record anything you should find. also Jamie Smith, former Granfaloon Bus and Lords of Howling guitarist, in Portland producing Rollerball...

maybe the band was drinking. at least they were by the time we were on stage. it seemed like a good idea at the time to have Zia from the Dandy Warhols play tambourine, she really wanted to, but after playing Hammering the Cramps she revealed that what she really wanted to play on was Weird Sisters, and whatever went in between, so she played tambourine and did interpretive dance (this show was videotaped, by the way). So afterwards perhaps it seemed like a good idea for her to play more, I don't know. I walked into the dressing room and heard words like "drop you off in Virginia" and "hey guys I have a little C...". I turned around right there and fled to the bus, earplugs in, into my bunk. mind you i'm not scared of crazy girls, nor am i scared of drugs, it just all felt sketchy and portland-like and I wanted no part of it. they all came out to the bus to drink the night away (except maybe Paul, off experiencing the good old American tradition of shagging in the back of a car...) and I remember Mandrake's 6am pronouncements of "Get off the bus. Now. You are not coming with us. Not even just to Vancouver." Rock.

ok. so. on to Seattle.

First thing is a little live noon-time radio on the UW radio station (KCMU), Mark and I did it as a duo. Steve from Capitol is there again with bagels and coffee.. still a god.

after many nights on the bus we get to stay at a hotel, the famous Edgewater, transient home of many musicians and famed for their debaucheries. (even the bar there is called 'the Mudshark' - I kid you not!). what I did there is none of your business, but I must say no actual Seattlites were harmed in the process. All I know is they ain't cutting the carpet into bits to sell like they did after the Beatles stayed there.

We play at the Crocodile Cafe. I've played there before, last time with Victor when we played as Fifth Business and some horrid band called the Presidents of the USA opened

for us. the club is owned by a woman named Stephanie who had been a coworker of my old college friend Suzanne, both lawyers in Seattle. a few years ago after playing with Granfaloon Bus in town, Suzanne and I got on the ferry to go out to some brewery on Bainnridge Island. As we parked, Suzanne says, "there's Stephanie" who is approaching with her boyfriend after parking their cars. I'm looking at him thinking, "oh god, isn't it pathetic when people have to dress like members of REM..." then we lift our sunglasses and look at each other and ok, it's actually Pete Buck... (and they're on their first serious date, he's thinking he's going to move there.) we head to the ferry lounge for quarts of redhook (which thankfully he pays for from his distended wallet..)

well, years later, Peter and Stephanie are married and have children. Scott McCaughey, from the Young Fresh Fellows, used to book the Croc, now he plays with REM too... I had played on one of the YFF records years ago, and had Scott known that I was in Sparklehorse, he would have repeated the after sound check kidnapping into the recording studio for the Minus 5. oh well, someday soon... anyway nice to see these guys again and they seemed to enjoy the show. we drank at the bar after with them and Peter from No Depression magazine who claims his first interview at an Austin radio station years ago was with me....I have no recollection of such an event, but that doesn't mean much....

our opening band this evening is a young psychedelic band called Voyager One. pretty cool, very spacey but without noodling around. the bassist girl plays a fretless Rickenbacher (? what a weird instrument). Their CD is nice, like early Floyd in some ways..

Varnaline have been having good sets the past two shows, I think there is some NW connection with them...

our show goes well, almost stunningly, but then Mark breaks a string and the bridge saddle flies off, then the next guitar fucks up somehow and at the end of Happy Man he decides to wreck it and fall down, we were rocking. I nearly fell over the glockenspiel at the same moment he was bouncing the guitar around...

well, he doesn't want to do any encores, I never really understand this. sometimes I feel like Mark would be a harsh dad, he's always so mean to audiences who love him when they don't love him enough, he'll punish them by refusing to play more if they talk at all... I think maybe he focuses on the talkers and ignores the listeners. Paul diligently fixes a guitar into working and we do end up playing another tune... this time....

the next morning I am taken to the Lighthouse Cafe for perhaps the best latte ever, and then to the Longshoreman's Daughter fo breakfast, served by the daughter herself I think. a fantastic time in Seattle yet again, and we're off to cross the border. Dave ceremoniously leaves his pipe on the pilings near the Edgewater for some wayward stoner to find.

Here we begin Part One of the Great T Shirt caper, smuggling merchandise into Canada. it actually wasn't that tough, the border people looked but didn't seem to want to get really involved so we got into Vancouver by sunset.

In the past I have loved this city, but i'm not gettin gany sort of feel for it this time at all. I walked over to the area where all the restaraunts were on Granville in Gastown near the cluba dn ate perhaps the cheapest Japanese food ever (and spent those old \$2 canadian bills that had been kicking around my desk for years.) but it all seemed pretty seedy. and we were well burnt out by the previous week of shows, and it looked like

nobody really cared about seeing us here. to top it all off, apparently Zia had gotten Mark's home phone number and had called there and now Teresa was calling to find out who the hell this Zia was!

nobody got close to Varnaline at all so Anders picked up his mic stand and brought it to the center of the dance floor for a couple tunes...

however, despite ourselves, when we played, we rocked, and the audience came forth and it was good. despite ourselves we played a bunch of songs, and encores too. you just never can tell.

we left late at night and went through customs at 4am, they always make you get off the bus so we couldn't sleep til after that. then began the long journey to Salt Lake City.

Sparklehorse Spring 1999 tour diary part 3

Brain Death

We've left the civilized world now, on our way across the wastelands of Eastern Washington and Oregon. we stopped for lunch in some place where there was an Indian Reservation on one side, a Nuclear Power plant on another and a military base training area on the third. Highly desirable real estate! By night time we were in Idaho, yeah. stopped outside Boise at some truck stop where Allan gets a motel room, we get the bus. we all head over to Denny's, which appears to be the local hot spot at 10:30 at night on a saturday, all the local youth are there. many tables of teenage girls, and near us: a couple, him wearing his class of '97 t shirt and her pregnant in overalls. oh yeah. After a brief discussion of teenage pregnancy and where we could all be today, Matt comes rushing in from the "Lounge" area at the Denny's, saying that they're doing Karaoke in there! he's so excited. we could potentially eat in there but it's pretty smoky and filled with cowboys, so most opt to stay at the table. except Ivor and Matt, of course, who can't avert their eyes from the spectacle. after eating, Dave gives it a shot, but while all the cowboys are singing gentle country hits, he goes for Led Zeppelin's Rock and Roll, and does it full on. They vainly attempt to turn him down....

Next day travels take us through Northern Nevada in the snow and to the lovely town of Bendover, excuse me, Wendover for a pit stop, then on to the Bonneville Salt Flats. We've detoured a small amount to get here, we just want to see the test tracks and the speedway. Heading out on the little road, we're starting to get the idea that we may not be there at the right time of year, because as the road ends in a cul-de-sac and we all get out, we realize that the Salt Flats are covered in two inches of water for as far as the eye can see. it's a pretty amazing sight and we are slightly stir crazy so we all take plenty of pictures. Then back into the bus and into Salt Lake City.

well, SLC turns out to be a bust. When we pull up, it is apparent that they have moved the venue from the upstairs "DV8" club to the downstairs "Brick". and they are already setting up for a 6:30 pm all ages punk ska show. So we can't load in until after this show is over and then we get no sound check, but it wouldn't matter cuz there are hardly monitors anyway... and the promoter is in Las Vegas leaving his lackeys to help us out. I head off to have some cybersex at a local kinko's and return to Mandrake loading our bus with our rider, beer and sandwiches basically, and when he's done, we've cancelled the show and are preparing to split. I am astonishingly the only one who still wants to play. (I mean maybe astonishing that I'm an idiot? we all knew that. Jud from Varnaline wants to play too. SLC is always this way, you play punk rock shows in quanset huts, that's just the way it is. man, the shitty places i've put up with in the past just to play... I just can't get behind the mentality of cancelling a show if you're actually there! i could see it if you weren't going to arrive, but I swear in years of touring, never have done this. and we're all a little edgy from travelling and not playing, this just sets me the wrong way, I feel like everybody's really snobby. back into my paperback.....)

A new Vox has been following us a day late until now, we pick it up here. It's a blue speakered one (the 15 watt speakers, to be overdriven by the 30 watts of the amp) so I give my old OX (i had covered the first letter) to Mark to replace his one that has no brilliant channel. the new one gets a 5 so it's VO5. also in the boxes from Vox is a wah-wah pedal that Mark uses for the rest of the tour.

Off into Wyoming, then wake up in Boulder. My brother Daniel and his wife, Barbara, live there so they come and get me and i get to go over to their house and do laundry (thank god)

and watch sonograms of their as-yet-unborn baby. I'm going to be an uncle. Weird Uncle Jonathan. Has a nice ring to it...

We're playing at the Fox theatre, which is a beautiful theatre, but it's Easter Sunday and all the students have gone home, so nobody is there to watch. well, nearly nobody. there's Jef Harvey, from Denver, a fan who has graciously allowed the touring Container to stay at his house in the past, former SF drinking buddy-turned-ski bunny DeDe Turnbull, and even Dave has friends here, a guitarist who plays in the band of the daughter of James Taylor and Carly Simon. As we start the set, we're already drained. but then, a vision, it's the Taylor girl dancing in front, 6 feet tall in a sheer white dress. it's inspiring and she knows it. she's pretty much the only thing that sustains us through the show. We bravely stumble through. the next day, again no show. we stay somewhere in western Kansas and entertain ourselves by going to a bowling alley! Garsh. And those waitresses, they just knew we were a band, gee... So we get to Lawrence and it's some club i've been to years ago but by this point i'm getting a little foggy...at least Lawrence is a college town, hence good coffee... small but appreciative audience, including people who have driven from Omaha, Lincoln, Wichita and Springfield, MO. (including a rock fan couple whom I had seen actually enjoying our show in Austin!) That's dedication. they liked every note, I could just tell. And with the new amp I'm actually getting some decent midrange finally, getting a decent tone.

several days have passed again living on the bus, which means no showers and no shaving, but we get to Minneapolis for another day off, but this time with a hotel room. At the same hotel the P-Funk All Stars are staying and Dave in fact knows Michael Hampton, "the Kid", the guitar player. He has his signature on the back of his bass. Anyhow, they are playing that night and we can go if we want. I walked downtown to Nicolet Mall to meet the illustrious Holly Day, poet and writer, and coincidentally a music journalist as well (which is how I know of her. her poetry, however, is incredible, and that's really why I want to meet her, not just to get Magnetic product reviews.... yeah, sure, you say.) We were going to meet at Jitters coffee house, but apparently it's closed down, as I'm looking for a phone, I see a young woman pushing a child in a stroller and I just know it's her. I walk up to her outside the record store and say "Holly.." and she looks up, it is her. she's a little freaked cuz she doesn't know me...anyway we had a pleasant afternoon talking about words and geography and whatnot, and she promises to come to the Sparklehorse show the next day.

That evening Dave, Matt, Ivor and I get in the hotel's van to get a ride to Prince's club to see P-Funk. The hotel seems to house recent army volunteers on their night before they ship out as well, and as we get into the van, several get in with us saying that they're going to 'the View', a strip club with glass floors that you can sit below (?) and they have some girls with them in this endeavour ...well, at least until the driver gets there and the lady from the front desk comes over and yells "Army kids out! You're not going anywhere!" And they're looking at me! i'll swear I'm with the rock band! I can see it all now, they think I'm an 18 year old recruit, i'm going to be in Yugoslavia tomorrow.... (so i briefly have the nickname of GI Jonathan...)

we had already seen the Original P in Austin, but that was no preparation for a modern George Clinton Concert. We got there way before they started, and waited around watching all the well dressed black audience and the poorly dressed white hippies come in. they started around 10pm. I smoked some with Dave, as I was instructed to do by the band. last time i saw george Clinton was way back in the 80's in Santa Cruz (where coincidentally they had just come from the previous show...) but he had the full thing going on tonight. I lasted slightly over 3 hours, during which I had the revelation that Dave's friend Michael was indeed the guitarist on the 7" live version of Maggot Brain, and a heretofore unnamed guitar hero of mine since high school! and he played Maggot Brain, for at least 20 minutes... and then Blackbyrd McNight did his guitar solo, oh man...

Matt and I left Ivor and Dave there and caught a cab, who's dispatch radio aired the incoming phone calls through to the cabs, it was like a comedy show with the dispatcher abusing the callers...

The upshot of all that was that the brits got some of the funk in 'em. they insisted that it was the best show they had ever seen and they continued to play THE BOMB all the time....every night... I mean baby's first P-Funk is cute and all, but...

Everybody seems to have found some music stores here. Scott went and bought some sort of hard disk recorder factory demo version and Dave bought another 1978 Fender Precision Bass just like the one he's had for 18 years, except the way it was when he bought it.

The bus placard reads "Heaven" now and remains that way for awhile.

OK. We played the next night at the 7th street entry, adjunct of the 1st avenue club, both old CVB venues. Across the street at the Target Center, Rod Stewart! and, no shit, Matt blags his way into getting tickets for us, so after sound check we went over to check out Rod. We sat up on the side in an auditorium of 15,000 poofy haired bleach blonde forty year olds...whew. they were excited! at one point the lady next to me turned and said "don't you just love him? I mean, as a guy?" having no idea what she was getting at I had to say No, but i'm pretty into the violinist... they were playing on a huge empty stainless steel set with no visible amps and then video throughout. what a spectacle. and they're fucking good musicians. whatever. We opened our show we the intro to Maggie May. the audience were packed into the small bar and it went ok. I could see Holly Day entering some form of music listening dream as we played. (I fear that maybe she's out of her mind, wouldn't surprise me. she did compare me to Charles Manson in a review of 'Fancy Birdhouse'.....)

onward to Chicago. Anybody who forgot to shave or shower in Minneapolis is fucked at this point, because we're living on the stinky old bus until Toronto now. I'm the only one in the entourage that doesn't smoke, in fact I am avidly opposed to it, I fucking hate cigarettes. and i say this as a tobacco user as well, I do like the drug. I even like to smoke it occasionally (in a pipe, and I would never do it indoors). Cigarettes are just so fucking not tobacco, like bad booze or American beer. it's sad, they're just made for addiction and Addiction is slavery. I can't wait 'til people figure out that it's really not cool at all, but it's so much like the might makes right of punk rock, those that offend think they're cool by being offensive... and of course even the part time smokers like Scott and Paul are swayed by the full timers so that everybody is smoking all the time in the bus. at least in Europe we had one area of the bus where nobody smoked, but there we also had Scott Fitz on bass, another nonsmoker. By this point in the tour the bus is completely disgusting, everything is dirty dusty and smelly.

In Chicago it's cold. seems a little seedy despite the fact that we're in some fairly cool part and there's nice restaurants around. Paul has lived here for a time before moving to NY so he's got friends. We're playing at the Double Door so we're there all afternoon. I spend too much money renting an internet computer across the street for awhile, and looking for cds at the local Reckless (where they're just as clueless as the Reckless in SF, hmm..) Just to make ourselves feel good, Dave and I go to a semi-fancy italian restaurant where we get the evil eye from the moment we walk in, they think we're bums coming to scam a meal.

Mike Viola of the Candy Butchers opens the show. it's a big place and it's full by the time we play, and we do a rockin' set. my amp was a little low for the hall, couldn't fill the room like Mark's two, the show was videotaped and that's how i discovered that for sure... still and all a successful show. Several friends and Magnetic fans there, including old housemates of mine from SF...

Backstage afterwards I find that Paul's friends include Sally Timms from the Mekons. Despite the fact that she's been doing the song cycle shows in SF a bunch lately, I haven't seen her for ten years, (besides on TV in LA MCing a screening of "Jaws"! what will they think of next..) since Camper did shows with the Mekons around here and they all showed up the next day in Detroit all wearing Plaster Caster T-shirts, red and blue ones for the casters and the castees respectively.

People are starting to get sick by now, the tour bronchitis is setting in. Some have been sick for days already... fuckin' smokers.

The next day in Detroit, we are informed that the Smashing Pumpkins are playing at St Andrew's hall and don't want anybody in the Shelter so our gig has been moved to Alvin's. The unfortunate truth about Detroit is that there's no good food around. We're in a haze. We spend time in the afternoon at a bookstore near the venue getting dirty paperbacks with great covers ("Sin Fool" and so on) and old issues of Rolling Stone from the 70s. I think by this point I was no longer able to concentrate on anything enough to read a book, so I spent most of the time listening to CDs on headphones and staring out the window.

The issues of Rolling Stone are enlightening. Most of the reviews are of bands or records that never made it beyond that year. One story claimed that the Rolling Stones themselves were foolishly continuing their career "crippled with age" as they were... (this in 1979). it all makes me think of present rock journalism with the same sceptical view that the writers really and truly have no concept of the non-importance of what they're writing about and can't give any sort of historical perspective to it.

and as if to prove it to me, we went to Cleveland. I think I can say that brain death occurred in Cleveland. we played the Grog shop, a tiny bar. Much yucky shops nearby. at this point the tension of living on the bus and being gross and dirty finally cracked ---- Dave. not whom you would expect. but he had had enough and on top of it the club was gross and the bass sounded like shit. we got him calmed down by bringing him Austin Powers head on a keychain which spoke four phrases from the movie. Mark has been loading his sampler with phrases from "Touch of Evil" like Dennis Weaver's "it stinks in here" and "do you know what a mary-jane is? do you know what a mainliner is?"

Barry Simons is at the show, he's The Music Lawyer from SF, the guy who negotiated Camper's contract with Virgin way back when, and many other bands before and since. seems he's in town visiting his mother. he says that the street the club is on (Covent? can't remember) is where he used to come to look at hippies back in the sixties, where all the cool record stores were...and now it's this... Barry's alright by me. for a lawyer. I get him a rolling paper.

Next we head to Niagara! and the Great T Shirt Caper Part 2, smuggling the rest of the merch into Canada. Since it doesn't take much time to get to Canada, we have time to go on the Maid of the Mist boat ride! never got to do that before, and with the abundance of Marilyn postcards already sent out, I have to get Niagara ones to continue the tradition.

We get to Toronto a day before we play and finally have a hotel, so after a shower Dave and I go out for food but i am unfortunately poisoned by the food. afterwards I went to see the Matrix and contemplate the life I could have had if I had chosen to stay at Danetracks last September to be assistant sound designer on this movie instead of touring with Sparklehorse. I spend the night and the next day completely nauseous. most of the day of the show is spent wandering around Toronto with my face facing the cold air to keep me going...sick for days. Mark has a plethora of press and interviews, TV and radio and such, and gets to see videos that Garine Torossian has made for some Sparklehorse songs. She also has a film that we're going to use instead of the normal slide show. Our show that night is fantastic, filled with

people and the film is spectacular, it's beautiful (so is Garine, her eyes will swallow you whole.) Lots of local musicians are there too, which is always nice to know. also there is Roman Sokal, who was the sound man for the Invisibles, the film i had scored that was at Sundance this year, who says that the film is going to festivals around the US this june...

back on the bus afterwards, off to Montreal. Having been unable to eat the previous day, i'd trying to find out if I can eat today, and thank god we discover a cafe with decent cappucino. the Club, however, is new and obviously a front for some other sort of money making. And the local Record Company rep hasn't supplied anybody with the requested photos or press. the show is boring. people leave in the middle of it. I don't blame them.

From here we go through customs again at 4 in the morning, as if that was going to prevent them from full cavity search, but again they look on the bus and are so disgusted that they wave us by.

Next stop is Boston. I hate Boston. it's a disgusting and violent city, and I say that from the bottom of my heart. Boston is where i had the truly Spinal Tap Moment many years ago trying to get paid at a CVB show, where the Rathskellar promoter guy had the slicked back black hair and a voice box to talk, uh, rasp out words with. he says, "so there's 120 people on the guest list so i can't give you your guarantee"... I say, "well, we don't know that many people, we're from the west coast..." he laughs (rasps) and says, "You Have A Lot To Learn About The Music Business....."

we get a hotel room but it's outside of town by 30 miles because it's near somewhere where Mark wants to look at studio gear for Static King. it's a 3 mile walk to the nearest highway food. (when we found out about this situation was in Cleveland of course, and as we complained, Mark said "I'm not here to accommodate your days off" which pretty much said it all.)

next day we actually drive into Boston after a side trip to Mercenary Audio to look at more audio gear. it's a great place, but gear that we at the Magnetic Motorworks or the Satellite could never afford. kind of like going into a Ferrari shop. We played at the Middle East Club, a fairly big venue. Richard Gann showed up, he who painted all the Hieronymus Firebrain cd covers. I have my little flip out this evening when i bring Rich and his friend onto the bus and it's full of smoke so i open the roof vent, then Matt comes on and sees the roof vent open and closes it 'cuz it's raining, I jumped all over him.

A band called Wooden Leg opened the show. the show was ok, that's about it. Mark is pretty sick, he's been coughing pretty steadily.... it's a robitussin show. Again we leave after and awaken in New York City, our bus placard reading, "you're in good hands".

We loaded into the Bowery Ballroom at about 2pm. Sound checked til 5. Danny Clinch was there to take pictures of Mark for the Vox ads (ha ha)... I took a cab over to Edie's (the Magnetic Mistress of Illusion, photographer and artist extrodinaire) and Andrew Norton was already there (Andrew is another name from those old CVB records... also happened to be our sound man when we opened for REM, so he's my crew for the show that evening). We went out to eat at Boca Chica, my first real food since Toronto, and then amused ourselves in the new hipster area of Ludlow street, where we found video driving games of California cities like Santa Cruz and San Francisco. saw some random band at arlene grocery, passed by but did not enter the Living Room where, unbeknownst to us, Chris Unrath from Baby Flamehead was playing an acoustic set...

The show was big and boomy, we put as much as we could into it and it showed. probably our best east coast show. in the audience in front of me, LD from Flare, partner of Chris X in their

new project, the Moth Wranglers, winking whenever I looked at him...

New York Set List

- **Spirit Ditch**
- **Painbirds**
- **Tears on Fresh Fruit**
- **Saturday**
- **One Man's Blood**
- **Sad & Beautiful World**
- **My Yoke is Heavy**
- **Rainmaker**
- **Sunshine**
- **Homecoming Queen**
- **Hammering the Cramps**
- **Heart of Darkness**
- **Happy Man**

- **Abundance**
- **All night home**

I should point out that these set lists are just what was listed, I can't remember what we actually played, and sometime it isn't what's written...

Paul had bought a Fender Jaguar Guitar in Montreal and graciously allowed me to use it at these last few shows a a second guitar to my regular Stratocaster. It was inspiring to have new tones to play with.

after the show, everybody partied downstairs until whenever they kicked us out. I got to show my friends the wonderful stinking tour bus. wheee.

Left and woke up by the Airport tower hotel in Philadelphia. having no idea where i was , i got up and called Eden Daniels, former Baby Flamehead singer, who said, I can come and get you but you have to come with me as I shop for my birthday barbeque. when she arived, we took Paul into town and proceeded over the bridge into NJ to buy beer 'cuz you can't in Philly on sunday, and ran out of gas. Luckily, we were on just that much of a slope to keep the car going on to a gas station....eventually stocked with beer and party favors, we went to her birthday bash, where i learned of Chris Unrath's performance the night before, and by then I had to leave and go sound check at the Theatre of the Living Arts, where we had played last fall with PJ Harvey. realizing that my friends here were going to drink themselves silly and forget that I was even in town soon enough, I bid them adieu and went to South Street and lost myself in the revery of being in the theatre ("that's where I met Polly Harvey, right there!...")

in Boston, Rich Gann had told me a story of a coworker of his at RISD who had a 17 year old son. the day after the prom, the son is fumbling about the ktichen trying to make a bowl of cereal, whistling. the Father said to Rich, "he thinks i don't know what's going on.." well, Dave Dreiwitz live in New Jersey and he went home last night. He arrives with his girlfriend, whistling. he thinks we don't know what's going on.

He also happened to bring his weird Danelectro longhorn bass for this last show.

A band named Bent Leg Fatima opened. great Can-like weirdness, a very Jaki drummer and a

guy with many synthesizer things... Varnaline gave themselves to NY like we did, and they're all sick too. seems like the tour should have ended last night. anyway, we slug it through and pack up to leave. drop off people in Philly, (Mark is staying to do NPR Fresh Air interviews the next day, Ivor leaves from the Philly airport) head on up to NJ and NY to drop off Matt and Scott and Paul, by the time I get up the next day it's only me and Allan somewhere in Pennsylvania.

Eventually by dusk we get to the Linkous Ranch. After Allan and I unload all the gear, I realize that I am going to have to take two trips in the truck to get it up the road to the house, but by this point I can smell actual sleep so I have super human strength and unload it all alone. The I had to feed the animals, and got sucker punched by one of the horses while giving them oats, the fuck. bit my tongue. Showered and soundly slept, Mark and Teresa came back shortly after I arrived. Got a ride to the glorius Star Motel in Dillwyn where the bus was the next morning, Mark grabbed whatever he had left and we went off to the Richmond airport, the planes were on time and I made the same trip through Chicago and home. In looking through the bus, however, I found out that sometime in the past few days Mark had lost his little bag of loose leaf lyrics, all the lyrics he had written for the past two years. All are gone! A tragic end to the creativity of the tour, and Mark seems to write while he's on tour.....

And to round it all out, I stayed in SF for the next few days and played another show with Victor at the Bottom of the Hill opening for Mark Eitzel the next Saturday night, and we all bought new matching Danoelectro Guitars and basses for it. (or at least everybody else's matched, mine's sparkley.)

that's it, if you don't like it, write your own tour diary!