

Jack Pioneer Soundtracks – Debut Promo Tour

“The George Wright Stuff” AKA “The Promosexuals”



Figure 1: Too Poor offices circa 1996

It's May 1996 and I'm about to embark on my first ever promo tour of Europe. I'm in Too Poor's offices at Highbury and I'm being asked prior to the trip who I wanted to go with. Paul Cox, then head chap of our record label is amiably warning me about the upcoming trip.

'It's pretty hard work' he says smiling, rangy, all teeth and lank hair. 'You won't have much time to go off and see galleries and films and things like that. They (the foreign licensees) will work you pretty hard.'



Figure 2: Paul Cox Spring 1996

Hmm. It seems I don't have much choice in the matter -I'm the singer, so obviously I've *got* to go. Although for 3 minutes I'd toyed with the idea of granting no interviews - ever - and thus going for a Howard Hughes vibe, this fantasy was quickly scotched. After all, I'm excited, goddammit! I want to get out there and spread the quixotic word...I can play at being a pop star, stay in hotels, live off room service and theorize with earnest Swedish philosophy students while they interview me for obscure fanzines ...

I already have my stock response ready for pretty much any question likely to come up: I'll put my hand to my chin, (I had just the one back then), gaze out of some European window, fix my gaze onto some distantly profound ski resort and quip: '*One wonders...*'

(I will adapt this in Germany to '*Wim Wenders*')

Back in the reality of the North London record company office, the carrot cake munching, silky haired and affable Paul Cox is still talking. Who do I want to accompany me? Such a trip will be too much for me to bear alone. There's a lot of interest in 'Pioneer Soundtracks' and the itinerary will be full. (At this stage I'm not at all surprised that there's so much good

feeling about our debut record. It's everything I wanted it to be and more).

So let's see. Jack is a big group; Seven personnel. I should have a lot of choice in theory.



Figure 3: Jack 1996 L-R: Colin Audrey Matthew Anthony Richard George Paddy

Audrey, the New Yorker who does the string arrangements and plays violin is OK. I mean, I don't have any particular problem with her. She's great at what she does and has a kind of diffuse affability about her; a sort of typical American optimism that I suspect shrouds a deep-seated anxiety. But it's this kind of cheeriness that grates rankly on someone as naturally miserable as I and besides, Audrey is not that keyed into the philosophy behind the record. (I'm having trouble recalling it right now too). Nor is there any reason that she should be au fait with the album's roots. And err...will that do?

Richard Adderly, our 'second guitarist' is another albeit genuinely cheery fellow, seemingly full of the kind of bouncy puppy like joy that comes from what appears to be a healthy middle class upbringing. (And why not). Plus he's about 4 years old at this point.



Figure 4: Richard Adderley Jack Soundcheck Early 1996

While I enjoy the purity of his character in company, helping him to pronounce long words, and mashing up his rusks, he's not exactly a poster boy for the harsh Battaile and Kafka inspired 'Pioneer Soundtracks' ideal.

Hmm. Then there's Colin Williams. Bass Player and unacknowledged Frank Zapper Doppelganger. Colin is an enigma to me. Within a riddle.



Figure 5: Colin Williams In Studio 1995

I'm...I'm sort of in love with him. I never feel like I can truly reach him. He's genuinely mysterious to me. A kind of silent guru. What's he thinking behind

that goatee and those shades? What's with the *smock*? Where does he go on weekends and how come I'm never invited? Harrumph. Etc Nah, Colin is too inscrutable for this trip.



Figure 6 Frank Zappa.



Figure 7 Patrick Pulzer and Anthony Reynolds

Last and least: Paddy Pulzer, the drummer. Paddy and I just don't mix. It's a chemical/Biological thing. Milk and Poteen. Or maybe it's because at heart *I'm* a drummer too? And that I don't like his drumming particularly. (Its ok but...more a matter of taste above all...

Or Maybe its because I'm jealous of his Jewish- ness. (I'm a practicing lapsed catholic). I've always wanted to be Jewish, ever since seeing those big table scenes in Woody Allen's 'Radio days'. I dunno. But whatever... It wouldn't work. The trip is almost two weeks long. Paddy and I have nowt to say to each other after 10 minutes in the back of a van, let alone over two weeks.



Figure 8 Patrick Pulzer at Home North London Circa 1996

Ok. Then howsabout...howsabout...Matthew?

Jesus! Forget it. I've never had a relationship like the one I have with co songwriter and guitarist Matthew Scott. He's one of the most brilliant guitarists I've ever heard and one of the most useless people I've ever met. His social skills are down there with Dustin Hoffman's 'Rainman' on PCP. We do connect on a

deep, mystical musical level, granted. And that's the point. (We're like Jagger and Richards without the revenue). But when we're not playing or writing together, I feel an eerie vacuum rushing in, howling, and making my blood itch and pucker. Its like having a lover and you only bear each other because of the great sex-in this case the sex being the music. After a pint or 30, common ground arises as it would between anyone. I mean, I LIKE him most of the time, even feel a warped and skewed affection for the curmudgeonly bastard. But no way can I share a 2 week trip mano a mano with such damaged, albeit talented goods.



Figure 9 Matthew Listens to Anthony guide Vocal 1995

(By the way, whether any of these characters would want to spend two weeks with me...is unrecorded.

Its most likely an anagram of the following would most approximate their feelings on the matter:

"Fop/being/up/pretentious/not/cooped/aeroplane/I'm/on/not/a/with/that"

That leaves George. Keyboard thumper.



Figure 10 George on Walkabout Highbury Fields 1995

Big shiny George. George is 6ft 8 inches tall. Very small spaceships orbit his carefully cropped head, his hands span decades. His feet flip flop nonchalantly across varying time zones - heel in the tropic of Cancer - toes in Capricorn.



Figure 11 George crouching 1995

He is also one of the brightest, most articulate and clued up geezers I've ever met. Much sharper than me. I live in Anthonyland but George is actually involved in politics and stuff, gets out and moves and grooves in the real world while I make tiny skirmishes upon it and then spend weeks reading and thinking about my excursions.

George is kind of the third genius in Jack (ahem) and like a real true genius; I don't think he's even aware of it. I know Matthew isn't. (There's a vague and sexually potent brooding Resentment between them).

George's physicality is a big part of his genius as a member of Jack. He looks great on stage, I mean...He looks so wrong for the group he's perfectly right. And even he wouldn't call himself a musician although he has impeccable taste in most things. (Miles Davis was once asked what he looked for in a musician. He replied: *'The way he walks and the way he dresses...'*)

But despite being no Chopin, Big G has a true idiot savant talent for *noise* - of the analogue synth variety. I wanted him in originally as the kind of Eno figure but he's something more than that, already...more literary, droog - like and aggressively political.

I christen him George '*right stuff*' Wright!

Lately he's been wearing a jacket I found in the street, a purple rained on leather thing that only a psychotically depressed crusty the clown look-alike could carry off...but on George it looks cool, weird and timeless. It's a look no one else could possibly get away with. I imagine it's hard for him to find clothes to fit, but he saw this in my flat and just claimed it, or rather it claimed *him* - jumping up onto him like a garishly Puce and elongated stray dog finding its long lost master.



Figure 12 George with Jacket

George would be my perfect axis on this promo trip. He can talk up a storm and is constantly surprising and interesting to talk to. The downside is that he can get a bit argy bargey and unpredictable when he's had a drink or nine. (*The line 'There he goes/losing fights in public' from 'Biography of a first son' was written after our first meeting with George. After which he went out with Matthew and ended up surfing down*

**the stairs of some club in a fight with two squaddies
while St Etienne (!) played in the background -
Squaddies in an indie club! Big boy agro to the
soundtrack of 'Hobart paving'! (Club X I think it was).**

But George is cool with me, surely.

I'm a *sobering* influence, right?

Of course I am.

(Sigh):

'Not'

**So off we go to get our passports - in one day - and
then before ya know it we're off to Europe. First stop
Cologne...(Or was it Munich)? Then Holland,
Switzerland, France and other places I no longer
recall....**

The trip will be only a *major* series of fuck ups.



Figure 13: Anthony bearing it and grinning.

Neither drowning or in Berlin

Spring 1996 was the first time I'd flown since I was a kid. I'd flown quite a bit as a child and *loved* it but that was over a decade ago I was worried about flying again.



Figure 14 Anthony and George take off for Germany 1996

For some reason I'd become obsessed with the idea of air pressure. In those days Contact lens saline came in aerosol cans and I was convinced that mine - and for some reason - my balls - would explode once in the air. This didn't happen- I'm sure I would have made a note if either event had occurred. Still, I hadn't slept well and was feeling unwashed and slightly dazed when after a surprisingly boring 50 minute flight we arrived in Germany.

However, there was some delay in getting off the plane. A portent of trials to come. George indicated

that he wanted us to wait until the rest of the passengers had cleared out. This went against every instinct in my body, an instinct that kicks in on buses, trains and boats – said instinct being to jump up, smash a window and *get the fuck outtathere* as soon as ready and able.

But George kept batting me down, like some fly, fixing his gaze somewhere down the aisle. Eventually I was allowed to leave my seat, the plane now being more or less empty. On cue George bounded ahead with massive elastic strides, goonily approaching an air stewardess. Smiling, he babbled in German (George had, of course at some mysterious point in his young life, lived in Germany).

He reminded me of a dangerous John Cleese.

The air stewardess looked rather bemused at this lanky purple-beleathered Englishman, stooping in the confines of the Aisle, his monstrous hands suddenly dwarfing a stub of pen, scribbling something down on a torn scrap of paper.

She took the paper gingerly, looked at it distastefully and then nodded kindly at George as if he were a mad giant child.



Figure 15 George chats up fraulein 1996

Eventually the grisly episode was over and we made our way into 'arrivals'. *'What's all that about'?* I asked disagreeably, huffing and guffing pissed off that we were last off the plane for such inane shenanigans. George was lighting up a fag. His tone professional and icy: *'My number in London, in case she has a stay over'*.

Jesus. We were not yet officially on German soil and the boy was already on the make...

Outside in the bright clean air, we were picked up by...I don't remember actually - someone from the local Record company (Rough Trade) who seemed as unexcited by our visit as we were stoked.

The new Teutonic air around us had an exciting foreign tincture. The smell of a million new destinies moving around us...I was a stranger here. G was a strange stranger. It was strangely good to be...a stranger.

Boring note: (Jack had signed to Too Pure in the Uk and Too Pure in turn signed with labels abroad. These labels then licence (not merely distribute) Too Pure records. This means they buy the right to press and print copies of, for example Pioneer Soundtracks. (We the group don't see any of this money and it doesn't come off of our debt to the label. So, we may owe T. Pure £50,000 for what it cost to make P. Soundtracks etc. This we pay back by selling copies of the album. Meanwhile, T.Pure can licence the record to 10 foreign labels for £10,000 a time and this has no direct bearing on our debt. This was my understanding of it anyhoo. I stand to be corrected. And licensing is different to merely distributing - where a label in Germany would simply import the UK versions of the record to sell in Germany. Thus, the more popular a

***record is, the more versions there are of it.
Interesting huh)?***



Figure 16 Jack's Royalties

**So we're in Germany, its early morning, the car is not,
as I recall, long and white.
(Any associates fans reading this)?**



Figure 17 George and Anthony being driven 1996

**I'm pretty knackered now. My plan is a bath and bed
and then maybe a tour of local bookshops and bars.**

**I've got it all figured out. Because, I mean *surely*,
were not expected to do interviews *today*, right? Or
else we would have come late *last night*, right? This is
obvious, logical and civilized.**

**I yawn regally and flop a porcelain wrist about.
Hunger pangs begin to bloom beneath my ripped six-
pack. In all the excitement I'd forgotten I was
starving. Like the guy in the Hemingway story that**

wakes up and lays there for ten minutes before he remembers his heart is broken...

The driver babbles in German. Its so nice *not* to know what people are talking about. I sink back in the soft leather while George lights up a cig' in the front seat, (its in my aristocratic nature to always slump in the back of cars.). 'Yeah', I'm thinking. 'A hearty breakfast, Chill out in a steamy bath, nap, get myself together and hit the town at a little before dusk. Sounds good. I feel lucky, mama...I feel...mighty fiiiiine!'. I close my eyes. Everything's gonna be all right from now on. I'm the boss now. I'm running the show.

Welcome to Tonytown, you scum: Population: *Tony!*



Figure 18: Anthony Reynolds AKA Tonytown 1995

On cue I'm awoken by a hard brittle voice from the front of the car: 'Oi! Reynolds!' George turns to me from the front seat all googly eyed and translates: The gist is that we're running late so were skipping breakfast and getting straight to the job in hand. We don't want to keep the journalists waiting, after all. This then, is German efficiency.
"Raus"!!!



Figure 19 George looks down on Munich

From this point on, the whole tone, shape and form of every promo trip Ill ever make is patented.

And by God, I have no right to protest. Of course, I am *grateful* to even be here. This is *work*, right?

I'm a *lucky* motherfucker that anyone wants to even *speak* to me about my record, right? Because, I mean, whom am I kidding? *I* know, *George* knows and the guy in the *driver* seat knows, that Pioneer Soundtracks is average to middling indie *dreck*, right?

And the small army of Germany's most prominent journalists, now awaiting our presence will know this soon enough too.

Suddenly nervy, manicured fingernails in my mouth, flawless white teeth chomping to the quick, I look out the window at the citizens on their way to work. Like they give a *schnitzel* about our unique blend of melancholic pop rock, right? Fuck. It's a *scam*. I'm a *fake*. A *bum*. And everyone knows it. I better get in line boyo! *Fuck* breakfast. Shit. What was I thinking?

I shouldn't even be slouching in this backseat. I sit upright and straighten my tie, tidying my hair. Maybe

**It'd be better if *I* offered to drive? I know I can't but
I'm willing to learn! Just give me a chance!!
Fuck that - maybe I should get out without even
asking and *push* the car? Start directing traffic!
Christ knows I'm gonna' need a job soon enough! My
heart is in my mouth, my blood pressure off the
scale...My Dior shirt soaked to my back. I knead the
temples of my proud brow with a clammy hand. '*Shit.*
It's all over before it's begun!'**



Figure 20 German Citizen: Mostly indifferent to Pioneer Soundtracks

Throughout the entire trip, my lush fantasy sequence of downtime; a breakfast, a bath, hitting *anywhere* at dusk, never mind Herzog festivals or smoky bars - will evade me. My time is not my own. I will never catch sufficient breath. Again. From this point on I will always be predominately tired, grumpy, frightened and hungry, running with the hunted in pursuit of the mirage of 'promo related record sales'.

(I will embark on promo tours for every Jack album hence and this state of mind/condition will be fought increasingly with drugs and tequila. But on this first trip, I am still, relatively an innocent).

We arrive at the hotel my blood sugar levels at an all time low. The hotel is nice. Stylish. Theatrical. The town is clean. The mood efficient. There is a room for

interviews with a waiting room beyond. I barely catch a glimpse of George and I's quarters.

The journos; eager, earnest, polite, occasionally challenging, are trooped in.



Figure 21 Journalists from German Rolling Stone Magazine 1996

There is little time to catch breath between the sessions. While awaiting a phoner to connect - the line is bad - I cram crackers into my mouth, washing them down with Coffee, no time even to add cream.

Interview wise, I have my spiel down. I don't remember it now, but at the time I was acutely in synch with the philosophy of Pioneer soundtracks. It was a concept album, it embodied a youthful ideal and I lived and breathed it.

***'And we both knew something forever/Something now I don't recall'*. There was a purity about that time I've never recaptured. So the interviews were painless in that respect. The words poured out of me.**

Automatic talking.

What's weird is how natural this unnatural situation felt and so suddenly. This was my life and I was living it.

**A day of one-sided conversations subject : my work -
and me -what more could an ego freak like myself
want?**

**George was on the periphery of my senses
throughout.**

**The last integrator packed up his Sony and marched
off into the dusk. Night fell and I was no longer
hungry. Just tired and weirded out by having a
conversational mirror held up to myself all day.
George - a smudge of cigarette smoke and lilac leather
- headed out onto the town with the local rep. Me, I
skipped dinner and turned in. I hoped to be asleep by
the time my buddy got back. George and I shared a
room, like GIs. Romantic, huh?**

**It was cold. I lay in the easy gloom and wondered
what was going on in Cardiff. I didn't miss my
girlfriend in London at all. I wondered what the rest of
the band was doing right now? The fools.**

**Staring through the darkness I was spent and
content, neither horny or not. I wished I smoked.**



Figure 22: Anthony prepares for bed in Munich Hotel Room 1996

**We were going to another part of Germany tomorrow.
I couldn't know it, but the fuck ups would only happen
once we left this country.**

**London was a hundred years away.
I could hear music from a club down the street. What
day was it?**

**I heard shouting in the evening air. Angry German.
Perhaps George had got into some bother with
sailors?**

**It was a nice image and I sloshed it around my brain
like mental chewing gum. George could take 'em and
anyway...**

**I was beyond such anxiety. Knackered. Kaput!
There was an old radio on the sideboard, across from
the bed.**

**I turned it on.
They were playing Simple Minds...**

Down and Gout in Frankfurt and Antwerp

Soon were flying to another part of Germany. *On a propeller plane!*

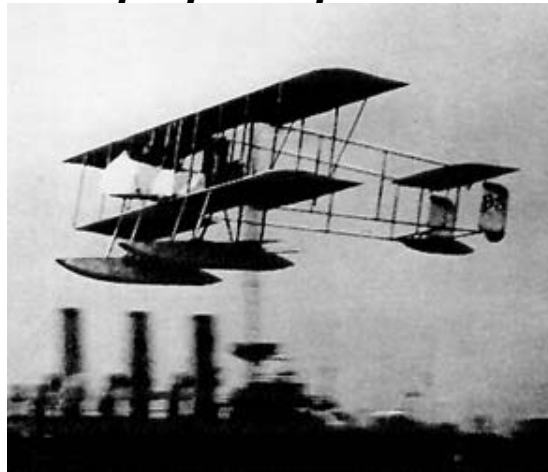


Figure 23 George and Anthony leave Munich circa early 1996

I'm rather nervous. There are only 4 other passengers and the plane is very loud and being smaller than yer usual commercial flight, very shaky. At one point I ask George to ask the pilot if he could fly a little lower. It seems to me were getting rather *too close* to the sun for my taste. If God had wanted us to be this high up, he'd have given us etc

George has his noggin stuck in a CP Snow book. I don't exist at such times. So goes the dynamic of our relationship. He ignores me. I start talking to myself, for comfort sake more than anything else. *'Ah well'* I muse rather too loudly, *'at least the plane is so empty, if we did go into a dive or whatever, at least I could make it to that emergency door sharpish. No fucker is gonna get in my way. Plus, on a set up like this, Ill wager there must be some provision for parachutes aboard such a jalopy'*.

George doesn't even look up. *'We'd be good as dead before you had a chance to move'* he says calmly.

'Sides which; those emergency doors aren't real in a model as old as this. They're fucking painted on, mate'.



Figure 24 Anthony and Georgie mid flight.

I adjust my cravat and get up, moving a few seats further to the rear - out of sight of the damned propeller. I force myself to look at the book I've got: 'Just the One' - a Biography of Jeffrey Bernard. I'm that edgy I don't read a word. The pages swim. I glance along the empty aisles glance at George his cropped noggin stuck in his posh book. He seems to be smiling faintly. My thoughts are petty. *'What I would fucking do mate, is jump on your back like a chimp and then jump off when were 2ft from the ground. Mate!'*

(George Wright 2006: " Ahem. What can I add to this stream-of-concs- nonsense? Marvellously entertaining stuff from Anthony, as always.

Of course, you didn't have to travel with him - plumpish and petulant, and the worst traveller I've ever met:

AR - 'The wheels are falling off the plane'
GW - 'No, they're not, they're retracting, because
we're ascending')
AR - 'Ascending? Like in a horror film?'

(etc)''

**We spend quite some time in Germany. We stay at
some nice chap's lovely house in the countryside.
(Gerhard was his name). He plays Hank Williams
constantly and it's nice to see the inside of someone's
home for a change.**

**Stroke of luck, there's a copy of German 'Playboy' in
the drawer beside the bed. A photo spread, black and
white, Helmut Newton style. Two women start out
boxing and end up fucking. I'm a grateful witness.
Ahem. Calms the ol' nerves, what?**

**Morning comes and I'm taken to town, to the small
flat of a younger record Company rep'. He hands me
some Cds by a group called Bismarck Idaho. They
have tiny stickers on them saying; 'Produced by
Momus!' 'Oh, I like Momus' I tell him all innocent
like. 'Did his name help sell any'? 'Oh no' he groans,
'Nein'.**



Figure 25 Momus Circa Mid Nineties

The chap looks aghast, as if I were asking something conspicuously daft. He looks gravely out of the window, as if remembering a childhood in the Gulag. *'Nein...nein'.*

At some point I ha ha - tenderly complain at how busy we are. I'm thus told that Germany is our biggest market which is nice to hear but rather rum as well. Because if this is us *big* then we must be the size of ant dandruff everywhere else.

Then again what am I fucking on about? We've only released a few singles, none of which were domestically released outside of the UK. I learn here an interesting dynamic: If something is a critical hit in the UK, then it will travel outward, impressing other terrortries. But this calculus will not work in reverse.

Because our first few singles have been ecstatically reviewed in Britain, the foreign press are thus excited too. I don't know it now, but while nice big reviews are jolly nice, what counts in terms of sales - is radio play or a TV advert. Or a movie synch. All three and you're sorted.

I am thus haunted by the 'produced by Momus' sticker, an ill talisman.

Still. Although days of talking about myself have become eerily natural suspiciously quickly, I'm still not completely bored by the process. Germany *likes* us, and, from the tiny segments (A supermarket, a café, a hotel, an airport lounge), I experience, I Like Germany too!



Figure 26 Anthony and George (Making Anthony look small) Somewhere in Germany may 1996

We spend time in Frankfurt and Hamburg. (I think...I'm not sure. What I AM sure of is as of writing this I've STILL never been to Berlin - what the fuck is that about)?

In one of these cities I get a call on the reps cell phone - still a novelty in 1996. I'm handed a small black brick. The genially languid tones of Paul Cox are on the other line. It seems that Peter Walsh, the sterling chap love boss dude who produced our album, is in Town! What are the odds! We meet at a bar, once the days exhausting itinery is completed. (Among which a student neurosurgeon tells me that 'Hope is a liar' made his neck hairs go 'Pssst').

**Someone else tells me our songs are pathetic. *'Oh. If you feel so'* I reply, hurt.
'No I mean like, full of Pathos, JA?')**

True to form, as we arrive to meet Pete, they are stacking the chairs, on the brink of closing. In this rather prophetic atmosphere Pete and I embrace while George, in perfect German, orders a first and final round at the bar. Pete is beaming, a sunny blonde presence. He's lost weight. *'I just cut out all fat from my diet'* he states plainly. He's in town recording a German group that sound like *'the waterboys'*.



Figure 27 Peter Walsh and Anthony recording P.Soundtracks 1995

**Were all happy at how the Jack album is going.
(Although its not yet released for another two months)...the mood is justified and modern.**

(Pete, 2006):

"I enjoyed working with you too. I did not totally enjoy the Black wing vibe and I know that we were slightly restricted by budgets and schedule, but I feel confident that we got the best out of what was available..."

The experience of recording with someone as gifted, decent and professional as Peter Walsh did in a way spoil us early. And that was almost a year ago now -

the perfect summer of 1995. As the waiters lock up the till, Pete and I are planning for the follow up album. Matthew and I have already written half of what will become 'The Jazz age'. Pete is enthused by my descriptions of the songs, the new direction, the concept etc *'Budget will always be a problem though'* I say. *'We really need orchestras this time round'*. *'Fuck it!'* He says in all sincerity. *'I'll take whatever they're offering and build a studio on my land. Well do it there!'*

It's a plan. Pete lives in a fine Surrey house on some rolling fields. If we record at home we can take all the time we want. It'll be even more blissful than the Pioneer sessions at Blackwing.

Back in whichever German city this is, the staff is chucking us out. We are on a long boulevard. It's dark and rainy. Lights through mist. Empty wet streets, cars hissing as they pass.. This then, is Europe in the rain.

**Pete and I embrace.
I haven't seen him since.**

(What ultimately happened is another story. The label delayed recording and Pete ended up being committed to a Simple Minds - that band again - project that went on a lot longer than planned. Pete and I got back in touch late 2006 and have *very* tentatively talked of working together again, budget permitting).

Next stop: Belgium, Antwerp. I know this ain't gonna be good as soon as we arrive. A turnipy looking fellow with a standoffish manner meets us. On a fucking *bicycle*.



Figure 28 Our Rep in Antwerp

I'm aghast. George and I, surrounded by our luggage, are, as ever, knackered. I look around incredulously as everyone but us steps merrily into a waiting cab. 'Uh'...I'm trying to be polite but its raining and my hair is getting fucked up. 'There's...a car...right?' 'Oh no' he replies slyly. 'Its not far'.

Oh for fucks sake. The twat tootles ahead on his shitty bike while George and I scurry behind, pulling spitefully at suitcases and shopping bags. (I found a shop in Germany selling some wonderful Cocteau tomes and they're as heavy as buggery). Of course, I *now* know that there's no such thing as 'not far' in such cases just like the term 'ten minutes thataway' is a hanky of cock-snot. We hurry hot, bothered and wet from mild rain through busy traffic and across bumpy paving and curbs. At one point the suitcase bucks and rears and I fear my wrist will be put out. 'This is a bit off, isn't it'? I shout ahead over the traffic noise, through wet air. The guy actually stops and looks over his shoulder. 'Momus was here last week. It was good enough for him'. That name again. 'In fact, he sat on the seat and we rode in together'.



Figure 29 Momus Antwerp Mid Nineties.

**My proud brow crinkles, aghast at this idiot logic.
'Yeh, but there's two of us!' says George, getting
agitated and yet hoping to blame someone not
immediately accountable. 'Err...Didn't they tell you
there'd be two of us'?**

**The guy doesn't answer. We tramp on, sweating and
parched in the rain. Eventually we collapse in a stuffy
office - not even a fucking hotel mind you!
'Were late' says the fool. 'We will start immediately'.
Despite this, he disappears and George and I sit
fuming on a busted couch for 45 minutes being
practically ignored by all in the office. The guy's
manner never improves. I don't know if it's 'cos he
hates the record or what. Of course, I don't *mind* if he
does or not - I'm not that precious. But by Christ, he
should be professional enough to be polite and
considerate, surely. Were his bloody guests. Citizens
of the realm to boot! "Ye God sir, you have a woman's
arse, and as captain of this ship, I shall see to use it
as I see fit... '!!**

**There is some consolation. Were much less busy in
Antwerp. They're not as convinced by our brave and
audacious debut as the lovely Germans. *Good. I'm
glad. I want to go to bed.***

En route to the hotel, we make some sort of detour to a grimy club, where were hoisted onto a more agreeable host. The rude guy clocks off. '*Good riddance to bad rubbish*' I mutter when he's safely out of earshot. The new chap sorts us out a few spliffs for back at the hotel. We're staying at the Ibis on a big barren square. We check in hastily and at last I luxuriate in the solitude of having a room of ones own.



Figure 30 Crime scene : The Ibis of Antwerp

**I check out the room service menu. Some kind of cocktail for about £13. Fuck it. I've got a tiny bit of publishing money left. I'll treat myself. It's yummy. I flick on the MTV. George Michael: 'Fastlove'. Love this song. I unwind my Cravat, throw it in the corner. *So tired. So very weary.* George knocks and enters. We share a spliff. George : '*I'm meeting the guy later. There's a Combustible Edison gig. Coming?*'
'...Edison..' this is a modern lounge group of some description. Back in Blighty the Mike Flowers pops is**

being hailed as the new religion and Lava lamps are illuminating England's churches...
'Nah, George. Ill have a drink with you downstairs and have an early one'. I'm a boring bastard and I love it.

Although not the most boring one here. At the hotel bar the only other punter is a depressed and middle-aged businessman in a linen suit, a Denham Eliot look-alike . ***Rock and Roll***. Between cocktails – just one more before a kip - I notice the sign behind the bar - the same one plastered all over the hotel. ***'Got a problem? If we can't solve it in 15 minutes, the bill is on us!'*** Or words very close to that effect. Its accompanied by a Zen like figure on a cloud.

Interesting.

I bid young George farewell on his gay way and retire to my room. My eyes are killing me now - I've had my contact lenses in best part of the day. I crave my spectacles. Bath and bed. How I long to get my head on that bone coloured cradle!

On cue, the key breaks in the door. (There are actual keys here not cards). Actually snaps, locking me out. This cannot be happening. My eyes! No! ***Noooooo!***

I take a weary elevator to the lobby. I explain what I can to the guy behind reception. He's not especially sympathetic. Of course he offers me another room but no way can I can get into mine. Its Saturday night and ***'No one can come out now, its too expensive'***, he mutters glibly.

'But I need my room' I plead suddenly feeling tearful. I point at my bloodshot eyes adding by explanation: ***'My Eyes!'***

He shrugs a Gaelic shrug of pure indifference. No doing. Too complicated. These things happen. Excuse me, the phone is ringing. Fuck off please. Its obviously someone much more important than you.

I take the key to my new room as he gabbles at the phone in something other than the Queens English. At least I have a bed. Ill just have to improvise in the optic department I suppose. Someone will be here in the morning. Some *locksmith* motherfucker.

I'm about to let it go but there's a nagging in me noggin. Ye Gods! *The sign!*

I decide to re-address the guy behind the desk in a courtly manner. I feel suddenly powerful. I turn, in the manner of Nuryev. Perversely benevolent. '*This is some problem, eh?*' I ask him, nonchalantly and *obviously* *fucking rhetorically*.

He looks up, suspicious. '*Yessss, it is a ...problem*' he confirms grumpily.

(Why does everyone in Antwerp dislike me so)? I continue the chase. '*And...The problem can't be solved until morning, right?*'

'*Is correct*' he answers 'As I have told you 'Sir', it is triple time to pay a locksmith on a Saturday night'...it would be as you say, 'more than the worth of my job'. He is suddenly very suspicious...scared even and I am impatient. I'm becoming excited as I close in for the kill.

'*I know that*'. I counter kindly. '*I understand that*'.

I'm suddenly a wise old man. Yoda in a suit.

I point at the omnipresent sign, the Zen one on the wall.

'*The bill*'.

'Yes.' He seems mortified, as if this has never happened before now. He is gripping paperwork in both hands with such force that the tips of his fingers are white.

I show no mercy. He is weak. He has erred. He must pay.

'*The bill is on you, correct*'!?

He looks suddenly very sad although surely he won't be paying the bill himself, personally...? Ach, I am weakening in my mercy.

So I drive the knife home : *'You foot the bill, right?'* *'I think so'* he half-heartedly confirms, his head drooping, broken on the verge of tears. He is whopped. Beaten like a gong by the better man : I.

It is settled.

I am soon ensconced in my new room. (Smaller than the original I might add).

Troops of busboys are pounding the steps, bearing tray upon tray of cocktails, crisps and club sandwiches.



Figure 31 Anthony's Room Service Staff May 1996 Antwerp

Fuck it. After my fifth cocktail, conscience swimming, I phone down to reception: *'Another four if you please'*. Jesus. That's about £60 in one phonecall... I check the ubiquitous sign. It swims before me: *'The bills' on us'*. You bet it is, you rude cunts. And So what? I don't make the rules. And the record company guy treated us abominably. *Fuck 'em.*

I no longer even acknowledge room service. I have no cash on me, anyhow. Couldn't tip em if I wanted. As rank after rank of sweating Bellboy lays down the forest of drinks, I try to concentrate on the other George in my life right now - George Michael, spinning on MTV in heaven above. George and me. All the young George's. We're the dudes. Me, I'm 24. I can make Pianos *come*. I pee rainbows and JFK is on the guest list. I consider chewing my cravat but this worries me. I may be drunk but I'm not nutty. And what's more. *I'm right*. It says so, they're on the wall. The writings on the fucking wall, bub. The wall. Hey teacher leave those kids alone!



Figure 32 George.

By the time George comes home I'm a sprawling mess, crooning 'Fastlove' to myself. A deposed King among a sea of wrecked glasses and plates. And yet - George is sad. And that makes *me* sad. A big man like George! With wet eyes! I no wanna see him cry. I have much weakness, my love. One being, I dontwanna see a big man cry. Breaks me fucking heart. Imagine the balls on the fucker!

'Wazzup G?' I ask mateily. 'Have a drink 'I'm reaching for the phone already...

'They fucking ignored me at the gig' he laments, lighting a sad looking fag. 'wouldn't even buy me a round' I grin raffishly and wag a pissed finger: 'Ha. Ill fucking remedy that, my boy'.

I'm onto room service quicker than a 'fastlove'.

We dine and drink merrily. I'm not even sure I explain the broken lock sign deal. Maybe George just assumes I'm mad. Somewhere deep in my conscience, I know I'm bad. But right, goddammit! George right, bally ho!



George and Anthony from Jack in an acid-fuelled bid to break the one-handed drinking record. Note George's uncanny impression of Niles Crane from 'Frasier'

**'Where are the spliffs' whines George. Its one of the last things I hear. I'm nodding off.
'I left you 3 spliffs'...**

Nasty morning. I wake early. Re use my stale lenses. Scout the square outside the hotel. There is a garage sale of Titanic mementoes. Actual lifebuoys and the

like. Hardly good for the luck, what? And a bad bloody omen. I creep back into my room. *I don't a feel a so good.* I slumber in the grey Belgium light. It's Sunday. Blech.

The phone awakes me. I'm tetchy. *'What'!* I snap. It's George. He's crying.

My attitude softens. *'What's up'* I ask in a fatherly tone.

'The bill ...we have a bar bill of. almost £300 and they're gonna' make us pay..They won't let us leave..theyre shouting at me'

'Will they bugger', by Harry. God is on my side. I'm coming down. I hang up on Georges sobbing.

I dress sharp. Suit and tie.

My old room is now fixed. *'Was No problem'* says the arse-faced locksmith.

Hatefully, I load my Suitcases into the lift.

I pull into the lobby, still half - cut. The remains of twelve £13 cocktails humming through my veins.

'What fucker said that' I spout grandly as the doors open, giggling.

George looks very sad indeed, huddled shrunken over by the bastard rep' who originally met us on the bike.

Well, *I* thought it funny, boyo.



Figure 33 George despairs in the hotel reception

To cut a sordid story short, the chap who was behind the desk last night is long gone. The sign means *nothing*, obviously. We have taken the *piss*. They demand the money. They can't believe George and I don't have it. Our manager is on the phone. He doesn't even want to listen to my side of the story - i.e. the truth. The locksmith comes up to us. '*No problem*' he smiles like the idiot he is. Everyone is against us. *The cunts*. Somehow, eventually we are let out of the hotel. The bike bastard is furious, steam pouring from his cabbage ears. He just wants done with us. Somehow, sometime the bill will be settled. As long as we *get the fuck out of Antwerp*

He insists on escorting us on the train to Amsterdam, leaving his bike chained at the station. '*The hotel said they will no longer take guests from us. You have disgraced us. I will see that you and your band never come to Antwerp again.*' (He's right. We don't). As we approach Amsterdam the mood settles. A sorry episode. But over.

'Try and stay out of trouble until you get to Paris' he bitterly blathers. 'Then-ppht!' he makes a theatrical gesture with his stubby hands - 'Do what you will'. Sounds good to me. Fuck em. I'm too hungover to care.

I root in my Gucci bag and come up trumps. At last - my spectacles! I take out my contact lenses. Relief! The ticket inspector approaches. He is a foot away. I open my glasses case. Oh dear. Perched above and between them are 3 giant spliffs.



Figure 34 Breakfast Enroute to Amsterdam

The Bike bastard becomes as red as a hard on. Circumnavigating the ticket inspector, he marches me into the train's crude toilet.

'Flush zem!! He hisses. 'I insist!'

'Couldn't we keep just the one'? I ask gamely.

As if! Was this man ever young?

Down the cistern they go. We return to the coach.

For us, the war is over.

In a few hours George and I will be in Paris.

Where only *one* of us will be arrested.

No...that's not right....Paris is later. We stay in Amsterdam next. That's right. There's a bootleg to prove it.

We're met by yet another grumpy fellow - perhaps he's been forewarned of our wrongish behaviour? If so, like most people he doesn't mention it. Nothing along the lines of 'I know you were arseholes (and arseholed) in Antwerp. None of that on my watch and well get along dandy, Ok lads? Now come on -*Enjoy yourselves!*' Rather, he is merely aloof and vaguely disagreeable to us throughout without ever explaining why. But, (sigh), I guess it should be obvious, right? But look...listen.....as far as Antwerp went, for heavens sake I was only acting according to the *sign*.

I was, theoretically, in the *right*, right? No court would convict me. Come on, man...give a brother a break. Sheesh, already. Less o' this jive.

I mean, I put it to you - we're a rock and roll group right? So...we live *beyond* society, not in it. And in return - you get this great art - come on! Plus, we're *British*. We're just being *eccentric*...



Figure 35 Anthony in Eccentric Mode Amsterdam 1996

(Years later, on a promo trip for the second Jack album, an escapade that sees Matthew burn down his hotel room after falling asleep with a fag (As in ahem, Cigarette) - in his mouth, - and one rep break down in tears after we innocently ask about getting some coke, (I think the poor lass may have even asked if we preferred diet or regular) - it is explained to me why our antics aren't accepted as simply part of rock and roll's rich loony legacy: 'Maybe if you were Motorhead or something', I'm told... 'But *your* music suggests sophistication and a certain gentility - we don't expect the same people to be so...debauched and irresponsible').

I soon realised that another bottom line was; its ok to wreck hotels, demand toxic substances and puke onto Picassos and beat each other up - if you're selling enough records to pay for the damage. Therein, layeth the rub, bub).

But, anyway. I'm in Amsterdam again. The last time I was here was in 1992. That was the first time I smoked da'erb and the last time, (To this day), that I drank Gin. The trip ended with me being admitted to

**the free catholic hospital and I'll tell you about it
some other time...**

**Now, its still may 1996 and George and I are staying
in a nice hotel with a curly stairway and a lovely view
of canals and chained up bicycles. We're old pros
regarding interviews and photos sessions by now and
I take to wearing George's glasses out of sheer
boredom. Bit disorientating as I have my contact
lenses in - the stairs are a trifle tricky to negotiate but
the novelty factor makes it worth it...**

**What's dawned on me at this point is that although
I'm now 'officially in music' or whatever, this trip has
very little to do with that. Making music I mean. On
this trip, all I seem to do is talk and look out of
windows while being photographed - just like Smash
Hits magazine taught me to do as a kid.**

**I miss my guitar and the sense of advancing myself in
any real way. This kind of travel seems to compress
the mind, not broaden it. The non-stop days of
interviews are beginning to feel unhealthily
masturbatory...which is really saying something. So
when its announced that our next stop is a radio
station where were expected to actually do *our thing*
the prospect is a welcome relief from the relentless
verbal jerking off.**

**We hop into a car with Mr Surly and it strikes me that
even this is a new experience - actually driving in a
foreign city. Shit. From now as far as my life is
concerned, public transport is a thing of the past. *I'll
never open a door for myself again!***

**We stop off at a squat where Surly picks up a nylon
stringed guitar and then were pulling into the radio
station. Its late afternoon. Just a few hours ago we
were somewhere else and soon well somewhere else**

again but right now I must focus...enter the zone...morph from happy go lucky walker of the world into my higher calling, *the ballad singer*.



Figure 36 Anthony can play Guitar.

I've changed into my yellow adidias tracksuit top, (after Bruce Lee); blue Levis and vans sneakers. I chat a bit with the radio host, a stunningly gorgeous Helena Christiansen look alike with perfect legs. She plays a song from our album and then asks me what its about. I explain its the usual - girl meets boy leaves girl for London misses girl, girl has moved on etc She gazes at me maternally: 'You know, we girls get upset too you know'. I focus on her long nylon legs suddenly feeling 13 years old, shuffling my feet and dreaming lusty thoughts...'Yes, I uh, guess so mam.'



Figure 37 Some legs

After the interview we're shown a barren room. It's surrounded by a much bigger one where another group are fully set up. They peer at us. So this is how it feels to be a lobster on display in a restaurant.

In *our* room are a piano and some microphones. The engineer addresses George; 'You're the pianist right?' G looks sheepish, avoiding the technicians gaze...'Err. Sort of.. '

The engineer begins his rap: ' It's a lovely Piano. just tuned...nice tone...'etc etc

George sits on the stool that suddenly becomes a pinhead beneath his long frame. He grimaces at the piano, lifts the lid like it was made of dog doo and gingerly prods at a key 'Plonk ... plink...' its obviously a noise making device of some sort... he now seems to be looking beneath it for something...

Tuning my guitar I call over in my best John Lennon impression : 'You don't have to plug it in George its acoustic powered'...

We do three songs. 'F.U'. is a one-chord sequence that doesn't change throughout. That goes ok. 'Biography of a first son' is less successful, with big G playing verse chords as I play the bridge etc etc It feels a lot worse than it sounds. I close my eyes and think of John cage eating an apple. I end the session solo, with a song I've just written : 'This is what you do'.

(There's a boot of this session going about, we don't sound so bad).

Just before we leave I see a wad of cash change hands, going from the engineer to mr Surly - actually less surly now that it's apparent were not complete demons.

Back in the car George and I ask about the money. We are, perpetually skint, it goes without saying. 'Oh its for the session' were told. Silence. Were driving back to the squat to return the guitar. 'Ummshouldnt we be having it, then?' George asks innocently. I know it sounds rude but...well, its obvious, aint it? In the driving seat, surly is obviously improvising; 'Oh, er, no, this is for the hire of the guitar' 'What! You had to pay your mate to borrow it?' I ask incredulously. Again I know it sounds rude but its not like we went to a music shop or whatever..., is it too much to ask to be paid for our labours? I mean yes, we would have done it for nowt, but that's not the same as not getting it when we *are* paid is it And please, brush aside the argument that such a fee will go against the immediate cost of our trip, i.e. back to the record company... Its more likely going in the pocket of surly and G and I are starving troubadours goddammit!

Well not starving exactly, we will eat handsomely on this trip...but...Anyway. I don't remember what happened. I seem to remember us getting half, the notes counted out there in the street in the grim European dusk, this seedy act draining the dignity of our music making, making it feel like something low and seedy...Georges hand stretching out in anticipation like a huge gangplank in the moist Amsterdam air...

We eat heartily in a restaurant where mr not now so surly talks agreeably of nothing but Jansen and Barbieri, who he entertained here just the other month...



Figure 38 George and Anthony

Then we wander the streets and with my share of the cash I actually buy a few CDs - Two 'best of's : Aznavour, Brel, and a Paul Quinn album and a Catatonia compilation.

Back at the hotel, I am suddenly overcome with exhaustion and a powerful need for solitude. (We're sharing a room again). This leaves poor wee Georgie to venture out alone for the evening. Then again, he's probably better off without one such as I...

I lay against the headboard watching the lights along the river, too knackered even to switch on the TV.



Figure 39 The view from my Hotel via memory

**So...this is my life...
I reach out and turn off the light...**

The next day were in Brussels. I remember very very little of it (Maybe I should ask George to contribute to this blog)? Other than me leaving the greatest white shirt in the world in the hotel and leaving too early to buy an amazing Cocteau book clearly on display in a shop window. (I actually scribbled a note with my London number on it and posted it through the shop letterbox. I found the book 6 years later on Charing Cross road).



Figure 40 The holy Cocteau Book

And then were en route to Paris via a wonderful scenic train trip

Chugging slowly through mountains and snow into the waiting arms of the Gendarmes...



Figure 41 The future