

Tour Scotland England, Ireland and France 27th April to 9th of May 2000

Written by Tony Overwater



We leave Holland by car for a tour that will bring us first to Le Mans, France, and then for a tour through Scotland, Ireland and England. It's been a while since we toured by car. We did some tours to Scandinavia and Britain some years ago. Lately we were getting used to travel by plane. We have to find our place again in my 12 year old Mazda 626 station. Joost and I in front, taking turns driving, Yuri in the back next to the bass and the bassdrum. One square meter each for many hours a day.



Today we left at one in the afternoon and arrived in Paris just in time to get caught in the rush hour. After one and a half hour on the Parisian periferique we drive 2 more hours south for Le Mans. We arrive at 10.30 pm, in the rain with steamed up windows and no oxygen left in the car, a smell of wet camel feet filling the small space. Yes, we are on tour again.

We spent most of the time talking. I own this car now for one year and still haven't installed my radio. To pass the time the trick is to find a teasing topic for the discussion. It was easy this time. Joost and I just saw Jesus Christ Superstar on video and we were impressed. Yuri was, as usual, disgusted by our uncritical passion for this movie. Joost asked what Yuri thought of Jesus and off we were for a three

hour debate on Jesus, God, religion, love and even politics. Time flies than.

Le Mans

The last time I played in Le Mans I spent most of the time in the hospital with drummer Sunny Murray. We were supposed to play in quartet with David Murray, Sunny Murray and Graham Haynes that night. But David and Sunny got into a fight in the minibus on the way between Paris and Le Mans. The driver got scared and stopped the car and they continued their fight on the middle of the highway. It was a fight between friends, maybe even more between father and son (they are not related though) so it never got really bad but somehow Sunny hurt his hand. That night David left and didn't play the gig, Graham didn't feel like playing anymore, so Sunny and I played a duo concert. Sunny had his right hand wrapped in a towel

and avoided using it. After the concert we spent the rest of the night in the hospital where the x-ray showed Sunny had fractured his hand.

Since than Sunny and David haven't been playing together however on the program of this year's festival I saw that they would play together 4 days after we played there. It's nice to see things come full circle.

We played in a nice theater in the middle of the town. I had spent the morning studying and I was surprised how well that went, considering the fact that I had spent a whole week working on our boat and in the garden. Sure enough, what usually happens when you play well before the concert I wasn't playing that good during the concert. In the whole the concert wasn't bad. Joost played on his 'new' Gretsch from the early 80's and it makes quite a difference. The whole bandsound improves. More subtle and the drums and the bass are blending beautifully.

My friend Kees van Boven, who is a jazzfestival director in Holland, is at the concert which is a nice surprise. We hang out together that night looking at the festival concerts in a beautiful abbey just outside Le Mans. We spent most time talking though. The concerts, despite the high quality of the individual musicians, don't interest me at all. Most bands I hear sound like a collection of musicians instead of like a group.

The next day we get up early. We have to drive back to Holland to catch the nightboat to Scotland where we will play next.

It's Koninginnedag (Queen's day) today. That means party time in Holland. People dancing in the street, children playing funny games and many people are out in the street selling second hand stuff, drinks and snacks. I really should be home with my son Kaili. I must say I miss him a lot on days like that. I called him up this morning to wish him a nice day but his main concern seemed to be the question if I already had bought the Pokemon cards that I promised him. Pikachou, Ratata and Ash are all he lives for at the moment. I can't wait until this hype is over. This Nintendo brainwashing makes most children into greedy little monsters.

Europoort



Second mean of transportation this tour. The night ferry to Hull. We try to predict the food that will be served, the quality of our room and the amusement offered. The economy class rooms are simple. A toilet sized room with two beds one above the other. Yuri has the same room for himself. His argue to always get the single room in these cases is that Joost and I sleep too noisy. Calling the kettle black! Anyway, he is the leader so why not.

The food is better than expected. The Malaysian crew has prepared a buffet that extends the usual roast beef and mashed potatoes with a very reasonable Indonesian rice table. I feel pity for Jasmine, the singer/piano player in the Flying Dutchman lounge, she must have lost her voice already for quite some time. With a deep cut out decollete exposing most of her breasts she seems to try to compensate with her looks for her loss of voice. 'Raindrops keep falling on my head', performed with the help of a little paper icecream umbrella she snatched from one of the tables, comes out with squeaks and sighs. I feel so sorry for her throat that I can't bare it and leave for the other musical entertainment. A teen group, two boys, two girls singing covers with much more enthusiasm than you usually find on ships like this. The movie 'Mission to Mars', probably the biggest attack on my intelligence since silvester Stalone's 'Daylight', fills the rest of our night.



I like Scotland. Especially with this sunny weather. The roads, the hills, the pubs and the kind and funny people here put me in a good mood. Or at least in a better mood than my playing would normally allow me to. I play like shit. I feel like an empty barrel. No ideas, no energy and too many wrong decisions. the only highlight for me seems to be Mr Neil, our Arab music based tune. All three of us are looking forward to extend those influences into a new project that we are thinking of for quite some time now.

Ireland

This tour looks like an old fashioned telephone switchboard. Crisscross lines on the european map. After France and Glasgow, Scotland we drive now for one gig up and down to Dublin, Ireland. We left at seven this morning to catch the ten o'clock high speed ferry to Belfast. than 3 more hours to Dublin. Tomorrow back for 1 concert in Edinburgh on the west side of Scotland and the day after we take the plane to London for some workshops. Back on the plane and 2 more concerts in the highlands of Scotland. Phew..



We discovered a new videogame on the ferry to Ireland. Motorboat racing through the most bizarre landscapes and cities. Yuri, the only one of us without a driver's license is usually best in these games. While I crash my boat on a bridge in Venice he swiftly maneuvers his jetboat between the gondola's and other competitors. Taking turns in competing with each other we spent our daily allowance in 30 minutes. But what a rush. Just have to cool down now for driving the car again, safely.

Dublin

It's sunny and it's warm today. As they say here, the weather is 'brilliant'. The last time we were here it was exactly the same. It looks like a subtropical climate here to us. The only give away that I'm wrong about that, is the pale complexion of most people here. Like in holland though, they embrace every opportunity to expose their delicate skins to every beam of sunlight available. It's the first of may, labor day, but it looks like high summer. I guess in two days the white skins will turn tomato red like the over enthusiastic Brits and Irish you see on the beaches of the mediterranean in the summer.

We play in the same place as last year. JJ Smyth's a pub with a music room upstairs which is rented by the Improvised Music Company that organized our concert. Like last year it's a great gig again. The people here love music, and they are really attentive and responsive. Straight away we get in contact with some local musicians and have nice conversations about music and culture. My playing is slowly getting better. We mix up the repertoire and try to find some new angles and solution for some of the tunes.

Tuesday 2nd of may 17.00

Today we left at eight and we hope to arrive somewhere between six and seven. We drove the whole day and spent two hours on the ferry. I hope we will have time to eat before the concert. It's time for our traditional 'happy hour' now. Stop at a petrol station and buy coke and chips, salt and vinegar, and maybe some powerbars, called flapjacks.

20.35

We ate Indian in 20 minutes, two doors away from the venue. We start playing while the spices and chicken still fight their way down to my stomach.

We are glad to see Nod Knowles, the organizer, from the Bath jazz festival. We saw him a few days ago in France but he hadn't had time than to attend our concert.

London



The next day we get up at 5.30 to catch the 9 o'clock flight from Glasgow to London. Joost found out last night that he left his bag with clothes in Dublin. Also his agenda and phone charger are in there. Luckily we have some information, like departure times and telephonenumber on separate papers. It's the first time that we will be flying with Easyjet. The cheapest way to fly. It's quite simple (no meals, no boardingpasses or seat numbers) but it's not bad. Yuri has a struggle with the lady at the desk concerning his saxophone. She thinks 'that guitar' should go in the luggage department but Yuri insists on taking it on board as he has been doing for the last 10 years. New regulations and a bad tempered employee decide otherwise. The saxophone goes with the luggage. Luckily everything goes fine. Two days later on the way back there is no problem at all. Yuri just brings the saxophone with him. Most airline companies, including Easyjet are musicians unfriendly, alas.

In London we're picked up by Toby, the organizer, in a colorful hippy bus which reminds me of the closing scenes of JC Superstar. We're driven to Dartford where we are doing some workshops and a concert. The first workshop is in the closed department of a mental hospital full of serial killers and murderers. I can't help wondering who did what. Sometimes it's hard to see who are the patients and who are the personnel. It's quite nice though. A girl comes up to me and asks me if I'm Michael, somebody she knew from before she was locked up. 'No, I'm sorry that can't be me. I'm from Holland.' They walk in and out the room and talk to each other while we play. We try to explain a few things about what we do. They seem to like it. After the concert they excuse themselves because it's time for their medication. A woman with a trolley enters the room and the patients gather around her patiently waiting for their daily dose of medicine. The numb expression on their faces and quiet behavior are in contrast with the way they look. The kind of people you would turn around for in a little alley at night. Here they look like old toothless circus tigers in a cage.



The next day we have 2 workshops, one in a girl's grammar school (no comments!) and later one in the Mick Jagger center. The same place where we will do the concert that night. Mick Jagger is originally from Dartford and he opened and sponsored this cultural center just a few weeks ago. The concert is nice. I left my own bass in Scotland because of the flight and I play here on a bass from the music school. It's quite a horrible bass but after struggling with it at the workshops the bass and I come to terms during the concert. Within

it's limits it has it's charm and we have fun during the concert because of it's thumpy, rocky sound.

Montrose

We fly back to Glasgow and drive to Edinburgh to pick up our instruments that we left there during our visit to London. Joost is reunited with his lost bag. We drive further up North to Montrose where a Dutchman has founded a jazzclub in his own hotel. Quite an achievement to run a jazzclub in such a small town. That night it's quite full though and we sell many cd's, thanks to the aggressive selling techniques of the organization. They take the cd's around to every table and persuade the people to buy them. In the same way they attract their audiences. Besides a direct mailing they literary call the people up, a few times, to convince them to come to the concerts.



[click to enlarge](#)

The next day we have our first day off in 10 days. We drive into the highlands and make a hike through some fields and along a loch. At one point we all lay down in the grass and enjoy the enormous silence. It's only than that you realize that we are in noisy environments all day. The car, restaurants, jazzclubs. We stay for half an hour not saying a word. This is probably one of the greatest virtues of his trio. We can spend hours a day not saying anything just leaving each other in peace. We spend so much time together during these tours. It's only when we sleep that we have time for ourselves. Other than that we do and share everything together. Even on our days off we stick together. I don't know any other band that can do that. We've been together now for 10 years and the balance between our differences and things we have in common give us just enough movement to grow without stop. We spent the night talking about this in the local Indian restaurant of Montrose. I think this trio is quite an unique threesome, each of us with different qualities and personality.

Aberdeen

Our last gig on the tour, our last concert with the current repertoire. We decided to change our repertoire. After 3 years of pop tunes we long for some new challenges. More harmony, more complexity. We will each write two tunes and find some new pop and jazz standards to play. Also our arabic repertoire will be extended.

We play in the Lemon tree in Aberdeen. A very nice club with probably the driest acoustic I've ever experienced. The very friendly technician doesn't seem to have any experience with acoustic music. When a technician asks for 'the kick' instead of the bassdrum you know things will go wrong. A pop drumset is not supposed to sound as it sounds acoustically but should become something else through the PA. A jazzdrummer though, plays his set in the natural balance and all the PA has to do is to make that sound a bit louder. This requires a drastic other microphone technique than most technicians are used to. The same goes for the other instruments. A good 'jazz' technician comes first to listen to your instrument before he mikes it. A pop technician works from the mike and will ask you without hesitation to change the sound of your instrument because he gets to much resonance. It's an old struggle, we fought it many times but it's still tiring.

Anyway the gig is nice and we're relieved to leave this phase behind. It was a successful tour. Not because we played that great, on the contrary we played quite bad, for our taste. But it was clear what the problem was, we need some new material. This gives us a new direction and that is just what we were looking for. The coming two months we will start to work on this. Hopefully the next tour will be a new episode for the Yuri Honing Trio. This chapter is closed now.

