

Too Loud In 'Ere

20 Years of Live Music

Jonny Hall

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A Tale of 20 Years of Live Music

Jonny Hall, June 2017



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Introduction

Every live gig I've ever been to has given me some kind of story to tell. You could ask me about any of them and I could come up with at least one occurrence that captured the spirit of the night. But not every live show has been truly 'special'. I've seen excellent performances by bands with crowds numbering in their thousands that were simply 'very good nights out'. No more, no less.

No, it's those gigs that leave you buzzing all the way home that count, the ones where you really felt part of something special and years later, need only think of that occasion to be right back there, in soul if not in body. Sometimes the whole gig doesn't have to be brilliant, a single 'magic moment' is all you need. And it's those events that have kept me coming back for more. Most people just settle for a few favourites and watch them every time they come round. I'm not like that. I've rolled the dice on catching relatively unknown bands plenty of times (especially at festivals). You never know what you might discover.

It doesn't always work. I've had my share of dead nights, shitty soundsystems and line-ups that seem to shift every time you look at them. But there's also those character building moments where somehow I still managed to watch some live music despite near-intolerable circumstances.

It's also worth saying that virtually all the experiences you'll read about here have been from a man-in-the-crowd perspective. The take-off of my DJing endeavours has given me a few backstage access privileges, but the VIP tent at M'era Luna and the queue-jump passes at WGT have always been off-limits to me. As for those live events I personally DJed – well, you'll have to wait for the Terminates Here story, which I have every intention of writing at some point.

The bitter truth is - I've paid for this, financially, mentally, physically and aurally, a perspective rarely seen in the so-called 'music press', and I wouldn't have had it any other way.

1997-2000

I was a late starter to live music. My first ever gig ticket was an 18th birthday present. It would be another few years before I caught the gigging bug. But even those early shows gave me stories to tell.

June 1997 – It started with a Laser Harp.....

Seated in the Wembley Arena next to my old friend Anthony, awaiting the arrival of my childhood musical icon, Jean Michel Jarre. The audience seemed tense and uncomfortable, the generation gap between old and young just a little too obvious. Jarre's fanbase covers all age groups, and not everyone wanted to stay seated for the duration. We young un's would dance to anything, the older fans preferring the comfort of their plastic seats.

A group of people on the far side of the arena attempted to resolve the tension by triggering a Mexican wave. After a couple of minutes of false starts, the whole arena was suddenly awash with arms, everyone suddenly remembered why they were here, and, as if on cue, the lights dimmed and the screen shielding the stage fell.

A green laser shot down from the ceiling, fanning out across the centre of the stage. Monsieur Jarre was right behind, cutting the beams and triggering the opening notes of 'Oxygene 7'. My induction into the world of live music had begun. And the first instrument I'd hear through a concert PA just happened to be the most obscure device of all. A Laser Harp.

December 1998 – Consumed With Memories

Fast forward 18 months. Halfway through my degree, but more importantly at the end of what I'd call the worst year of my life so far (only 2001 would later compare to it). My uni life was collapsing around me for the second time (having pulled myself back from the brink once already). I'd had enough of my college, degree, hall of residence, the lot. I'd developed some alternative music tastes by now, but couldn't at the time find a social life to match it.

One cold December morning, a call from Anthony unexpectedly arrived, returning the favour of the Jarre gig the previous year. We were off to see Fear Factory, and a bunch of mates from back home were coming along too. That evening. Time to find out what a metal gig was like at incredibly short notice. It so happened that 'Obsolete' was one of my favourite albums of the year, 'Demanufacture' I liked even more. In a break from my usual military precision, it was time to cancel the evenings plans involving some kind of alcohol-fuelled carol service. I had to see this.

Trev, already a veteran of the metal scene, decided that the best place for me was standing at the back looking after people's stuff. Bollocks to that. Despite all warnings, I was going down into the pit. The opening salvo of Shock, Zero Signal and Self-Bias Resistor and I was still standing. Then came 'Edgecrusher' and it was time to ATTACK!!! I

discovered, up-front and personal, what a mosh-pit was, and being six foot tall and heavily built, I found I could hold my own just fine. And not just survival. I was going to fight to the front.

Amid songs old and new, the pain of the year just gone began to alleviate. I was where I needed to be. By the closing chords of 'Pisschrist', I was within a couple of metres of Burton C.Bell. And then came the opening orchestrations of 'Resurrection'. I loved that song, still do. And the lyrical sentiment of the song summed up a crucial turning point – slowly but surely, everything would turn round in my life from here.

Back into the pit afterwards, still moshing hard to 'Replica' at the end of the set. I emerged from the pit to find my buddies from Brentwood waiting for me at the back. Trev, frankly amazed that I'd outlasted him in the pit, grudgingly goes 'Not Bad For A First Try'.

1999 – A short hiatus

I've noted that when people tell stories like this, they wax lyrical about all the exotic locations that they visited. Or sometimes fail to. I used to have a colleague who'd spent 6 months in office jobs stashing and 6 months travelling. I knew him shortly after his tour of Australia, a place with plenty of beaten tracks to veer off. Yet he could not spin one exciting tale of his adventures. Analysis of which precise brand of sandal was most appropriate for exploration down under hardly counts as a memorable anecdote.

In comparison, my 1999 was spent in a remarkably confined space. Take a map of London and Essex and draw a rough oval around Hammersmith, Kentish Town, London Bridge and Shenfield. I didn't leave that area once, despite it otherwise being a cathartic rebuilding year for all of my previously shattered hopes. 1999 was the year where I started clubbing at alternative nights, discovering a whole host of new bands, Rammstein and Apoptygma Berzerk especially. It was also the year I discovered the alternative scene within my university – small but (eventually) making itself heard.

Yet I didn't manage to see a single gig. Attempts to see live bands, NIN and Type O Negative never came together. But the appetite was growing. I've included this section only as a lesson to those self-righteous types who seem to think that distant travels or attendance at vast numbers of significant events is needed to live a rich and fulfilling life. Exactly how I turned things round in 1999 is a longer tale to be told later, but for now, let's pick up the live action in 2000.

May 2000 – And I Need Your Chemicals

My next gig was actually my first sight of established favourite Apoptygma Berzerk, which I mainly remember for falling on that once-in-every-four years 'leap day' and Stephan Groth's 'Polizei' T-shirts. But this is meant to be about relevant memories, not irrelevant ones. A few months on and it was during a clubbing visit to Full Tilt that I won a ticket to Flag's first ever 'Gotham' festival. I had no idea about any of the line-up barring one Xymox 12". But what the hell, a free ticket, after my exams were all done. Why not go

along and check it out?

No-one else I knew was interested in going, but I went along in relatively high spirits and sure enough, I got into the spirit of things once I got there, and actually quite enjoyed the sets by Mechanical Cabaret and Killing Miranda, which was just as well as I'd see plenty more of them as the years went on. I met a few people I'd previously met in London clubs at the venue, so I wasn't as lonely as I was worried I'd be, either.

But it was Diary Of Dreams that stole the show for me. It was clear that a lot of people had come especially for them, and it would be a hypnotising set, utilising on this tour a dual-vocal approach. I was won over immediately, especially when they got to a song that was quite obviously called 'Chemicals'. I had no money to actually buy a CD at the time, but I kept requesting 'Chemicals' at every club I went to until I saved up the pennies to buy a copy.

The money would eventually arrive via unfortunate means. I was due to see Nine Inch Nails at the Lost Weekend the day after my degree result was announced and I left uni, but they pulled out. Not tempted by a line-up now headlined by Ash (WTF?), I got a refund and purchased said CD at Resurrection later that day. It's had more than a few plays since then.

There were other gigs in 2000, including my first chance to see VNV Nation and Front 242, but unemployed and unwanted after the end of my degree, I was never in the best frame of mind to enjoy them. 2001 would bring little improvement to my state of mind, but as you'll soon read, my gigging tally began to grow.....

Plus these snapshots.....

I can't write a full account of every gig (well, won't actually), but there is more to my gigging experiences than just these stories. To capture the remainder, I'll end each chapter with a selection of short, isolated memories from the gigs I didn't cover in full. Sure, they may be rejects and near misses from the main text, but they all bear some relevance.

- *Watching the Chemical Brothers at midnight at Brixton, with no idea how I was going to get home*
- *Richard Pyne from Killing Miranda comically baiting a predominantly-gothic audience, something I'd later discover was a personal trademark*
- *The Galan Pixs covering 'Closer' a couple of weeks after NIN pulled out of the Lost Weekend.*
- *Going home from Black Celebration with The Nine's 'Transmission' stuck in my head. Said song wasn't released for several months – what a wait to hear it again!*
- *Thinking I'd discovered the next generation of industrial metal in Sulpher, only for Rob Holliday to instead choose the life of jobbing guitarist for arena-scale bands a couple of years later.*

2001

The first part of this feature saw how I began to dip my toe into the world of live music. But with the exception of Gotham, these gigs were all about 'going for one band'. Come 2001, and I began to push the boundaries a bit further. But not much further. Outside of scene events, 2001 was a dead year for me. The only work I could get was mind-numbing temporary admin work (including that bloke that could make all of Australia sound boring), which left me turning up to several events in no state of mind to enjoy myself.

Despite that, there were a few stories to emerge from the years gigging adventures, concluding with a show that I still maintain is the best I would ever see.

February 2001 – Put You To Rest....Tonight You'll Be My Guest

Small-name industrial bands traditionally had two methods of getting London gigs. They can play support on extended-length billings, or they can do a show 'Upstairs at Slimelight'. Not exactly a marvel of soundsystem technology, but inexpensive and willing to play host just about any band that one of the DJs claim could pull some kind of crowd. And at the time, Suicide Commando were still a small band in UK terms. But they were just starting to make their mark.

I'd found my way up to the top floor, where I'd rarely ventured before, with little if any idea as to what to expect. And what I heard was a form of electronic body music harsher, louder and more scathing than anything I'd previous heard. I had no idea what any of the songs were called, but my blurred memories suggest that I spent the whole gig by the left front speaker, bouncing the full distance. This was my first experience of the style we'd latter dub aggrotech, terror EBM, hellelektro and all kinds of other tedious classifications. Five years later I was all but sick to death of it.

There was one amusing aside. The calls for an encore were inevitable, but having just seen Suicide Commando depart the stage, the band that returned turned out to be.....VNV Nation? Ronan and Mark duly gave out a stack of freebies (I got the 'Standing' CD single) and finally brought back Johan Van Roy and co for a few more songs. Energised by what I'd just seen, I staying the duration of the night and arrived back in Harold Wood, stopping off at my grandparents for a cup of tea before heading for home.

April 2001 – The Hand Lies Severed At The Side Of The Road

Whilst half the scene were off at Whitby over the Easter weekend, I decided that London offered a better spread of live action at spent the weekend gigging and clubbing. Having seen Fear Factory and the bands at Slimelight on the Saturday, I bumped into Wilson, an old uni mate of mine, and also an individual with a wonderfully skewed outlook on the ways of the world. His uni mates had all gone home for the holiday, so there were plenty of spare beds round his house. That was a stroke of luck, because Flag's Elektrofest

was taking place later that day, and whilst I had a ticket (bought after my previous good experience at Gotham), I no longer lived in London and on no account could I handle a there-and-back trip to and from Essex.

A few hours sleep was not enough to recharge the batteries however, and despite first sight of Icon of Coil and In Strict Confidence, I was a broken man and nearly decided to leave before the appearance of a previously-unknown (to me) headliner 'Fad Gadget'. A group of 80s veterans that had spotted my poor state of mind and body made an impassioned plea that I should stay and watch no matter how bad I felt. It just so happens that I very susceptible to persuasion from die-hard fanatics of one band or another and hence pulled myself out of my chair and decided to see what all the fuss was about.

It took two songs to work it out. I didn't expect the singer (Frank Tovey) to start assaulting a prosthetic hand with a portable power drill, spraying fake blood all over the place. And apparently, this was quite tame by his standards, as he later claimed 'I've spilt enough real blood for you fuckers'. Further antics took us right through to 'Lady Shave', with the infamous shaving-foam-dance the highpoint in one of the most surreal bizarre performances I'd seen to date.

We had know way of knowing at the time, but Frank Tovey would die suddenly 12 months later. Neither could I have foretold that my friend Wilson would only be with us for few more years. Sometimes you have to treasure the memories of your adventures because you never know when those you enjoy them with will no longer be around.

November 2001 – Though These Wounds You Cannot See

The DJ Terminates Here story will follow at a later date, but I did also do some DJing back in my student years under the 'DJ EOL' name, though my sets weren't actually all that adventurous. Even though I'd graduated 18 months previous, Imperial College RockSoc invited my back from time to time to do the token 'industrial' sets. They'd booked the band MaxDmyz to headline one of their sICk Night In mini-fests, and asked me to be their support DJ. This was in fact the second time they booked the pair of us, but back in June, petty student politics about who-ran-what-part-of-the venue intervened, and the event overran to the extent that both them and me only had time for 2 songs each.

Fast forward to November. The event had moved to a different part of the Union building and it was time for another go. What no-one knew was that I'd been on anti-depressants the last month or so, and was suffering having being given the wrong version of the tablet by the pharmacist. What's more, I was still desperately trying to extract some kind of enjoyment from a uni that had proved time and time again that it was too conservative, too grounded and too sensible for the zanier life I really wanted to leave.

My own set was a five-song blast of sure-fire hits, and this time MaxDmyz took the stage with a full hour to play with. Back then, the group employed two vocalist and a performance artist who would inflict various tortures upon himself in full view of the watching public, occasionally helped by the bands keyboard player (who never really had all that much keyboard to play). The usually conservative IC audience quickly got into the spirit of things, with various mosh pits, impromptu stage invasions and a writhing pile of bodies piling up in the middle of the floor. The dull, inspired nature of both my year

and my time at IC were firmly receiving the middle finger.

The evenings chaotic nature went into crazy overdrive when lead singer Pete committed his then-traditional set closing move of smashing up a TV set (the old CRT variety) – usually it was an action confined to stage, but on this occasion the broken box found it's way into the crowd and promptly got kicked around the place. When the house lights came on, blood was visible on the dancefloor. Luckily on this occasion, it wasn't anything a first aid kit couldn't solve, but it was an anarchic move that was some distance from what the IC Union employees usually expected to deal with.

MaxDmyz would soon drop the performance, backing-tracked, TV-smashing side of their show and became a solid four-piece metal band, returning all focus to their music. I myself had played my last ever student era set, and my last-but-one until 2008. Sure enough, come August 2011, I once again found myself as MaxDmyz's support DJ. Both them and me had grown quite substantially in the interim. As for Imperial College, after this I hardly ever saw the place again.

December 2001 – Mein Herz Brennt!

Around the time of the 2-song atrocity at IC Union in June, I'd also been due to see Rammstein at the Astoria. I'd actually fallen for their music as far back as 1999, but they weren't touring at the time. They weren't a huge band at the time, but had still managed to sell-out the 2000-capacity London Astoria. Only no-one was letting us in. It seems that a mistranslated rider had led to their pyrotechnics being crippled, and the band pulled the plug rather than rework their show. It wouldn't had been so bad had the same thing not happened with NIN a year ago, and both at times in my life where I could really had done with the cathartic release that seeing one of your favourite bands live for the first time provides.

Unlike NIN, who took 5 years to return, Rammstein promptly rebooked at the end of the year, shifting to the Brixton Academy, who's high ceiling and solid construction was just the job for a sextet of Teutonic fire-metallars. Only none of us knew at the time what the fuss was about. Why did the fireworks matter so much after all? Why couldn't they just play the songs? These boys had a lot of explaining to do.

Having made it to the gig, unemployed, still under the influence of ADs with with about £3 in my pocket, I really, really needed one mega-gig to reignite my stagnant life. It seemed like everyone else did as well. The mere sight of skinny keyboard player Flake appearing on stage and turning a light on provoked an uncharacteristically wild reaction from the audience, accelerated further as the opening chords of 'Mein Herz Brennt' were played. We could hear the singing, but where was the singer?

The answer? Riding down from the ceiling on a motorised disc, that's where! Before long, the Academy was alight in a musical and literal sense and everyone present finally realised why they were turned away from the Astoria six months previously. The full tale of the gig has been told elsewhere, from the head-mounted flamethrowers, the Till vs Flake spanking/dildo ritual and the finale of crowd-sailing in a rubber dingy for their cover of 'Stripped'.

But for me, it was more than just a great gig. It was my life's most important turning point, as I received a call the next day, offering me a job I'd previously been turned down for (the first choice candidate had rejected it). It was the start of a continuous period of employment that continues to this day, giving me a solid platform on which to base my exploits elsewhere. I'd rediscovered my resolve to see things through and make a better life for myself. And whenever I think back to the moment I knew things were going to get better, I'll think back to the Rammstein boys finally appearing on stage in a shower of sparks and leaving in a blaze of glory.

Plus these snapshots.....

For a year I otherwise have less-than-happy memories of, quite a good bunch of live action here!

- *First live experience of Project Pitchfork and Star Industry*
- *Watching Mesh in a pair of boots that in all honesty, didn't fit properly (damn you, New Rocks)*
- *VNV Nation doing a cameo for Funker Vogt at the Underworld during 'Tragic Hero'.*
- *The Nine and SPOCK co-headlining, a match-up that could only be defined as a high-scoring draw.*
- *Diary of Dreams playing the Garage with Assemblage 23 in support. A23 were actually the bigger band in London at the time, resulting in some rather unwarranted flak aimed the headliner online. Tom Shear himself had to intervene. The gig itself went down just fine.*
- *Suicide Commando falling flat at Black Celebration 2001, only a few months after aceing their Slimelight set.*
- *VNV Nation's backing track being set to random at the Camden Palace, resulting in the only time I'd hear an Advance+Follow track live.*

2002

At the end of 2001, my stagnant life finally turned around and come January 2002, I entered a continuous period of employment that leads right up to this day. This of course meant more money for gigs, CD and (for the first time) full-blown music festivals.

What the year didn't provide was any one performance that really stood out....it was a year where the event as the whole was more than the sum of it's parts. It was also the first year I saw more than 100 bands over the course of the year. Though the tendency for the same bands to crop up time and time again made bagging the last few quite hard!

May 2002 - It Makes No Sense, It Make No Sense At All

The annual Flag Gotham festival shifted to the Camden Palace. As had become my habit, I'd been to Slimelight the night before, partied through to the end and then found an afterparty to kill the few hours before the festival began. A drug-fuelled afterparty. I had no idea what we were inhaling, but I left at lunchtime with paler skin than is healthy and an urge to consume junkfood, which was duly located and eaten. Then joined the queue outside....or rather collapsed down the side wall of the Camden Palace whilst the door time was pushed back an hour. I'm pretty sure it was raining, but it scarcely seemed to matter.

Got inside and things looked up, an embryonic form of Ghost of Lemora bringing some joy back into the day. But then the backed-up excesses bit back, and I was ILL. For the next five bands, I sat at the back in a semi-conscious state awaiting something, ANYTHING, that would take my mind off the condition I was in, but nothing of remote interest was being played. The Faces of Sarah? Dull. Seize? Underdeveloped. D.U.S.T.? A total mess. Midnight Configuration? Cringe-worthy. Altered States? What a State!

And then, like a bolt from the heavens, came one band that were head and shoulder above everything that came before. Girls Under Glass awoke me from my stupor and had me down the front, dancing for the duration and even singing along to a couple of cover versions (I didn't know their own songs back then). A kind of electronic-goth-industrial-darkwave combination that had influences from all my favourite genres and a handy Numan cover thrown in. Oh, I needed that!

Clan of Xymox headlined, and gave that kind of measured, pre-planned performance that they always do – excepting a few tweaks to the setlist, every Xymox gig is essentially the same. After this, I would do the whole Slimelight-followed-by-8-hour-festival thing a couple more times, but ultimately realised that I'd enjoy both more if I didn't try to stuff both of them into the same weekend. As for the afterparties? I'd quit those by the end of the year. Sleep seemed like a better option.

August 2002 – Made It To M'era

Late one Monday night in August 2002, my head hit the pillow one night and I drifted off

to sleep with the one thought in my mind "I Actually DID IT!". All those people who had accused me of 'being boring' had been disproved. I'd finally made it to a full-blown continental music festival. In Germany. I'd secured a lift from someone who I'd met on NetGoth but actually first met on my doorstep at 2am Friday morning - though previously established as a scene DJ/promoter elsewhere in the UK, I'm not one to accept lifts from TOTAL strangers!

The four-day jaunt included attempts at tent assembly, consumption of cheap German pilsner, trying to figure out what on earth was being played in the hangar party on Friday, discovering the German obsession with dudelsack (OK, bagpipes!), watching VNV Nation in the rain, cramming into the Hangar to get a glance of Das Ich, getting my one and only chance of seeing Soft Cell live and discovering so many new bands that simply hadn't made a mark on the UK scene that I no longer thought that I'd already heard the best.

OK, we have to concede that on the Sunday night of the festival, I couldn't sleep and actually regretted coming in the first place. The rain wasn't welcome either, considering I had a limited supply of dry clothes. That I had to hide in my tent for an hour instead of watching Ikon due to total and utter exhaustion. And the fact that my German was still rusty having not studied it for 6 years, yet kept getting asked why I was wearing a 'VMP Nation' T-shirt by non-English speakers (BTW, that's a dead joke now. Best Before: January 2012).

But I'd caught the bug. Actually, I kinda guessed that I would and hence booked a trip to InFest a few weeks later (actually I'd bought the whole package of someone who'd pulled out), but this was ordinary in comparison due to a line-up that (strangely for an InFest) was mainly bands I'd seen before, and a shitty atmosphere with far too many people in a sulk about something-or-other. It's a real pity, as many people that would become friends in later years were later established to have been there, and if only I'd had a bit more confidence, I might had come away with better memories.

I was supposed to go to Whitby as well, but my accommodation plans collapsed and I sold my ticket on. I did eventually make it in 2003 and 2004, but the live action at those events always seemed secondary to the social (?) aspects, so there won't be much else about the Yorkshire seaside here.

And try as I might, I can't dredge up anything worthwhile to say about Killing Miranda trying to play Elektrowerkz with a cardboard cut-out of Chewbacca on keyboards, nor Sheep On Drugs attempt at a comeback in a sauna-like Highbury Garage where even the vocals were on playback. What about Sigue Sigue Sputnik, seen for the first and only time, right at the end of the year? Yeah, right. All good fun, but since when have Sputnik and any kind of deep and meaningful insight gone together?

Plus these snapshots.....

Well, there are a few other notables from my first 100+ band year.....

- *Second and last chance to see Fad Gadget live before his untimely demise, two days into my first full-time job.*
- *Going offline on the day the Queen Mother died, missing the news entirely, and only finding out in Slimelight just before And One went on stage.*

- *Dark Jubilee – A two-day Bank Holiday special in London that was well received by those who went, but failed financially with much behind-the-scenes controversy, and a promising promoter was lost.*
- *Welle:Erdball's retro stage show at Infest, and my folorn hope that they could have made it had they cut themselves a slice of the electroclash fad at the time.*
- *Attending Black Celebration 2002 after a Slimelight all-nighter, the last time I'd rely on 'chemical assistance' to achieve such a feat.*

2003

The focus of the last part was my discovery of the wonders of European festivals. It may therefore come as a surprise that my one overseas trip of 2003 came as very much a last-minute thing. There were many other things to distract me closer to home, and the move to a London-based job meant that I was never far away from some kind of gigging action whenever I felt like it. And I felt like it a lot. Rather too often, in fact, as my first major gig of the year would reveal.

March 2003 – Life Keeps Slipping Away

I was now seriously into live music and rapidly ticking bands off of my to-see list. One band I was particularly trying to bag was Ministry, a band who provided some rather sharp relief to my less-than-inspiring early-to-mid years at IC. The venue for the gig was the London Astoria, an ideal location for an see-em-up-close metal gig. And the completely UNideal support band was Raging Speedhorn, a band who had quickly become a personal anathema during a Rammstein support the previous year and now appeared on stage, made a lot of noise and just made me (and several other present, no doubt), even more impatient for the appearance of the headline band.

My first sight of Al Jourgensen in the flesh was disappointing but not exactly surprising – the then-dreadlocked lead singer seemed to be about 20 years older than I knew he actually was, the years of excess having taken their toll. But the music actually sounded OK. Three tracks off the new album to open, then a trawl through the backcatalogue, the hits becoming more and more frequent as the set went on. Which is just as well as there was no getting away from the racket blasted through the PA. Did I say this gig was LOUD? And not just 'WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?' but more like 'FUCK ME, THIS IS LOUD!'. The mosh pit was equally brutal, a 90-minute brawl to the sound of industrial metals most prominent pioneers.

I first realised something was wrong when walking home from the station. The sound of the pelican crossing was slightly off. I got home to find a strange resonating noise every time I heard one object strike another. The problem faded within a day, but I'd realised that the excessive gigging was going to do my hearing some real damage if I kept up at the current rate. I didn't actually lay off the gigging, but I'd since make a habit of retreating some distance from the PA after a favourite song or two. Nothing to prove by lasting the whole night in front the speaker stack.

August 2003 – M'elta Luna

Do you remember the European Heatwave of 2003? I certainly do. Not being one to take the heat all that well, my overriding memory of that month is being deliriously slumped in the back of a Ford Galaxy in a Dutch Service Station at 2am, being told about this strange new cartoon about a square kitchen sponge, but in my state of mind and body at the time, I felt sure initially that I'd dreamed it.

Truth was, I was only at M'era Luna as a last minute replacement for someone else, and I had little time to prepare for the roasting 40C temperatures at the event, peaking at around the time Red Lorry Yellow Lorry hit mainstage. I still managed to see plenty of bands along the way, although one that failed to impress me initially was Nightwish (not yet known in the UK). Their power-prog-symphonic-operatic-metal was just too much to take in at the time, especially when they completely failed to grasp the weather conditions of the time and covered the theme from 'The Snowman'. Nope. Not Now, Not Here.

October 2003 – Holy Books and History Texts Forget Because We Know

It was at the above festival that I got my first live experience of Killing Joke, but such was my heat-afflicted state that I really needed another chance to get to know what they were like on stage. As part of an adventuresome weekend, I got to find out. Back once again to the London Astoria. Those of you who have seen the 'Joke live will know that to truly appreciate the furious, tribal nature of their live show, you have to see Jaz Coleman do his thing at close-quarters. The man has an incredible story to tell, but when fronting up his band, all that matters is that he doesn't so much take up the mantle of a lead singer, more that of a rebel leader calling his troops to war.

After the deceptively grandiose opening of 'Communion', the one-keyed synth bleep that signalled the opening of 'Requiem' piped through the PA and it was time to ATTACK! The Killing Joke mosh pits usually consist of men angry about something or other, this year the topic of choice was the Iraq war, and here was a chance to let some of that tension go. The fury reached a peak around the time they played 'The Death And Resurrection Show', a scathing, visceral seven-minute epic which turns out to be highly spiritual at it's core, but down on the Astoria dancefloor, it was just an excuse for an extended length push-and-shove.

After this, I was punchdrunk. Song after song bulldozed their way through the PA....since the band didn't play their 'new wave era' material at the time ('Love Like Blood' was definitely absent), there wasn't a single break in the fury. By the time they got to their now-traditional set-closer 'Pandemonium', it was only the tightly packed mass of bodies on stage that kept me upright.

November 2003 – But What Ends (When The Guitar Strings Snap)?

Neo-folk gigs. I've been to a few in my time, but it's always been a scene I've hovered around the fringes of, enjoying the songs but not wanting to be complicit in whatever-it-is some of those people stand for. I don't believe everything that's said about the political side, I just want to enjoy the music and then go and watch something different next time without having to sign up to any kind of movement.

This gig demanded more attention than most, however. Death In June were playing a show on the HMS President Boat, a decommissioned boat now moored at Blackfriars. In order to mark the occasion, the organisers laid on a vegetarian buffet, which seemed surprisingly principled for a band who's last album was called 'All Pigs Must Die'. The PA

and stage seem to have been somewhat improvised with little room for performance – Douglas Pearce was seated about a foot from the front row of the audience, whilst legendary neo-folk rhythm-generator John Murphy (sadly no longer with us) was left to play a variety of nursery-school percussion throughout the set, there not being room for the usual drum set-up.

Ian Read (of Fire+Ice fame) played the role of compère, providing us with a quick rendition of 'Benediction' before introducing the main band. Douglas appeared wearing his trademark sniper veil, which would be lifted after four songs and not lowered for the rest of the night. Also notable was the fact that most of the songs were prefaced with some kind of story or explanation as to their origin. This was somewhat refreshing given my only previous Di6 live experience at Slimelight the previous year, where song after tedious song was delivered without break, without variation or without sight of the singers face.

Indeed, for a musical sub-genre that was often seen as elitist and self-consciously controversial, this all seemed quite harmless, a kind of 'sing along with Uncle Douggie' affair. The second half of the set was given over to requests, though the ability to deliver them began to wane due to Douglas' guitars tendency to rapidly shed it's strings. There was just time for my personal favourite 'But What Ends When The Symbols Shatter?', but what ended when the guitar strings snapped was the gig. We called for an encore anyway, and the collected ensemble of mostly-militantly attired individuals present ended up singing 'Heaven Street' without any instrumental accompaniment.

On the walk back from the station, I encountered a drunken man grasping a six-pack of Fosters, celebrating England's Rugby World Cup win over the Australians earlier in the day. Not realising my unconventional appearance, he goes ' WE WON, MAN!!!', to which my only response was 'You're still drinking Oz Lager though'. I went home happy....not knowing at the time that an ankle injury shortly after meant that this would be my final scene night out until New Year's Eve.

Plus these snapshots.....

Some moments that reflected the mood of the scene at the time.

- *Mid-bill band 'Deathboy' filling the 'Upstairs at the Garage' room, only for most of the crowd to disappear before their label mates played later. I called this lack of respect for bands on the bill you didn't come for "The Deathboy Effect".*
- *Gotham 2003 at the Camden Palace, a wild, all-over-the-place all-dayer blighted by technicals but somehow managed to entertain. I had to leave before The Damned finished their set, it would be 13 years before I'd see them deliver a full show. The assembled punks didn't care much for In Strict Confidence, though – one of them even told me to "stop dancing".*
- *Second Ministry show, no support so stuck waiting in venue for ages. Then went to an Armalyte show in the Underworld the next day, one of those bands would have fitted perfectly if promotional politics allowed it, but it was never going to happen.*
- *[:SITD:] getting an encore at Infest, only to find they'd run out of songs. "Iz vere a track you would like to hear again?", indeed.....*
- *Watching The Galan Pixs play a club show at Slimelight at 2am, which due to daylight savings kicking in as they started, resulted in the show ending 15 minutes before it started.*
- *First ever Combichrist show in London, upstairs in Slimelight again, about 50*

- watched it, how many claim to have been there now they're famous?*
- *The Chaos Engine rallying cry during their Whitby show, getting the adrenaline pumping for.....Wayne Hussey's acoustic set. Mood whiplash or what?*

2004

An ankle injury scuppered any hopes of a wild and crazy end to 2003, but 2004 started with a fresh and promising collection of gigs to look forward to. One short-lived but welcome venture was the 'Pity For Monsters' nights run by the Devlish Presley duo and a number of allied friends. Despite co-operation from members London's deathrock revival scene, the bands they put on were varied in style and fanbase and it was one particular hidden gem that provided my first truly memorable gigging moment of the year.

February 2004 – We Are The Universe, Under A Broken Sky

The Wasp Factory label was another movement that tied in neatly with the PFM 'indies go it alone' movement, and in February they joined forces for a four-band billing at the Water Rats. Faetal came and went as a proficient but not yet fully confident opening act, but then the murmurings started that the next band, Earth Loop Recall, were about to take the evening up a gear. I wasn't convinced – I'd seen them once before and found them musically adept but lacking a certain spark. I should have known not to judge a band on an opening slot at the 'Upstairs at the Garage' Scout Hut.

What we received was a half-hour set, a mere five-song sample of ELR's latest album. And one of the tracks (the title track, no less), wasn't even ON the album. Yet those five songs delivered some of the most intricate, hard-hitting and dynamic electronic rock I'd ever heard. Compared to the competition, they just had more of everything. The highlight was the eight-minute epic, 'Like Machines', an almighty expanse of the song that defies all of the verbal description I have attempted to give it over the years. As for the show, I've never made it from the stage to the merch stall so quickly. I was bagging one of those CDs. To this day, it remains one of my favourite all-time albums.

Later on, we'd see Devlish Presley get a stage invasion and Deathboy get a mosh pit, but both acts were humbled at what had just preceded them. Scott Lamb (the Deathboy himself) summed up the feeling of the night by yelling out "BUY EARTH LOOP RECALLS FUCKING ALBUM!!!!". A variant on a cliché, and one that summed up the feel of the night.

What we didn't know at the time was that within a year, ELR would have ceased to exist. Despite a brief revival a few years later (which is featured a few chapters on), the project was terminated more permanently in 2008. Sometime shit just happens, you know?

March 2004 – Endurance Festivalling

Invitation 2004 in Ghent. 3 days, and only a short drive from Calais. A bit of a no-brainer, this one.

Imagine a festival line up consisting of: Tanzwut, Diary Of Dreams, [:SITD:], And One, DAF, Wolfsheim, VNV Nation, Icon Of Coil, De/Vision, God Module, Kirlian Camera, Clan Of Xymox, Qntal, Decoded Feedback, Covenant, Pride and Fall, Elusive and Ordo Rosarius

Equilibrio. Look at it in this days and age and it reads like one of my DJ sets, doesn't it?

Imagine having Belgian beer on tap during the whole event.

Imagine feasting on a Belgian hotel breakfast each morning.

Then imagine not being able to get a taxi back to the hotel after each day had finished. Had I not been in the aftershow DJs party and hitched a lift in a minibus, I suspect I would have spent the Saturday night of the festival sleeping at the venue.

July 2004 – Wish I Had An Angel

Nightwish might have made all the wrong impressions the first time I saw them at the previous year's M'era Luna, but I did eventually pick up one of their CDs on a 'what the hell?' basis, probably subconsciously realising that there was something in their sound I liked after all. And in July 2004, their 'Once' tour hit the UK. Nightwish were not a big band at the time, which meant the 2000-capacity London Astoria was called into play once more. The venue is now of course gone, as has any chance to see Finland's Finest in a venue this up-close and personal – even the all-Finnish line-up is no more. Which makes the capturing of my own experiences even more important.

At the time, the venue had one of those screens you could send a £1 text to and have your message displayed to all present. A rather naff gimmick that never caught on, but on this occasion it was used to host something of a popularity contest for metal bands. People kept texting messages like 'Scream if you love _____'. The audience response wavered throughout this process (reaching a humorous low when someone suggested Cradle of Filth) until the inevitable 'Scream if you love Nightwish' appeared. And everyone did. Just as the lights dimmed.

It may seem odd, but that whole process seemed to take up the atmosphere rating by a few notches, rather like the Mexican wave at that Jarre gig many years previous. A band who were probably puzzling as to why they weren't as big in the UK as they were everywhere else in Europe arrived to find they had a rapturously fanatical fanbase after all.

And me, the wannabe music critic, realised that the enjoyment of a band is just as dependent on the surroundings and circumstances as it is on the music. And from now until forever after (or at least until Tarja was dumped from the line-up 18 months later), Nightwish had captured the hearts of the notoriously hard-to-please UK metal audience. The gig was pretty much the same show I'd see them do a couple of times again the following year, but this time it just seemed to matter more.

August 2004 – Wir werden fliegen über's Meer

Another trip to M'era Luna, and this time we were going by plane. As it happened, I'd never travelled by plane before prior to this day, and we almost missed it due to huge amounts of messing about trying to get parked near Heathrow. I began to get the

feeling that I was the only one of the three in my party that actually wanted to go to the festival, or had any idea who was playing. Anyway, my first experience of air travel involved lifting off from Heathrow at 6:45am, zooming down the Autobahn at 200kmh in an Audi A3 Turbo Diesel hire car, then suddenly finding myself in the midst of a festival site that had previously taken a massive drive across Europe to reach. For all the environmental and security concerns, the Jet Age did bring benefits in bringing the rest of the world closer.

The story of the festival itself is best summed up by the tale of one particular show. In the two years since I'd seen them at this very site, I'd become a massive fan of the band In Extremo. They never seemed likely to make it to UK soil, so this would be my first chance to see them actually knowing how the songs went. What I didn't realise was there were around 10,000 people who knew the songs even better than I did.

From the opener 'Kuss Mich', I knew this would be a special performance. A trawl through the backcatalogue, peppered with pyrotechnics, acrobatics and an assortment of other on-stage antics. By the time we got to the finale of 'Vollmond', EVERYBODY was singing. A French poem adapted into German doesn't make much sense to someone who only speaks English, but I got caught up in the atmosphere and sung as loud as anyone else.

Many more excellent performances would be seen throughout the weekend (even though Saturday night headliners Wolfsheim bombed spectacularly), but nothing could equal the feeling of unity and celebration that In Extremo provided on this day in August 2004.

That, my friends, is what M'era Luna is all about.

The remainder of 2004's gigs would best be summed up by the phrase 'tried hard, but not quite', with the highlight being Rotersand's UK debut at the otherwise-disappointing 2-day Black Celebration festival in October. I've got plenty of stories to tell about Rascal and co later on, but not before we move on to 2005.....

Plus these snapshots.....

Mainly devoted to scene favourites.....

- *Einsturzende Neubauten's Blixa Bargeld's droll demeanour throughout his performance, quite at odds with the music itself.*
- *Elektrofest 2004 coming across as a bit of an electroclash fashion show, before Project Pitchfork dragged us kicking and screaming back into the 1990s again. Or would have done had they not been touring their obscure concept album at the time.*
- *Getting insanely drunk before Diary of Dreams played at the LA2 and my resultant "sing along very loudly and very badly" response.*
- *Wolfsheim's only London show, the best of the three I saw them play in Europe that year. A band that filled arenas in Germany ironically only seemed to work in the smaller venues, but it was all academic as they split up shortly after anyway.*
- *Feindflug making it to London to be greeted by a too-small crowd, and now I'm told a blank cheque won't tempt them back.*
- *Laibach's 'Anthems' tour – the main set ended with 'WAT', the first encore was*

'Mama Leone'. Listen to them back-to-back, watch the DVD, whatever you need to in order to understand how special this moment was.

2005

After a promising start, 2004 sort of fizzled out live-music-wise. Into 2005, then, and time to scratch one of the biggest live music itches of them all. Back in 2000, I had tickets for an event called the 'Lost Weekend' with NIN headlining, a band I'd previously tried and failed to see, despite being the act that drew me to this whole dark-scene place initially.

They pulled out at the last minute owing to 'illness', though many believed this story was cover for some contractual/political reason, being a known music industry trick that the establishment will never admit to (get the band off the bill AND demand sympathy from the fanbase? Get out of jail free!). Anyway, my day-after-graduation party was cancelled. The festival went ahead, but I wasn't interested in Ash and Groop Dogdrill (a band even Metal Hammer thought were too obscure to headline a stage) and got a refund. No news of a replacement show thereafter, nor any action from the band at all, for that matter. Until now.

March 2005 – The Hand That Feeds

This story actually starts in January, when news got out that NIN were going to play two shows at the London Astoria at the end of March. As I wasn't subscribed to their mailing list (it wasn't like the band were doing much), I'd already missed the pre-sale. Despite my gigging experience and growing reputation as an online critic (EOL-Audio), I wasn't one of those people who just 'got in' to things like this by virtue of my position. Then I found the Astoria was running a cash-sale only ticket allocation, one Saturday morning at 9am. I was leaving nothing to chance and promptly left Synthetic Culture at 3am, joined the queue at half an hour later and spent a cold January night sharing tales of just-about-everything with a bunch of people I'd never previously met and (with one exception) never met again. Tickets secured. I was going. My most sought-after band in the venue that held so many memories.

Fast Forward to March. We got the added bonus of a 'not quite famous in the UK yet' Dresden Dolls kicked things off, but there was only one band that were going to make the night. And when the opening note of 'The Frail' played into earshot, it finally became clear, I WAS FINALLY WATCHING NINE INCH NAILS. The remainder of the gig remains something of a blur, the mosh-pit ebbed and flowed, classic songs, the odd obscurity and three new songs from 'With Teeth' (all good ones). I exited the concert as something of a walking wreck, and when I woke the next day, I found that my lower back was aching thanks to a fall I'd taken in the pit during 'Wish'. Yeah, I've felt this pain for you lot so you don't have to. Luckily, the injury faded in a day or so, just as well as there was yet another adventure to come a couple of days later.

April 2005 – No Heaven Or Hell, Just The Land Between

VNV Nation were kicking off on their 'Matter + Form' tour, but no UK gigs were scheduled for the first phase of their tour. That didn't matter, of course, because half-a-dozen of us

could just pack into a Ford Galaxy, hop on a Ferry, drive to Mechelen in Belgium and watch them there. Only we then got stuck outside Calais Harbour for ages due to a dockside technical problem, putting us way behind schedule. It's a pity we weren't going to see Covenant, because I could have headlined this section 'Call The Ships To Port' or some other water-related lyrical metaphor. But no, today was a VNV day.

Anyway, we got caught up in all the late afternoon traffic which meant we only just made it in time for opening bands Soman and Diorama, the former well-received across our party, the latter being a band no-one in our group seemed to like except for me, possibly indicating my slow de-synchronisation with the UK tastemakers sound of choice, something that would later matter more than it did then.

And then VNV Nation....we'd got a DJ promo of the album to listen to in the car and weren't actually that impressed, but it was one of those things that only made sense once you'd heard it live. 'Chrome' wasn't actually an anthem back then, but it opened the set and then, to my great surprise, came 'Joy'. A track that means a HUGE amount to me personally, the first VNV song I'd heard live, but also one that was dropped from the setlist for the entire duration of the 'Futureperfect' tour. Now it was back, and it was worth the trip just for that.

The gig continued with a decent mix of new and old songs, and whilst the predictable encore of 'Beloved' and 'Electronaut' now seems a bit old, the multi-national crowd that had assembled for the show went home happy. Of course, we end up spending three hours on the ferry on the way back and arrived home a little bit before 5am. I'd sort of seen this situation coming and taken the following day off work.

May 2005 – WGT Debut

This should have occurred a couple of years previously, but it didn't, so my first Wave-Gotik-Treffen came in 2005. The first mistake was flying with a connection – I'm no lover of air transport, something that got worse rather than better with repeat experience, so two consecutive flights were enough to get me headachey and ill by the time we made it to the Renaissance Hotel. From now on, I'd typically fly once and then connect by train or bus – it would be 12 years before I used a connecting flight again.

But once recovered, the fun started. Here's the highlights.....

- Trying to find a Mexican restaurant, only to find a missing building at the address we were given (Leipzig is big on urban renewal)
- Randomly starting conversations with any and all English speakers I could identify (this became a habit at subsequent WGTs)
- Sitting outside drinking beer at the Mortizbastei and watching Wolfenmond do an unplugged set.
- Waiting over an hour to see Apoptygma Berzerk come on stage due to unknown technical issues, when really all we were waiting for was Die Krupps big comeback show.
- Finally seeing Zeromancer, then collapsing in exhaustion when Spetsnaz followed them (why were they so high on the bill? Are the Germans that mad for Ebb rip-offs?). The blessing in disguise was that this meant I'd left before Visage, who were

- apparently utterly terrible.
- 8 synth-pop bands in the far corner of the town (Haus Auensee) then a cab right across the city centre to the other corner of town to catch a ninth, which just happened to be The Human League. Who just happened to be unexpectedly good. It would be 10 years before I once again relied on a cab for a 'venue hop'.
 - A day at the medieval stage, run home to get changed, and dance through the night to Mr.Week's 9-hour epic set. One day, I'm going to have to try and beat that.
 - Returning to hotel, sitting straight down to breakfast, and then trying and failing to sleep. Got up for a final wander round, but the circus had left town.

So back in a year? Yes, please!

August 2005 – InFested

I haven't written much about my first two InFest's (2002, 2003) as the event seemingly focused solely on the live action - the relative lack of scene friends back then really mattered when there was only one stage and 45-minute gaps between bands. So I skipped 2004. I did, however, return in 2005 (after a particularly average M'era Luna at that). And this time I knew tons of people present. And found it much easier to meet even more when the opportunity arose. This was surprising as I was undergoing something of a minor mental collapse at the time, getting hopelessly bogged down in the 5-month rework of my EOL-Audio website. But for three days, all of that stress and tension disappeared.

The actual line-up was fairly reflective of the scene at the time, really, with the highlights being Covenant debuting three tracks from 'Skyshaper' (which should had been released that year but wasn't) and the psychotically deranged stage show of KiEw. What was special about this event was the atmosphere, the fact that almost everyone present seemed to be there to enjoy the music with a drink or six and maybe the occasional curry.

The rather basic Halls accomodation was cheered up by the welcoming atmosphere of a bunch of mostly-previously-unknown people who were just there for the music, previously years seeing me either bunk down with musically-disinterested stallholders or a hard-to-penetrate clique – I no longer felt B-listed. The cheap'n'cheerful atmosphere was exactly what I needed at the time. Checking old Livejournal entries, it seems that my rejuvenated state didn't last long. No, that came when the actual site was finished.

November 2005 – I Think We Made It Better

On 5th November 2005, after 5 months work, I launched EOL-Audio v7, a mega-repository of dark scene knowledge and opinion (the best bits are preserved on my DJ site, the factual stuff found it's way onto Wikipedia). This was such a big event that I needed some kind of celebration, so I went to join a group of friends to watch the Ally Pally Fireworks, then down to Central London for a night at Slimelight. And then came Black Celebration the next day. A festival that was originally supposed to be headlined by Apoptygma

Berzerk. Then by Killing Joke Sound System. Then by Killing Joke proper. And finally, by Mesh. Who actually turned up. Time to crawl out of bed and hit the LA2 for a day of mostly-bleepy goodness.

And then we found that someone involved in the sound engineering process either had no idea how to make electronic bands sound OK on stage, or was protesting against something-or-other and sabotaged some of the sets. The early bands (Deathboy, Faetal) worked hard but just seemed to be fighting a losing battle on this occasion, Inertia (usually a great live act) got lost in a swamp of resonance and then that dire, pitiful, pathetic excuse for a barely-survival remnant of an old project, Sheep On Drugs, took the event to a new low.

Mysteriously, everything then came good again when Rico hit the stage. It was like someone worked out where all the knobs belonged again once a real band with drums, guitars and stuff came on stage, and Rico had some pretty good songs which would have worked regardless of what instrument they were played on. Then came This'Morn Omina, one of the most original rhythmic industrial bands you'll ever see on stage (power noise meets tabla?), and of course the old reliable Mesh finished the day off with their finely-honed sing-along angst anthems.

A curate's egg of an event which could have been a total disaster but managed a save with the last three bands. Frankly, I was just glad that EOL-Audio v7 was out there and I could focus on having fun again.

Plus these snapshots.....

In a year with a lot of distractions, I at least noticed this much....

- *Killing Joke's 25th anniversary show at Shepherd's Bush, later captured on 'The Gathering' DVD.*
- *Girls Under Glass not letting a curtailed Electrofest ruin their performance..*
- *Rushing back from the midlands in time for Dead Can Dance.*
- *Watching SonVer in the Ritzy Cinema Bar. I was told to 'bring a book', so I did.*
- *A rare all-electronic mosh-pit in London when Ultraviolence played 'Hardcore Motherfucker'. Pity the angle-grinder had to be cancelled, though.*

2006

Having sorted out both EOL-Audio and my overall state of mental health during the dying embers of 2005, I went into 2006 full of optimism. This was to be the year where I began to make my mark – the site would finally get the attention I thought it deserved, and I could start DJing again, maybe get some guestlists and backstage access, in turn giving me access to interviews, starting a virtuous circle of promotion for my various activities. I never expected to actually make any money, that was too much to ask, but I was hoping I might get a little token something back in return.

The reality was not to be. The London Dark Scene was at it's most political and balkanised in the mid 00s, and someone with no affiliation to one particular faction was never going to get anywhere. What my unaffiliated, fence-sitting self DID manage to do was see way more bands than anyone else I knew. My tale of Sunday at WGT 2006 is so 'me' it probably won't be much of a surprise for those of you who've read this far.

May 2006 – A Sudden Sense Of Intensity

Covenant hit the UK with their 'Skyshaper' tour in May, bringing along Pride + Fall as main support. Opening act for the tour was RBN, playing their first UK shows in 'far too long'. Anyway, the gig sold out, which was hardly a surprise given how popular 'Ritual Noise' and '20Hz' had been the past few months, not to mention the followings the support acts brought along. The Islington Academy was going to be packed by the time the headliners came on.

What was a surprise was how packed the venue was for RBN. Opening bands rarely get capacity crowds, but this was as close as any 7:30pm show was ever going to get. Unleashing 'City Lights' for the first time, vocalising the sample-based 'Machine Code' and then giving us the Slimelight hit 'Faithless' (Original version? VNV mix? How about both?) as a not-too-subtle encore, Steve even going as far as saying 'I'm sure we've forgotten something.....'.

Pride and Fall were next, perhaps a bit anti-climatic in terms of performance, but still a highly significant tour for the band, for reasons that became clear soon after. And then Covenant. I'd seen my share of Covenant shows over the years, but this one was easily the most 'fun', one of those rare shows when the band managed to play most of the new album and still have time for plenty of classics. When all the support band members came on stage to dance to 'Dead Stars', it only confirmed that we'd been treated to something really special this evening.

June 2006 – 5 Bands, 4 Me, 3 Venues, 2 Much, 1 Day, 0 Taxis.

Those of you who have done WGT will know that there's a limit to the number of bands you can see over the course of a day. Usually you can fit in one venue switch tops, and despite the free travel on the trams offered as part of the ticket price, you would normally

need to utilise a taxi if you didn't want to miss anything. I used said modus operandi only once the previous year, and in 2006 I resolved not to use it at all.

Which made Sunday somewhat tricky as the bands I wanted to see were scattered all over the town. But I had it planned like a military operation. From the Agra market and down to the Cabbage Circus for Dupont – check. Then back to the Hauptbahnhof, dump my stuff in the hotel, and over to the Schauspielhaus to see Rosa Crux, an French band performing obscure ritual musics with one of the most bizarre stage shows you'll ever see. Rarely has a trip to a venue for one band been worth so much.

No time to toast a drink to them, though, out the door, bag their backcatalogue on CD and leggit back the terminus and onto the No.11 tram, for an odd multilingual discussion about the evenings bands, arriving back at the Agra for Garden Of Delight. It would be the only time I'd get to see them live, and 'see' is a bit of exaggeration given that their lighting only allowed you to see them in silhouette, but hey, they sounded pretty good.

Next band could probably be described on The Onion as 'Clan Of Xymox in Slightly-Better-Than-Normal Shock'. The band that sound exactly the same every time you watch them actually seemed slightly more vibrant than usual tonight, probably due to the decision that I'd summarise as 'Bollocks to the new album, let's do a greatest hits set'. The band themselves would probably have found a slightly more polite way of putting it, but I'm the one with the keyboard here.

And then....Deine Lakaien. You haven't done German goth fests until you've seen Lakaien do a show to an audience of several thousand gruffti, and they didn't disappoint. Alexander Veljanov was his usual decadent, bardic self, whilst Ernst Horn enthusiastically extracted plenty of satisfying noises from his rack of vintage synths, occasionally switching to piano for songs such as 'Return', so simply lyrically yet so powerful when delivered to a devoted festival audience. It was a triumphant day to a marvellous day of live music, one where my commitment to band-bagging actually paid off.

At some point, I got photographed for Orkus Magazine – my soundbite 'Centre of the Gruffiverse' even ensured the photo got published. Though my offer to become their English-language staff writer was passed upon.

August 2006 – Goodbye M'era Luna

Little did I know it at the time, but 2006 would be my last M'era Luna to date. Truth is, I'm happier settling for the things that got in way actually happening over carrying on as I was with a brief diversion in Hildesheim every August, but I couldn't leave this festival behind without one final tale of a weekend-long party somewhere in the middle of Germany. This was around the time of the whole 'liquid explosives on planes' saga, resulting on chaos on air transport which our party miraculously managed to avoid. We all made it to Germany more-or-less on schedule without any lost luggage. The taxis were pre-booked, giving us an easy route to our accommodation.

The end result was a group of us arriving in a small German guesthouse at lunchtime on Friday, our one fluent German speaker promptly falling asleep owing to jetlag (she'd come from America only the day before) and the rest of us walking off in the direction of

the nearest town trying to find some lunch, and then trying to order said lunch with one German dictionary, one 1995 vintage GCSE 'B' grade in German (me) and one Afrikaans speaker trying to improvise. The English language was widely spoken in town and at the festival site, but hadn't hit the rural parts yet. Various adventures followed, using just about every form of transport available to us (train? taxi? bus? foot? why not all of them?) and the festival hadn't even started yet.

Actually, I don't remember much about the actual music, to be honest – Girls Under Glass (a band I usually associate with rescuing iffy London events) doing a 20th anniversary show, a truly dreadful Blutengel performance in broad daylight (why bother?), my first live experience of Front Line Assembly, an amazing show by Rotersand in the Hangar (prefacing what we'd see in London three months later) and my last-to-date sighting on In Extremo remain the only faint memories. Maybe the festival meant more because on this one occasion, I was the one who knew what was going on, what every band sounded like, how to get from place to place. Maybe here was my first real experience of 'goth herding'?

Maybe it was just that on a year where I felt invisible much of the time, zipping around on my own, this was the one occasion where I felt I actually part of the weekend of others as well as my own? That must be it, because a year later the fact that the festival even took place at all barely registered with me. But more on that distraction later.

November 2006 – Like A Punch Out Of Nowhere

For reasons that weren't clear to anyone outside of the promotional community, Rotersand didn't play the UK in 2005, despite the incredible popularity of their 'Welcome To Goodbye' album. It took until the end of 2006 before they made it back here, playing the surprisingly confined 'upstairs at Slimelight' stage. RBN played support, a light-hearted affair than got the night off to a good start, though I do have some distant memories of getting their backing video burnt to DVD on the morning of the gig.

But we were all waiting for Rotersand. Initially, it seemed a shame that they had to play such a venue as the Elektrowerkz setup hadn't done every band who'd played it justice over the years (Girls Under Glass and Suicide Commando being the two real stand-outs so far). But somehow, Rascal, Xtian and Gun worked out what it took to play these apparent limitations to their advantage. From the moment the first words of 'Almost Violent' were sung, we knew this show was going to be close, up-front and personal.

And no-one gets up close and personal to their audience quite like Rascal – the packed audience lapping up every note and every word, even when he diverted off to hollow-body guitar to play the rarely-aired 'One Level Down'. By the time we'd got to 'Exterminate Annihilate Destroy', the atmosphere was at fever pitch. The encore was inevitable and whilst the setlist is somewhat blurry at this point, I'm pretty sure 'Lastlight' cropped up somewhere around the later stage.

The details don't matter – that was the definitive Slimelight gig. Rotersand had made that little upstairs room their own. For me, though - this particular gig came at a personal 'dead time', where a busy social life was simply a mask for deep dissatisfaction on a more fundamental level, and events at Slimelight immediately after the show were proof that I

was heading in totally the wrong direction. As it happens, the following year would see just about every aspect of my life turn around.....

Plus these snapshots.....

Did I say I went to a lot of gigs this year?

- *Getting two chances to see the very brief reunion of Bauhaus, and a little insider knowledge as to why it was so brief (any questions I receive on this subject will be not be answered).*
- *An extreme music weekender – Der Blutharsch at Elektrowerkz, Imminent Starvation playing the Slimelight aftershow and then the Cold Meat Industry festival the next day, another show that was good to watch but marred by low attendance and too-obvious backbiting.*
- *Dark City 2006, a brief chance to break from purely man-in-the-crowd to fill in as an RBN roadie for one weekend only.*
- *Tool live in Hammersmith – a highly accomplished show technically, but the ticketing fees, venue rules and over-aggressive security left a sour taste in the mouth, the first real signs that the corporate side of live music was getting increasingly rotten.*
- *Rushing back from a work trip to Aberdeen via Heathrow to watch The Birthday Massacre. I wanted to check my luggage bag in the cloakroom, but due to the heatwave on at the time, The Underworld elected not to open it and I had to drag the thing round all evening.*
- *Front Line Assembly and Stromkern at The Scala, a show which I admit saved me the need to go to Infest that year. I'd spent too much by that point!*
- *A much-delayed "what the fuck is going on here" Front 242 show at the Tinnitus Festival in Stockholm. Turns out they had to borrow a e-drumkit from an audience member – it seems Stockholm is EBM central and pad-whackers aren't hard to come by!*
- *An over-sensitive response to a technicality in my Black Celebration 2006 review, that proved to me once and for all that the scene factions were here to stay and I would never be truly accepted by any them – the beginning of the end for my EOL-Audio site.*
- *My last ever sight of a Killing Miranda gig at Bar Monsta, a venuee quipped to only a very basic extent and a poorly managed event that suggested that one should not automatically declare allegiance to every scene-friendly location without question.*

2007

2006 was over and I was glad to see the back of it. Despite much effort and many enjoyable occurrences on the way, my life had gone nowhere and by the end of the year began to feel very stagnant, finding myself unable to change any aspect of my life, for better or for worse.

But what of 2007, the year which either delivered everything I wanted or led me to give up even trying, at least for a year or so. No more EOL-Audio. No more big house at the end of the Piccadilly line. And no more being single, a relationship began in March, although we went to relatively few gigs together, our musical tastes aligning only on occasion. Everything changed this year.

I didn't exactly take a break from the scene, but I was never any less involved that I was in 2007. Naturally, things all changed again in 2008 such that I'd pick things up again and also restart much-missed activities such as DJing again, but that's a story for a later part. I did still go to SOME gigs this year, and here's the story of the best ones.

April 2007 – I've Got Nothing To Lose and Everything To Win

Remember the tale of The Water Rats in 2004? For the whole affair to die within a year just seemed wrong. It couldn't end there, and sure enough Earth Loop Recall re-assembled with a revised line-up and did a couple of 'old songs' shows (one in Cheltenham, and one I went to in London) before cracking on with the new material. Madame JoJos was chosen as the, erm, intimate setting for the London show.

It wasn't quite the line-up that burnt bright and burnt out a few years previous, but with an added live drummer, the 2007-vintage ELR set took on a more primal dimension than the original band. Sure enough, the assorted mix of old fans, goths and indie rockers seemed happy enough with the set as it was being delivered. All the old favourites were getting a look in, plus a brief sample of some new material.

But a couple of us wanted more. During the full-throttle, all-bets-are-off blast of 'Optimism Creeping In', we gave each other a couple of knowing glances, followed by a couple of knowing prods. Then a shove or two. Fuck it, we thought. This gig wouldn't be completed without a mosh pit.

A third body joined us before the end of the song, which was to be the penultimate one for the night. Luckily, the last song just happened to be 'Like Machines'. Eight minutes in length, there would be ample time to slog it out down on the dancefloor. So that's what we did. From the starting duo, we'd willingly pulled at least another dozen from the still rather sparse crowd in JoJos.

Once again, the band would self-destruct within a year after another run of increasingly inconsistent shows and this time haven't been heard from again. I personally haven't triggered a mosh-pit since then, either. Must have grown out of them or something.

May 2007 – Would She Give It As A Gift?

2007 wasn't a great year for big-name band-bagging, but one exception was ~~Orchestral Manoeuvre~~ ~~Manuevre~~ ~~Manevres~~ OMD. The band had recently announced their reformation, and we'd got some decent seats for their live comeback. Hammersmith Apollo balcony front row. Having not yet recorded any new material, they were touring behind their *Architecture and Morality* album from 1983. 'Play entire classic album live' was something of a trend at the time, but this was the only time I'd see a show of this kind. And I didn't even know the album all that well.

Still, the stage set looked pretty decent, and once Andy McCluskey walked on singing the opening tones of 'Sealand', it briefly looked like we were going to get a polished performance. Briefly, because next up was 'The New Stone Age', where he promptly picked up a guitar and started DANCING. I didn't know prior to coming that this was meant to be a 'feature' of OMD shows, but this guy was proper 'Dad grooving away at the School Disco' style. Roll with the Cringes, Jonny – the music still sounds pretty good.

A few tracks later, and it all made sense, because it was time for 'Maid Of Orleans'. I'm no religious man, but somehow the Catholic imagery, combined with a mixture of heartfelt vocal delivery, waltz-time and uncontrolled limb movement combined to truly encapsulate the OMD live experience. A song I'd only sort of liked before had become my dead-cert favourite. If the audience reaction was anything to go by, it was most people's favourite already.

With the album performed within 40 minutes, the second half of the show was all their other hit singles, not a bad song amongst them, but somehow, Maid of Orleans stood out, head and wobbly shoulders over the rest. You can't dance Andy, but you can't half write a decent tune.

May 2007 – Welcome To Paradise

WGT didn't seem as necessary this year, given everything that had occurred, so I treated it more as a celebration of everything that had happened. Such experiences as the only Retrosic live show to date, Heimataerde's stage debut and watching Punto Omega outside in a thunderstorm might all have made it into this review in lesser years, but there was one overriding memory from Leipzig 2007. Front 242.

OK, I'd seen them twice before – a workmanlike show in London late 2000 (when they were still touring their acid techno remixes) and that much-delayed performance in Stockholm the previous year. But somehow I knew they could do better. The band that had influenced so much of my favourite music had a reputation for an energizing live show and I was yet to feel it. Until Saturday night at WGT 2007.

Despite Psyclon Nine's best attempt at alienating the audience, the venue was packed to the gills by showtime. And this time the magic worked. A set loaded with classic tracks, performed in the proper, authentic manner, and a 8000-strong crowd set in motion by the

pounding body beats. The songs got more and more anthemic, the sing-alongs got louder (and less tuneful), and by the time we got to 'Headhunter' the whole venue was caught up in the frenzy of this 100% dead-cert classic track being performed live by the original artists. Germany loves it's classic EBM, and I do, too.

The encore was inevitable. And they still had one surprise up their sleeves. Kampfberiet? A slow, almost-forgotten album track from their debut release? Surely not? Yet the slow, menacing treatment they gave this song served as a counterpoint to what we'd already heard. The insertion of a few lines of 'Radioactivity' in Jean-Luc's vocal paid tribute to their own influences, too. The point was made, though. The Frontmen had another side, more subtle and less confrontational.

Then of course came 'Punish Your Machine', just to prove they were in fact unsubtle and confrontational most of the time after all. But what the hell, I'd had my definitive 242 experience.

The rest of the year wandered along, with relatively few gigs of note (and no more festivals) in it's latter half – my attentions were elsewhere at the time. Still, things would wake up in 2008....

Plus these snapshots.....

Bit thin on the ground this year.....

- *The celebratory atmosphere surrounding two NIN shows and one Combichrist show early in the year.*
- *Marking my 10-years-of-gigging, and hence the halfway point of this story, by bagging a free ticket to the Pet Shop Boys.*
- *Three successive weekends in October watching pre-Slimelight gigs upstairs at Elektrowerkz. Surprised no-one I knew came to see Legendary Pink Dots, but I've never truly sussed out their fanbase.*

2008

2007 was over, having provided few gigs of note in its latter half. 2008 soon made up for it – on the first weekend, I saw Earth Loop Recall for the last time, and System:FX for the first time. The ELR story is already told in previous parts, whilst the definitive S:FX story comes in a later chapter.

Die Krupps came and went in style a month later, and the live show following my favourite album of 2007 (Star Industry – Last Crusades) arrived over the Easter weekend. But looking back, these two events were just very good shows without any real significance outside of the quality of the music.

No, the three tales I have for you now all reflect different aspects of my live music experiences. They are not all positive, but they all have to be told.

April 2008 – Wriggle Like A Fucking Eel

Whitehouse. One of the most extreme industrial music projects in history. I'd bought three albums by then before deciding a fourth wouldn't make any difference. But I knew I had to see this project live. Once. Just Once. I just knew I had to subject myself to the full onslaught of this project's sonic defecation, blasted through a PA, with no hope of escape. Naturally, the Elektrowerkz was chosen as the venue (like they'd get to play anywhere bigger). What surprised me was the audience. They didn't look alternative at all. Was this some kind of counter-counter-culture? And why were there so many of them? Didn't think bands like this had that kind of following.

Turns out most of them were present due to an article in avant-garde music mag 'The Wire'. It seems power electronics were the flavour of the month amongst the beard-stroking elitist quarter of the music community. You'd expect me to get on quite well with such people, and I would as well, but I actually felt completely out of place. The opening band didn't improve matters, sounding and looking for all the world like some bloke spending 40 minutes tuning his guitar whilst his mate does a drum solo. I took a look at the CD stall, but it was full of generically-named discs that were obviously trying to put an ironic face on the clearly extreme music thereon. I took my wallet to the bar instead. I was going to have to drink my way through this.

And then came Whitehouse. There's only two of them, but their live show is no more (less) than a constant barrage of juddering, scathing, pain-inducing wave of electronic noise, with one of both of them occasionally screaming into a microphone. And the term pain-inducing wasn't a metaphor. I was literally hurting under the intensity of it all. After 40 minutes, I realised that I shouldn't be subjecting myself to this and walked out.

The Wire Crowd 1 – 0 Jonny

The ultimate irony: I later developed a much more refined, nay, "enduring" taste for this act, though struggled to fit any of their tracks into DJ sets. I finally got the chance as support DJ at Ad:Rem many years later, held in exactly the same room!

May 2008 – Wir sind geboren um Spielmann zu sein

WGT 2008 was proving to be a slight disappointment compared with previous years. OK, we had Persophone out in the medieval village and the surprise of Fields of the Nephilim not actually being complete shit. Halfway through the last day, and I'd just left the woeful Miss Construction in the CabbageCircus in the hope of finding something a little more engaging. I knew I wanted to see Corvus Corax headline the Agra that night, but I decided to quit the EBM early and catch some more mitteralter.

I had seen Salty Morty (as I usually call them) before, but their shows were always during crowded line-ups where I had little capacity to remember exactly what they were like. Right now, however, I was all ears. Anything was better than Chris Pohl doing 'Miss Combichrist' or whatever it was. They come on stage, and the first two minutes were a complete mess. Then someone in the sound booth presses a magic button and the bands music and stage show instantly comes to life. The band's rollicking medieval rock sound came to the fore and the Agra was won over. This was going to be a good one.

There were plenty of tracks from their new album (acquired shortly after, still my favourite by them), but this was not one of those shows where the setlist really mattered. This was Salty Morty playing the troubadours, or whatever the equivalent middle German equivalent is. And after a festival of workmanlike performances, this was exactly what my weekend needed. Finally the party atmosphere was underway, and not a moment too soon.

Their set ended on 'Spielmannsschwur'. For the 99% of your unfamiliar with this track, the overriding feature of this song is a 'Whoa-oh-oh-oh' type of chorus. The band's frontman obviously knew the anthemic potential of such a line, as he got the audience to practice it a couple of times before letting the band start the song. Just to make sure, you know? And everytime we got to the chorus, the whole Agra, me included, were singing along. And after the song was done, we kept on singing it. And after the next song too! Even after the singer went stage diving. It's what I call a '101 Moment' – harking back memories of Mode live recording where the audience carried on singing the chorus of 'Everything Counts' long after the band had finished the song.

Faun came on, proficient but slightly anti-climatic in the circumstances, and Corvus Corax did their thing with style and spirit. But Saltatio Mortis won the day, and the entire festival for me. With issues such as currency fluctuations, house moves and bicycle purchases to content with, this would in fact be my final WGT for 5 years. But at least I had one final memory to take back from my highly enjoyable quartet of mid-00s sojourns to the biggest dark scene festival in the world.

August 2008 – Infestation Again

The cloud over my state of mind during WGT 2008 might have actually had something to do with a failing relationship at the time. By the time of InFest, we'd been split for almost two months, but whilst the break-up was thankfully lacking in unnecessary drama, the intervening period was something of a 'dead' period with little of consequence occurring

anywhere in my life. This was a necessary festival, a kind of three-day 'pick myself up and move on' point. And it worked. Somehow, I got myself back on track thanks to a weekend of drunken madness in Bradford.

The trouble is, I can't remember why it was so good. Yes, Front 242 were headlining, but that was right at the end. Heimataerde doing their first UK show – c'mon, I saw their live debut! And One? Good fun but hardly deep? But that may be missing the point – this weekend wasn't supposed to have a point! Have fun, dance to some music you like, catch up with friends, eat incredibly poor quality food and have no functioning voice box left at the end of it all. Mission very much accomplished, I think!

There would be plenty more live action before the year was out, plus the beginning of Terminates Here as my alter-ego, my first steps on Facebook and my return to the DJ booth after a six-year hiatus.

Plus these snapshots.....

Another year where's it's confined to specific events, but there's always a story if you know where to look.

- *German scene legends ASP and Unheilig both playing London, both failing to pull much of a crowd and quite understandably that's the last we've heard from either round here.*
- *32Crash playing Elektrowerkz, the band name matching Kimi Raikkonen's race strategy at the Belgian Grand Prix the next day (he binned the car on the penultimate lap).*
- *Dope Stars Inc. played London for the first time. For health reasons, I was off the alcohol and junk food at the time, and the lack of such things really made it hard to loosen up and get into what was going on. I know of some vegan teetollers out there who still enjoy a gig – good for them, but not for me.*

2009

2008 had ended not with a massive gig, but with my return to the DJ booth (successful) and an attempt at forming a band of my own (not successful). I didn't know it at the time, but 2009 would see me attend no festivals whatsoever. Plans for WGT were abandoned in March due to having other uses for the money (the £-€ rate was really bad back then, worse than it's been post-Brexit vote), M'era Luna was never really on for me and InFest (the most likely candidate at one point) had a year off whilst the venue was refurbished, though the recession, the lack of any big new scene 'names' and the cost of importing established stars (think ForEx again!) probably meant this enforced pause was a blessing in disguise.

And hence it was not a good year for discovering new bands on stage – though plenty were discovered on CD and online. Virtually all the gigs I went to this year were for long-established bands, and very few of the sets I saw comprised of much new material – I'd say only Diary Of Dreams, Prodigy and VNV Nation were actively pushing new albums when I saw them (all good ones, to be fair). Das Ich played at the Gotham fest, a show so low-key that even their fans had forgotten about it by the time they returned in 2016.

Other live acts, as varied as Jean Michel Jarre, Ultravox, DAF, Yes and Orbital, were all content with dishing up crowd-pleasing 'greatest hits' sets. Even the best support acts of the year turned out to be bands like Deviant UK, and System:FX, who'd already won me over.

So while I could spin a tale about dancing in the aisle of the Wembley Arena with a middle-aged raver, or suddenly being reminded that Midge Ure is in fact Scottish, or a two-hour long DoD set, there is really only one vignette, one gig from 2009 that remains imprinted on my memory. Just One.

October 2009 – The Rest Is Imagination

Project Pitchfork. A band I'd seen three times before but a long time ago, before I'd really become a fan of their music. And two of those sets were overburdened with tracks from their confusing 'Nun' trilogy. And the last set I'd seen by them was in 2004. But finally, another London gig was scheduled. And it fell on Halloween. On the day after that I found that I'd actually got the job I'd recently applied for.

With the sole new song 'If I Could' opening the set, we soon got the inevitable dancefloor accelerator 'God Wrote'. And having drunk my way through the support bands, I was already pretty wasted by this point. And apparently I wasn't so much singing along as shouting along. I REALLY had a lot to get out of my system on this occasion. And when the opening notes to 'Human Crossing' played (the first Pitchy song I'd ever heard), I practically exploded with excitement.

And so it went on, concluding on 'Existence', and then the inevitable encore of 'Timekiller', which is the one Pitchfork track all the people who aren't otherwise fans of the band know. Of course, I still had enough energy to dance to it, and emerged to the most

refreshing autumn night breeze I'd ever felt. The strange thing was, when the band returned to the same venue in Jan 2011, I found the whole affair rather disappointing, partially due to my frame of mind at the time but also due to an iffy setlist that hardly offered any of my favourite tunes.

But doesn't matter – I'd had my definitive Pitchfork moment, and with the new job sorted I was well set for 2010.....

Plus these snapshots.....

None – read the text above if you want more insights.

2010

2009 might have offered a single memorable concert, but it was somewhat indicative of my life that year. Not bad, constructive in parts, but just lacking a certain 'magic'. 2010 wasn't like that. I'd put it on record as the most eventful year of my life. On a personal front, it saw the start of a new job, a house move, two relationships started and ended and a real growth in my DJing exploits.

Still plenty of time for live music though.....

May 2010 – Who Will Deliver Me From Myself?

Another band that had cheated me thus far was Current 93. Their tendency to host shows in awkward venues and their well-connected entourage often means the regular punter doesn't get much of a chance to get tickets for their shows. Finally, however, I was going to get my chance. Two shows at the Kentish Town Forum to celebrate David Tibet's 50th Birthday, and I had a ticket for one of them.

And what did I do to myself the night before? Poison myself on a reheated curry, that's what! I wasn't quite laid out, but I wasn't exactly fighting fit, either. Luckily, mine was a seated ticket, up on the balcony, and dosed up on sufficient pharmaceuticals, I decided that I was going to see this band, illness or otherwise, before they disappeared on another lengthy hiatus. It wasn't like I was contagious or anything, and it was either sit down at home or sit on the train then sit at the venue. Not exactly a strain on the body. Let's go!

Living in the outer reaches of East London at the time, it was an unwelcome long journey over to the gig venue. The support band tonight were 'Nurse With Wound', not a band I particularly enjoy on CD, but live they made a sufficiently satisfying racket to provide an interesting precursor to the evenings entertainment. Current 93 themselves duly arrived on stage with about a dozen members. David Tibet is one of those artists who's talents are as much about getting the right people to play for them as performing himself, but I never realised it took this many people to reproduce the songs live.

He then threw us a curveball by performing a set largely devoid of his best-known songs, instead taking us on a lengthy psychedelic-delusional-avant-garde-rock-quirky-apocalyptic-whatever it is he does journey through his disturbed outlook on reality. Slumped at the far back of the venue nursing a diet cola, I found myself strangely drawn into this bizarre sound emanating from the stage. There was no holding out for some favourite track, no singing along with a well-known chorus. I was a sick man watching a band that required some kind of distorted mindset to fully appreciate. On a healthy day, I would have found this disappointing. But on this occasion, a audio mindfuck from Tibet's sizeable collective of musical misfits was about the only thing I could stomach. In any sense.

August 2010 – Dare To Live?

Infest took a year off in 2009, but it returning in 2010 with a revised layout that switched everything around, confusing all us regulars but working surprisingly well considering the last-minute completion of the venue. The big draw for me was Project Pitchfork, but I wrote about them in the previous part. Friday night headliner De/Vision were paint-dry tedious, so it ultimately fell to Rotersand to provide me with the one outstanding memory of the festival. I wasn't bowled over by the fact they were playing, to be honest – they'd played a few years previously and I was hoping for someone who'd not actually played these shores quite so often to top the bill on Saturday night.

I should mention that I'd actually travelled to the festival with the band's lead singer Rascal Nikov in the car with me. And I can confirm that his charisma, so apparent on stage, is only amplified in such a confined space. I therefore arrived at the festival in high spirits, filled up on cheap Bradford curry (this one thankfully non-toxic), and despite the disappointing live music on the first night, was just enjoying the weekend as a form of celebration of everything that had happened so far in 2010, how far I'd come and how much fun I thought lay ahead.

And if there's one band that are just plain fun to watch live, anywhere, in any mood, at any time of day, it's Rotersand. A last-minute schedule change had resulted in the band's setlist being extended by 30 minutes, which entailed have to re-learn a whole bunch of unrehearsed songs. Did that hurt them? Not a chance. With Krischan and Gun providing the highly technical musical accompaniment, it was left to Rascal to play to the crowd. And occasionally wander around it, handing out free stickers.

It's rare that a band I've seen so many times serves as the stand-out act of the entire festival, but Rotersand's vibe that evening was so in tune with my own feelings. Sure enough, Project Pitchfork put on an excellent performance the following night, and in recorded form they're still my preferred band of the two. But this InFest was all about Rotersand. I don't think I stopped dancing for the full 90 minute duration. Unfortunately, 2010 was never quite as good again.

October 2010 – Strap Me Down With Disillusion, Tie Me Up With Lifelines

No, it wasn't. Two months on and I was once again single, and not substantially advanced in any other sense. And for the second consecutive Halloween, a long awaiting band was making a rare (in this case first-ever) London performance at the Islington Academy. This time it was LeætherStrip, the prolific Danish electro-industrial project who's one of the few bands I'm into that's released so many CDs I doubt I could name them all off the top of my head. The band is the solo project of Claus Larsen, and that singularity extended to his live show. One bald, portly Dane in a pink shirt with a single keyboard rack and microphone. Not exactly an inspiring visual spectacle.

But I was only every into LeætherStrip for the music, and that was very much delivered. It was a couple of bars into 'Introvert' that I realised that I'd got myself more drunk than expected (for the second consecutive Halloween) and so decided to sing along as loud as I could (for the second consecutive Halloween). No, make that SHOUT along.....'the Strip isn't about achieving perfect pitch. The venue wasn't packed out (for the second consecutive Halloween), but everyone present was a devoted fan who'd clearly waited a

long time for this rare performance (for the second, oh, you get the idea!).

Once the new songs were out of the way, we got onto the classics. 'Adrenaline Rush', 'Japanese Bodies' and of course my own Strip favourite, 'Strap Me Down'. I honestly didn't care how little of the music was being played live, I just had a lot of tension to get out of my system, a real post-breakup catharsis. Possibly as a tribute to his first visit to London, Claus dug out his cover for 'Sex Dwarf' for the encore. By this time I was probably making 'woohooohwooh' noises in time with the synth solo, but there were no sober witnesses to confirm or deny this.

And that was essentially it for live music in 2010. A quick trip to the Pretty Goth Theatre late in November was about as live as it got for the remainder of the year. Onto 2011.....

Plus these snapshots.....

It was really a bigger year on a personal level than a live one, but there a few more moments worth capturing.

- *Suicide Commando returning to their breakthrough stage 9 years on to play a ticketed show this time, and sounding as good as ever, for now at least.*
- *Code 64 playing live with a new singer, and discovering the audience knew the words to 'Leaving Earth' better than he did.*
- *Global Citizen playing Reptile, a club that would then continue to give local (and some not-so-local) acts a chance throughout the years.*
- *Skinny Puppy and FLA playing a couple of days apart, the first promoted by a big corporate, the second by the small UK outfit Armalyte. Guess which gig got some relevant support bands?*
- *Attending gigs by Killing Joke and Swans in October, either side of break-up #2, with less than a days notice in each case.*

2011

2010 was an eventful year, for sure. But nothing stops when a calendar gets chucked. And sure enough, 2011 was almost as busy. Gig-wise, the key feature of this year was the increased merging of my DJing with my gigging. Four times I played the role of support DJ at live music events. However, there's a lot more to those stories than the memories of the live music, significant that it was. Those stories will be written later, in a separate volume looking into my DJing life.

One other fact – it was the third consecutive year where I attended no overseas festivals or gigs. This isn't something I'd given up on, it's just I had other demands on the money at the time. InFest, the low-budget indoor festival in Bradford, was still an option, however.

August 2011 – 8-Bits!

The early part of 2011 offer relatively few gigging stories, as I was occupied with buying a flat and then doing all the things you have to do to get it up and running. Getting a mortgage in the midst of the credit crunch was a stressful affair, but luckily none of the adventures you've read about so far had damaged my credit rating, so I finally had a roof over my head that I could call my own. Sort of.

But as a result of the above processes and my determination to get 'closure' on the whole process, I'd neglected my health - physical, mental, emotional, financial, the lot and hence arrived at InFest 2011 a broken man. Despite everything I'd achieved during the year to date, it had come at great cost. So I made a decision. Have one last 3-day bender, one final weekend of irresponsibility, get it out of the system and then pull myself together and get on with life again. Dosed up on vitamin pills to alleviate the need to ever care about my diet over the weekend, that was indeed the case....

The event as a whole remains something of a blur. I can't really remember which bands played this year or last, nor how much money I spent. I do remember giving the karaoke machine a go, singing Sham 69's 'If The Kids Are United'. In an obscenity-laced London accent. In the middle of West Yorkshire. I probably sung along to VNV Nation even louder, but I believe that's the idea at their shows.

And earlier that day, I'd finally seen mind.in.a.box live. I'd heard very varied stories about their live shows so far (not that they'd played many), and my curiosity was piqued further when I saw them setting up guitar, drums and other 'real' instruments – rarely seen at InFest. They appeared on stage and I was even more confused – were they supposed to be a kind of 'progressive futurepop' four-piece, or some kind of synth-enhanced Pink Floyd tribute band?

It's at times like this that the alcohol really serves it's purpose, because I stopped caring about genres and realised that whatever it was they were playing, I actually really liked it. I was tripping out during the quiet bits and dancing wilding whenever the drums kicked in. I did, however, long for a no-holds barred anthem. mind.in.a.box are a very 'technical' band, which does sometimes impact the 'instant appeal' nature of their music. How the

hell were they going to end their set on anything other than a drawn-out anticlimax?

Oh, 8-Bits. Not exactly typical of their style, but a perfect set closer, and it still worked surprisingly well with the addition of 'real' instruments. Cheered to the rafters (or whatever it was holding the roof up), there was no time for an encore, even if the band had had one to play (looking at tour setlists, they probably didn't). But my must-see band of InFest, one who had a varied live reputation so far, had delivered the goods this time.

October 2011 – Shine, Shine Your Light On Me

InFest had given me the drive to get my life back on track, but a couple of months on and I still felt there was something missing from my life. In a year of practical achievements, I was feeling increasingly hollow inside. My body and mind were on the road to recovery, but my soul remained on ice. I was a walking, talking automaton. Something had to give.

My epiphany came from a quite unexpected source. A VNV Nation concert. Unexpected, because I'd seen them many, many times before, and whilst I regarded their recent 'Automatic' album as a 'Return to Glory' release, I wasn't expecting anything more than some bouncy music interspersed with the between-song chit-chat that's something of a feature at every VNV gig. And so it was....new songs mixed with (relatively) old ones, nothing pre-Empires, though. Dance a lot, sing along with favourite choruses and go nuts during the instant hit and current set-closer 'Control'.

And then came the encore. Having cancelled a gig the night before due to voice issues, we had no idea how long Ronan was going to last, but there was enough left in him to manage a quartet of songs. Including one new track that I'd previously heard at InFest but not really appreciated the true nature of until tonight. The song was 'Nova'. And when the song burst into life a minute or so it, with the trippy LED backdrop as accompaniment, I finally realised what I was missing.

"Shine. Shine Your Light On Me. Illuminate Me. Make Me Complete"

There was a long way to go, but was no longer adrift and lost. Back on track for sure.

Plus these snapshots.....

My mind may have been elsewhere, but I can't help what it captures along the way. Or fails to.

- *Totally forgetting I'd seen the gothic rock band Grooving In Green in March when I became a fan of their recordings a few years later, and then seeing them in the same venue in 2016 thinking it was the first time I'd been to one of their shows. Only worked it out when I started writing this thing.*
- *If my house move hadn't already did for me – a Sunday in July saw a trip to Ikea and back, then off to run a D&D game, and finally off to see four-band bill topped off by Combichrist. Nothing left in the tank? I was sure of it now.*
- *A colleague suggesting I went to see Magazine at Shepherd's Bush. His reasoning - "I'm too old for gigging so you'll have to go for me". He clearly hasn't met some of*

my friends yet.

- *Diary of Dreams topping off the last-ever Gotham festival, having made their UK mark with their appearance at the first. Adrian Hates pointed the fact out with the oh-so-trad comment "First and Last and Always".*
- *Front 242 finally making it to London again, but neutered by noise limits – my return to European festivals would surely have to follow.*

2012

This is one of the hardest years to write about in terms of my 'man in the crowd' perspective, as this was the era when my DJing and gigging schedules crossed over the most. I've already said that stories of those events will be told at a later date. Luckily, I didn't quit being a 'regular punter' entirely, and hence there are a few live stories to be told.

Most of my 2012 live experiences occurred in small venues. I saw The Mission and The Cult in the Hammersmith Apollo (it was meant to be somewhere bigger and also feature Killing Joke, but wasn't meant to be), and the next largest venues I visited were Bradford Uni (for Infest) and The Scala (for VNV). Most of the other shows I attended were in bar or pub level venues. In many cases, this featured bands 'just starting out' – plus (dare I say) a few cases of 'has-been' and 'never quite was', so the sparks of greatness were thinner on the ground than some years, but compensated for by the sheer variety and volume.

January and December 2012 – In a Solitary Field, In Some Nameless Foreign Land

VNV Nation have a habit of cropping up in this story time after time. Maybe it's the devoted fanbase, maybe it's Ronan's Irish charm, but VNV gigs always used to have a certain 'atmosphere' about them. I say this in the past tense, as from 2013 onwards, their live shows have become laboured, flabby and lacking in 'guts'. It's the kind of decline bands rarely recover from – so I was fortunate that my 2012 was bookended by what I can only guess will be the last two VNV shows I'll ever enjoy.

January 2012 is of course in the lyrics to 'Honour', and VNV played some shows to mark it, including the bizarre decision to play in the Purple Turtle pub, a 200-capacity venue that sold out very quickly. Indeed, the gig over-sold to the point that the regular guest-list had to be turned away. Given how I never became a lasting member of that fraternity, all I can say to that is 'schadenfreude'. The band even polled online to decide what songs to play, though this was a missed opportunity as most people voted for stuff already in the touring setlist. Anyway, this was a hot, packed and intense show, an rare occasion to see a band that had made it 'big' up-close.

The year ended with another VNV show, this time at The Forum. This was a straight 'greatest hits' set, but memorable as the only time since I first saw them where my two favourite songs (Joy and Solitary) got played on the same night, and numerous other favourites made it in too (sadly nothing from Advance and Follow, but otherwise on the money). It was a rare chance to get a truly exciting gig in that 'between Christmas and New Year' period, and a farewell to me enjoying this band as a live proposition.

August 2012 – Moving Your Hands

Infest provided the other live notable live action of the year, and it provided one of the strongest line-ups for ages. Their pick of the UK scene bands was spot-on. My East London friends in System:FX finally got a shot at playing the festival, electronics done with all

energy and no messin' about. There was also my first live experience of Tenek, successors to The Nine, but still the catchiest of catchy synthpop – the kind of thing that has you singing along with the choruses before you know what the lyrics are.

As for the overseas acts, much as I enjoyed Absurd Minds and Solitary Experiments, it was a trio of The Klinik (Dirk is something of an Infest legend), A Split-Second and Blitzmaschine that provided this festival's defining moments. Old-school EBM rarely reaches these shores, and in an era where the wider electronic music scene was obsessing over Deadmau5 and Skrillex (fuck that), this felt like a real "pay attention children, you might learn something" moment. Suicide Commando, one of the names most credited for the 00s harsh EBM trend, might had headlined, but simply lacked the dynamism of the more stripped-down acts that came before.

The thing that got me was that whilst these three bands seem to have been well-received at the festival, it didn't result in the revival of the style in the UK. Infest themselves booked very few acts in this style thereafter, though the 2017 line-up promises a return in that direction, whilst the club scene carried on with the tastemakers pushing various nightmarish EDM/dubstep inspired material, arguments usually being resolved on the "brute force" basis of either "who has the biggest friends list on Facebook" or "who has the highest-profile DJ slot". If you think that last line is aimed at you, swallow your pride, it probably is.

Oh, and for those of you about to accuse me of some form of 'genre fascism', I do usually adopt a "live and let live" approach to style I don't like. But only if I can either steer clear of them (most genres with 'core' in them fall under that banner). But the trends in electronic music at the time flaunted their stuff to such an extent that I could not afford this movement (of the bowel-churning bass variety) the same tolerance.

Plus these snapshots.....

You'll read about most of the rest in my DJ story, but here's a few more fragment from a 'paying punter' perspective.

- *Getting stranded in London after a Clan of Xymox gig due a broken tube line and a snowfall messing up the buses.*
- *Spotting Gary Numan in the crowd in the Purple Turtle watching Sulpher. No, I didn't say hello – he'd waited as long as me to see them again, after all.*
- *A dubstep DJ playing on stage between Heretics and She Wants Revenge – totally unsuited to the event and not in the booth where support DJs belong (we know our place). Do you now understand why I felt that genre flaunted its stuff just a little too much?*
- *Watching The Cult – Ian Astbury prefaced Sanctuary with a comment about a time when DJs were brave enough to play such things on the radio. I eventually did hear it on the radio two years later. On a local station. In Belfast.*
- *A number of small-scale events involving the Terminal Gods. I have to mention this as I suspect at least one of the band members will end up reading this and I've mentioned most of the other London local favourites at least once.*

2013

The other notable event in 2012 was the start of a relationship that's still going strong today. It's not something I'm going to write about here or in any future piece, Mandy is very happy to remain the 'private' half of the couple, but I can't write this piece without giving her some credit for my live music experiences, especially in 2013. The story of how we obtained Kraftwerk tickets, for instance – is hers to tell, not mine, and it's also thanks to her that my return to Wave-Gotik-Treffen was secured, as was my farewell to outdoor festivals.

February 2013 – Music-Non-Stop

This was not my first experience of Kraftwerk live – I'd seen them on their 2004 tour, the one you see on the Minimum-Maximum DVD. But the story of this set of shows and the ticketing fiasco preceding it has passed into legend – suffice to say I was going to see the sixth of the eight "classic album" performances in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern. The album "Techno Pop", previously released as "Electric Café" was thought to be one of their 'lesser' recordings, but given the circumstances, we'd take anything.

On arrival, we received a pair of 3D glasses, an unexpected development. It seems that despite being down to a single original member touring no material less than a decade old, they weren't going to turn down a chance to 'get with the times'. 3D cinema might now be thought of as a passing fad, but here it was the "right place, right time". Never happy to sit on their laurels, these most static of live performers had decided that a third dimension was the most logical next step to take.

As for the show, the 'classic' album was delivered within the first half-hour of the event (BOING-BOOM-TSCHAK – PING!) leaving the remaining time for a decent run through the classics, including full-length takes on 'Autobahn' and 'Trans-Europe Express', a reference to 'Fukushima' inserted into 'Radioactivity' (did I mention they liked to keep with the times) and nearly all of 'The Man-Machine'.

I remember 'Spacelab' cropping up unexpectedly, yet genuinely feeling the space-station imagery was flying out of the screen and across the venue, the only time I'd experience 3D cinema and felt the effect. The concept that Kraftwerk now think of themselves as curators of an exhibit rather than a traditional live band might have come across as quite pretentious had it from a lesser name, but they at least have earned the right.

May 2013 – This Ain't No Disco.....

Back, at last, to Wave-Gotik-Treffen. 2009 was skipped due to the expense – I had other valid uses for the money, and history tells me this was nothing if not prudent, so I don't regret missing that one, especially as many of the Brit scene crowd joined me in absence for similar credit-crunch oriented reasons. 2010 was all personal baggage, 2011 was all about buying a flat, so missing WGT those years was also understandable. By 2012, I'd fallen out of the habit. Regulars warn you of the dangers of 'giving up your hotel room', but in reality that only matters if you have a loyalty to a particular one.

Anyway, my return was important on a personal level, but also on a musical one. Remember my comment about three bands that were essentially old-school EBM at Infest 2012 and how it failed to spark a revival in the style in the UK? No problems with that in Germany, where the style was much in evidence and even resulted in complaints about there not being enough 'harsh' (new-school) EBM on the bill and the resultant creation of a Thursday Night Tactical Sekt show. Fellow Brits asked me if they'd see me there. Of course not, I was off watching Jäger 90 at the old-school warm-up.....

We weren't just watching EBM. In Strict Confidence headlined the CabbageCircus on the Friday night. I remember Mandy described the band as "namby pamby" and the female singer as a "gothic clothes horse". I actually liked their songs enough not to worry about that, but the thinking behind that comment became clear 24 hours later. Not before I finally saw Velvet Acid Christ live, great songs but not a frontman comfortable in massive venues, his subsequent UK shows were much better.

Add a Suicide Commando set comprised of 90s material and we were all ready for Leæther Strip, now a husband & husband live show. Kurt remains behind the keyboard stand throughout, leaving Claus Larsen to throw his substantial frame around the Agra stage. This was the musical equivalent of a raw meat main course (VAC providing the vegan starter) and the mosh-pit was in motion throughout.

Mainly Saxons and Swedes from what I could tell, but with the cropped hair, obscure EBM band T-shirt and suchlike, I realised that for the duration of this set at least, these men were my body-beat brothers. The set delivered all the favourites, but the usual closing cover of 'Sex Dwarf' was replaced with a cover of Depeche Mode's 'Nodisco'. Remembering the Essex connection – Nitzer Ebb hail from there, as do I – it was time to belt it out like a Brit.

Good shows would also be seen by the likes of A Split-Second, Pankow, Orange Sector and Brigade Werther. Even KMFDM seemed to have found their touch again. Bands like IAMX and VNV Nation just seemed saccharine-sweet and ponderous in comparison to this. The bitterest pill was the train home from the airport on the Tuesday – I was returning to a scene where I was increasingly losing connection with what was going on. Individuality is no fun if it kills your social life. Perhaps a break from the industrial scene would help?

July 2013 – I'm a Professional Cynic, But My Heart's Not In It

When Rock Werchter announced its early line-up, it looked surprisingly tempting – Editors (not seen yet), Depeche Mode (not seen for 10 years), Blur (90s revival!) and Rammstein (haven't you been paying attention?). Only two trains from St.Pancras, too, so tickets were booked. Finding accommodation was tricky (no lectures about camping, please) and the only other band of interest to join the bill thereafter was Nick Cave, but in any case, we were set for a weekend back in the mainstream.

Initial impressions were not good – the stages were offering a mix of landfill indie, on-trend EDM (nice lightshows, shame about the music) and 'emotional' singer-songwriters, something the music industry regards as an 'easy sell' in these times. Also plenty of drunken lunatics thrashing their limbs about (mosh-pitting is communal, bashing people mindlessly isn't). Briefly thought about an hour after arrival that "this wasn't such a good idea". Then discovered you could earn free drinks by collection empty glasses – 20 cups =

1 drink token. Litter pickers paid in beer? That'll cover us until something good comes on. It duly became an obsession – by my estimation we save 40 Euros on drinks during the weekend via this economy.

Vitalic eventually dished up a modern dance style we could actually dance to, and Blur finally played in the early hours of the morning, and a band from my pre-gigging era was finally in the bag. The next day saw my first live experience of Nick Cave – always a good songwriter and professional performer, and my only recent experience of the now-massive Rammstein stage show. The HD screens erected might have helped us pick out details we couldn't otherwise see, but even from a distance you can really FEEL an R+ show in all it's fire and glory.

The final day could deliver quite insipid performances by Depeche Mode and Editors, both acts seemingly past their best, but at least we got a surprisingly entertaining show by 30 Seconds To Mars, not my usual rock sound of choice, but who at least knew that big festival stages were about more than slogging through the setlist and really played to the crowd as a result.

All that said, my final assessment was "Glad I did it once, but never again!", Some good music, but I never felt like I fitted in. You'll never see me at the big corporate UK festivals, I've retired from doing M'era Luna and whilst I was planning one last outdoor jaunt with Alt-Fest 2014, we probably all remember what went wrong there.....

As for the rest of the year, a mix of old favourites and small club-level shows occupied us (read the snapshots if you must know), before returning to Belgium for BIMFest in December. Compared with Rock Werchter it was a line-up much more 'us', and would be the first time in four attempts that I'd see Belgian bands on Belgian soil. Unfortunately, the venue was a room in a soulless, otherwise deserted complex on the ring road, no catering and no side-events (I'm told they've since moved somewhere with a little more character). A reminder that whilst bands are crucial to music festivals, you need more than that to make them truly memorable.

Plus these snapshots.....

A real mix here.....

- *A number of excursions into a venue called 'Mother Live' on Old Street. I was just about to book it myself when it closed down for an up-market conversion. Gentrification, anyone?*
- *Watching UK Decay play outside Rough Trade on Records Store Day.*
- *OMD supported by John Foxx. So good to hear electronic music that had space to breathe and let beautiful things hang there.*
- *Discovering a significant sum of money had gone missing from my bank account just before a Funker Vogt gig and then trying to work out what the fuck had gone wrong via smartphone.*
- *Ageing Crass co-founder Steve Ignorant proving at a November show that there's more to being an activist than just getting angry about everything – Anarcho isn't my punk style of choice but age and experience gives a person perspective and Steve has plenty of both.*
- *A double dose of Claus Larsen in December – the 'Strip and Klutæ all in one night.*

2014

There was a healthy run of interesting shows early in 2014. Laibach were back on tour, as were B-Movie, another chance to see Tenek and rare appearance of Rosa Crux, still one of the most unique stage shows you'll ever see. But I'm determined that this piece is about documenting the influence of live music on the person, not a dry collection of live reviews. And in a year in which I was rarely in a truly happy place (reasons to be discussed elsewhere), I needed something more than isolated gigs to move me.

June 2014 – This Volatile Paradox Will Never Stand

It indeed took until Leipzig for a truly moving live experience. A late one usually means a hot one and this was no exception. Early on were my first live experiences of The Eternal Afflict, The Fair Sex, Poupee Fabrikk, White Lies and Placebo Effect, a scrappy showing by Apop and a truly intense one by The Klinik (Dirk Ivens never fails us). And then – Front Line Assembly.

A controversial name in WGT circles (google 'Soy Leeb' if you don't know the story) and now with me. Leeb has never been afraid to jump on a bandwagon to keep his sound fresh, but his appropriation of dubstep influences on his last two albums, followed by a turd-in-a-CD case remix comp (maybe it kept sounding like a stuck CD 'cause the critics had wanked over it so much?) and my opinion of him had never been lower. I'd gone as far as boycotting his London 2013 show, the reports of 'This is the future of industrial – Dubstep influence will save us' were beyond the pale.

But when the band hit the stage, this time it was REAL Leeb. And REAL FLA. One brief hint of a bass drop early on, but otherwise the new and old material actually meshed together to cohesive whole rather than the jarring review bait practised by others, the more blatant references to the now-fading music fad already phased out. A band you expect to be great all the time is one thing – but a "Return To Glory" performance is that much sweeter.

Indeed, influences can be unexpected. Borghesia played the next day, and tried to escape the tag of being 'Slovenia's 2nd-most famous industrial band' by returning from their lengthy hiatus in the form of a psychedelic rock act. On a mixed-genre stage it might have worked, maybe even somewhere like Infest (remember Mind,in.a.box?), but on a specialist EBM stage between Vomito Negro (another first for me) and Spetsnaz, it was never going to work, they almost cleared the room, but I still got curious enough to check out the album later on.

Have to end on a sour note, though. My festival experience might have been positive in terms of the music, but the post-festival comedown was the worst ever. It was 'straight back to bad times' almost as soon as I'd hit UK soil. WGT had not cured my unsteady state of mind, it was merely a 5-day pause button. As I discovered later that year, even the pause button trick wasn't guaranteed to work.

August 2014 – Alt? Delete!

Alt-Fest, meant as my goodbye to outdoor fests, fell to pieces in a much-publicised story. I won't repeat the story as I was never really involved, but the fallout pulled a second, smaller festival under, and it was left to UK promoters to pull together hastily-improvised line-ups for the intended weekend. One had to be grateful for any live action back then, no-one made any real money out of the debacle and many lost big, but there was no hiding from the awkward atmosphere.

Still, the British spirit is best exemplified by our small-scale fests and making do with less than the best, and Flag Promotions (who deserve credit for many of the gigs previously mentioned here) called on their contacts and rallied what they could of the originally-booked Alt-Fest bands plus a few extras and made a three-day festival at Elektrowerkz, entitled SOS (Save Our Scene). Enough bands were willing to play for free (or close enough) to make it worth doing.

I went to the first two days (work commitments prevented the third), and actually quite enjoyed the first, local favorites Jordan Reyne and Black Light Ascension coming in late in the day to play sets and then a first chance to see Spiritual Front. Day two was devoted to the gothic bands – my first chance to see The Beauty of Gemina was sadly an acoustic show (either cutting costs or just choosing that variant of their sound for the occasion), with my main memory being She Past Away immediately winning a UK fanbase having come all the way from Turkey – so someone at least deservedly benefited from this mess!

Infest came a few weeks later, originally rumoured to be sitting out 2014 but deciding to go ahead anyway. Limited in terms of the bands they could book, hit further by three cancellations, included my hoped-for Project Pitchfork, replaced by the now long-past-best VNV Nation, unexpectedly available after the 'big' festival failed. A name band when one was needed for sure, but off the back of the lifeless 'Transnational' not longer a guaranteed 'must see'.

The end result was a very sociable festival, the bitching and backbiting having subsided by now, but a lineup that ended up too reliant on melodic synth acts and no one big performance that stood out in the memory. Maybe I was in the wrong state of mind, a mini-breakdown of sorts on Sunday night on the way back to the hotel backs up that theory. Oh, and singing 'Open Up' by Leftfield/Lydon in the karaoke room and fucking up my voice in the process.

But for whatever reason, the trick that worked at Infest 2005, 2008 and 2011 in a 'pick yourself up and move on' manner didn't work at Infest 2014. Blame cannot and will not be apportioned – sometimes the stars simply don't align.

December 2014 – Stop!

2014 didn't get any easier, it continued the feeling of scrabbling around, making good where possible and trying not to get sucked under. By mid-December I was out of ideas and just zoning through to Christmas. One final gig remained – Erasure. I might have overdosed on synthpop at Infest but let's at least see how the masters do it. We even got the bonus of Parralox on support – any band with the guts to kick off their set with a cover of 'Eye In The Sky' by rock dinosaurs Alan Parsons Project gets my respect, for sheer gumption if nothing else.

But we were here for Erasure. And if ever there was a template for the prize of 'the perfect pop band', it would be an dead-heat between them and the Pet Shop Boys (sorry, I say what I think even if it undermines the gravity of a statement). My first chance to see synth-meister Vince Clarke live in any project, and with Andy Bell, camp enough to house a million festival-goers but always a true performer, it was the perfect environment to forget concerns and just have some fun.

A couple of well-rehearsed backing singers and the show was complete. Erasure are a band who know what their audience wants – pick the best three off the new album and mix them in with all the hits. The inevitable call for an encore followed – we sort of knew 'Sometimes' would feature, but given the time of year, I was also half-hoping for a cut from their recent 'Christmas' album. And what does Andy do? Come back with his backing singers and sing 'Gaudete'. A Capella. Just the way it should be.

And only THEN sing 'Sometimes', with Vince back on the keyboards.

This was also the gig which sparked a viral video, triggered after show, of a whole tube platform singing 'A Little Respect'. I sadly missed this, but I assure you I would have joined in had I been there. Nothing like a communal sing-song to boost morale (why do so many people hate these?).

But for me, It was a last act of note in a year where I'd never truly felt 'in sync' with the world going on around me. Stress-related illness would see me out of the loop until New Year's Eve on a social level, but the enforced break definitely did me good – doing nothing for a few weeks was indeed the solution. Any negativity you've observed over the past few chapters ends in 2015.

Plus these snapshots.....

Amid everything that happened, some memories still remain.

- *Leaves Eyes at the Garage, meaning I'd seen every Liv Kristine project live once, and Theatre of Tragedy once with each singer.*
- *Arriving at a Rosa Crux gig to find the middle of the floor occupied by a large plastic sheet. It's purpose only became clear when the dust-dancers came on.*
- *Kirlian Camera and Die Krupps playing London, two bright lights in an otherwise muggy, tense and uncomfortable summer. Die Krupps had my other favourite Die K band (Die Kur) as support – you'll read a LOT more about these guys when I write my DJ story!*
- *Underworld playing 'Dubnobasswithmyheadman' start-to-end and all the B-sides and Lemon Interrupt material from the same era.*
- *Stompa finally sees new-school old-school EBM (for the want of a better term) reach London, and a precursor to the Ad:Rem event I'll cover in my DJ story.*

2015

The early days of 2015 saw me quell a number of inner demons that had loomed large for the past couple of years. In terms of live music, there was plenty of action throughout the year, but it once again fell to Wave-Gotik-Treffen to provide the first big story.

May 2015 – This Time.....

I could write a book in its own right about our WGT 2015 adventure. Mixtures of health issues (our own and family members) and the looming train strike on arrival in Germany and our return to Britain on Tuesday actually made me feel as certain times that 'not making it' was a genuine possibility. But make it we did, hours after we should have done, but in time for the EBM warm-up at The Villa, where the bands never run to schedule anyway (the actual festival runs like clockwork most of the time).

But it was the Saturday that possibly gave my greatest single WGT tale so far. It started with a trip out to the Felsenkeller, back on the festival circuit after a few years out, and that was a good thing, as it's certainly one of the more fit-for-purpose venues in use (we've had a few too many 'hasty civic conversions' of late). A couple of supports of moderate interest before a chance to The Beauty of Gemina once more.

Now, they might have been my favourite darkwave/gothic rock hybrid since Diary of Dreams, but my only live experience to date was their SOS acoustic show, a mere sample of their songwriting talents and a pale shadow of their full electric set. Which we got tonight. One track to lead us in, and then 'This Time' hit us with such force it felt like a bomb going off. 'Kings Men Come' and 'Suicide Landscape' were heard with their critical synth lines very much intact and when they got to 'The Lonesome Death Of A Goth DJ', well, I hardly need tell you how THAT one clicked.

And then a band that had eluded me for years in any form – Megaherz. I'd seen their ex-frontman project Eisbrecher the night before (now regarded as the bigger band of the two), but with a new Alexander W. on vocals (Wohnhaas instead of Wesselsky) and an excellent new album 'Zombieland' to play, it was clear the band were here to claim back what line-up changes had taken from them. After years on the back foot, Megaherz had their identity back. There's something special about that.

But I couldn't stop and celebrate. I had 15 minutes to get out, find a cab (only two available - I grabbed the first) and a drive across town, legged it into and across the Agra Park, round to the entrance and inside to catch the first song of tonight's headliner. And who justified such a break from my trams-only WGT procedure?

Front 242, who else? By this point I was so delirious with excitement that I barely recall the details of their set, but the sheer number of things that might have prevented me from making it this far had all been bypassed. That was a classic WGT day, and I still have the 242 hoody as a souvenir.

The rest-of-the-fest didn't disappoint of course – first chances to see Goethes Erben, Mono Inc., ClockDVA and Lights of Euphoria, the least-worst performance I'd see of US gothic

'legends' London After Slimelight (that's what I call them) and the usual defies-any-extreme reaction show by Clan Of Xymox. The threatened train strikes were eventually called off, too, though our journey home was delayed-at-every-stage from Berlin Schoenfeld onwards anyway. But every WGT needs a day like the Saturday of WGT 2015.

July 2015 – He's Just Trying To Survive

I'm very much aware of a significant body of work from New York in the late 60s and early-to-mid 70s that paved the way for much of the alternative sounds we know and love today. However, I had never seen any of the notable bands from that era play live – most had split up and many simply didn't have enough living members remaining to have any hope of reformation. Suicide, pioneers of electronic music and/or punk (depending which musical historian you ask) were still going, and an event was booked at The Barbican Centre entitled 'A Punk Mass' as part of a series of related events dedicated to something-or-other.

And yes, this was more of an 'event' than a 'gig', with Henry Rollins providing an opening talk about his own discovery of the band, before each of the members came on in turn to perform material from their solo careers, aided by a Moog operator toward the rear of stage. Martin Rev was in good shape (not many men of pensionable age can pull off a PVC suit), but Alan Vega was not. Unable to stand for any length of time, he still put every bit of energy he could muster into his performance. I only hope his appearance here was voluntary and not part of any music industry coercion, as it didn't seem right to keep a 77-year old stroke survivor on tour against his will.

But this was the spirit of the original punk movement contained in the last venue anyone would have expected to have found it. The second half of the show was dedicated to Suicide material proper. Or should that be 'improper'. Unwilling to take the easy route out, they launched into a set consisting of fragments of known pieces and backcatalogue obscurities, cutting from one line of attack to another, the kind of all-over-the-place performance that would have had the unknowing music critic turning up their noses in disgust. But this was Suicide. An anarchic performance like this was exactly what we SHOULD have expected. Not content with ripping up the rulebook back in the 70s by playing those synthesizer things, they ripped up their own rulebook for good measure.

And as if to prove this was the last act of defiance by a project who simply wouldn't play with convention – Suicide never performed live again. Alan Vega died in his sleep a little over a year later, and another New York legend had fallen.

August 2015 – I've Got Blood On My Hands

The feeling I had before Infest 2015 was that I had unfinished business from the previous year. Project Pitchfork were back having cancelled last time, but what I really wanted was one 'blow me away' performance, from any band, in any style. I'd previously established the first two bands playing Friday were both in styles that weren't for us, so we got an early evening train and saved having to take a day off work.

Cocksure were the only Friday band not doing 'dance music masquerading as something else' and a first chance to see Chris Connelly on stage to boot. Day two kicked off with Altered, well known from regular London shows. Decided to go for a curry after them, but wanted to get back in time for a band called Chant. The name didn't give much away, but a number of people whose opinion I've come to rely upon were saying great things about them, and it was clear whatever style there were, they were seriously good in their own right and not just playing to this week's style of choice.

I did not expect the frontman (Bradley Bills) to be a singer-drummer, rarely seen in this genre or any other (no references to Phil Collins, please!). I did not expect a mere two people to be able to generate such an intense percussive assault. And I did not expect the NIN concept for US industrial rock to be picked up and taken in a direction so ear-catchingly rhythmic. This was the most essential act I'd seen at Infest for many years, certainly the best "new discovery" the festival has ever offered. Perhaps I got over-emotional at the end, but that awkward feeling of 2014 was finally beaten out of me by Bradley's tribal fury.

L'ame Immortelle were an anti-climax after this, and I only mention the fact as most of the reviews I read seem to have boycotted them entirely. Still, had a lot of fun with Mechanical Cabaret, BhamBhamHara and Project Pitchfork on the final day, the ghosts of one year ago very much exorcised.

The remainder of the year saw a selection of live events to attend, possibly too many – by December I was getting live band fatigue, to the point where I just couldn't get into a show that should have been a dead-cert (Fear Factory performing 'Demmanufacture'). Maybe time for a new approach next year?

Plus these snapshots.....

Trying to be selective here....

- *Seeing all surviving members of Throbbing Gristle live at some point. Carter Tutti playing Chris and Cosey worked out very well, Genesis P.Orridge in Psychic TV less so.*
- *Agent Side Grinder playing London the night before we were due to fly to WGT.*
- *Seeing Part 1 in the woeful 'Power Lunches' venue shortly before the place closed for good. I usually regret the loss our live venues, but this is one we are better off without.*
- *Going to see Cradle Of Filth, for shits and giggles if nothing else.*
- *AlterRed doing the most convincing Kubrick Stare I'd ever seen at their Clockwork Orange-themed Halloween show at Reptile.*

2016

For 2016, I've decided not to write a detailed account of WGT or Infest. That's not to reflect badly on either event, just that I can't spin any lengthy tale about WGT 2016 that isn't a slightly-modified version of one you've already read. As for Infest 2016, that's coming in a future piece....so here's a few less-obvious tales of live music instead.

April 2016 – Who Said You Could Die, You Bastard?!

I've never really done 'conventions', mainly due to my lack of affiliation to one thing at the expense of others. But I do love a certain brand of British Comedy. The death of Rik Mayall came as shock, hitting particularly hard given I'd found out on the train home from the airport during my post-WGT 2014 comedown. Luckily, his fanbase rallied round on social media soon after. Credit must go to my old friend Penny for being the crux of this - she also handles the Infest Army page on Facebook.

This gathering grew into real-world meetups and finally the convention RikCon. Hired for the 2016 event was comedy band "Intermittent Explosive Disorder". Not content to simply dish out a selection from their repertoire, they'd put together a RikCon set, opening with the theme to 'The Young Ones' and then delivering a series of parody tunes referencing moments from Rik's career. 'Common People' became a Alan B'Stard anthem ('Everybody Hates a Tory'), whilst The Carpenters were turned on their heads with 'Please Mr Gas Man' – a totally unexpected twist on what I happen to think is the funniest half-hour of comedy of all time.

And then their 'original' for the night - "Who Said You Could Die, You Bastard?!", a four-minute impersonation of Vyvyan from The Young Ones with a suitable foul-mouthed 'tribute' to every Rik role they could think of. Tributes to a man like Rik Mayall have always been heartfelt, but they need not be respectful. A man who was essentially a 'punk' comic could not be written into history without at least a little bad taste aimed in his direction. The singer did his voice in with that showing, leaving Lee Cornes (a comic from the same era as Rik) to come on stage to reprise his Dick Head role from Bottom for the final song.

It wasn't the only Rik tribute I'd see that year – The Damned dedicated 'Video Nasty' to him when we saw them in our punk-laden late 2016 live music flurry. The only one of the guest bands from The Young Ones I've seen live to date (are Madness still touring?). Though I did miss out Nine Below Zero by one room at some point in Freshers Week way back in 1997.

All Through 2016 – Punk Rocks!

Indeed, It's probably the right moment to bring up The Damned again, as 2016 was notable for a year-long celebration of Punk across London, and history tells us that it was the Damned who 'got there first'. There was no shortage of events to attend as part of the

celebrations, and we also went to plenty of punk-oriented gigs that weren't officially connected to the 40 years thing (they weren't all London-oriented either), but since when has punk been official about anything?

I won't go into detail about all the gigs, so instead have some extended length snapshots!

- Not actually in London, but hey, stop me - The late confirmation of Public Image Ltd playing a midnight special (actually 1 am) at WGT – the set featured a semi-cover of Leftfield's Open Up, a song the original band don't play, so the guest singer took it for his own band!
- Discovery of a venue in Tottenham called T Chances which just reeked of old-school punk spirit (but without the shit layout of Power Lunches). We were actually there for an industrial-themed charity show headlined by Black Light Ascension, but this inevitably led to....
- Blank Generation – The final day of a three-day punk festival back T Chances. All very raucous, plenty of unknown bands, but a final run of The Members, The Lurkers, The Outcasts and 999 ensured we bagged a few minor legends in the process.
- Seeing Television in Brixton, a band that straddles either side of punk without actually being it.
- Bad Religion and Offspring in Hammersmith the night before the fateful EU Referendum...getting both Crazy Taxi bands in one go was a coup, a pity the gig was full of twats rather than punks. An argument with a bigoted Brexiter with some indeterminate provincial accent (a 'little Englander' if you like) in the pub afterwards proved some people just didn't 'get' what this whole style of music was meant to be about.
- First sight of Youth Code live. For those of you wondering why they get in here, they're anarcho in spirit if not in musicology - the kind of thing the angry women of punk would have sounded like if they'd gotten into Nitzer Ebb and Front 242 rather than all the three-chord-discord stuff.
- A gathering outside The Greyhound in Croydon to pay tribute to that town's part in this story – Captain Sensible was one of the speakers, and even performed an acoustic 'New Rose' (even though he wasn't actually the singer of the Damned.....)
- Killing Joke's near-perfect set at the Brixton Academy, a band who did more than most to take the principle of punk and build in so many elements without losing their tribal fury.
- Turning up at the Plough and Harrow in Leytonstone expecting to see Rubella Ballet. They cancelled due to illness late in the day (though we got in free as compensation), so we watched Airdrop and Country Hospital instead.
- The Men Who Will Not Be Blamed For Nothing – the most punk of the steampunks, with Andrew O'Neill's stand-up act as support.
- The Damned, supported by Penetration, using ELP's 'Fanfare To The Common' man as their intro tape as an ironic statement of everything they sought to destroy. The death of Keith Emerson earlier in the year (Greg Lake to follow soon after) did not affect this stance.
- Sham 69 and UK Subs shortly before Christmas, an Oi! double billing, with Charlie Harper (now a grandad in his 70s) getting in the festive spirit by playing my favourite festive single of the lot – Hey Santa.

Plus these snapshots.....

It wasn't just punk rock, you know.....

- *Das Ich back in London again, and this time rose to the challenge of entertaining an audience that for the most part didn't understand their lyrics (a trick usually reserved for Rammstein)*
- *Author & Punisher – bringing the one-man band concept to industrial, and I DON'T mean by standing behind a laptop – a hand-built mechanical performance rig of a kind I'd never seen before and probably won't see again anywhere else.*
- *Laibach touring the show they put together for North Korea based around 'The Sound Of Music'.*
- *OMD performing 'Dazzle Ships' and 'Architecture and Morality' at the Albert Hall, only time I'd been inside there despite having lived round the corner once (twice actually).*
- *Plastic Noise Experience covering 'Moving Hands' by Klinik at around the same time Dirk Ivens was performing it in his all-projects show across town. These two really should have been in the same venue!*
- *Test Dept. playing the Dome (the first DJ Terminates Here venue) on the day it was announced I was Djing at Infest.*
- *Waking up in Naples, making it home to London, unpacked, sorted out all the details and STILL making it out to see The Last Dance and The Last Cry with The Last of My Funds.*
- *Blood Axis finally making it to London. I nearly wrote a long piece about this but as the mere existence of this project seems to be an issue with some people, I won't take it any further here.*

2017

2017 is a story as yet unwritten in full, as the 20-year mark where this tale draws to a close arrives in the middle. And hence a lengthy write-up is beyond me, as I don't have a year's worth of context to build the gigging tales round. But there is one event that does justify a bit more, and those of you who have read this far can probably guess what it is.

June 2017 – Get Around, Get Around, I Get Around (When it's time to go, I'm the first to know)

WGT 2017 was always intended as my 20th anniversary of gigging. It was perhaps indicative of the significance that the itinerary for the weekend was planned with enormous precision, going as far as to print out the Monkeypress.de timetable and tracing ideal paths with highlighter pen.

And as if to give me a sign, the travel gods smiled upon me and the plan just 'worked'. 21 bands were seen in all, of which only one (Skinny Puppy) I had seen before. And with such treats as an all-star cast reviving the Dorsetshire name or Autodafeh up-close-and-personal in the Mortizbastei, this was not a case of scratching around for something to do. But it just so turned out that the two biggest highlights of my festival occurred at the same venue, two nights apart. The Stadtbad, a old swimming baths converted into a venue, would host both.

The first was Kite, a synthpop band from Sweden, but somewhat different from the standard-issue Vince Clarke wannabes (many of whom I admit are bloody good at it!). A stage set that projected images onto satellite dishes, neon piping on the keyboards and a vocalist whose voice it was hard to draw any comparisons to (Demis Roussos is the closest I could get). Add some excellent songwriting and a well-considered running order ('Castle of Sand' makes such an epic finale) and it really was a case of an act in an overcrowded genre devising something truly unique.

The second was Revolting Cocks. A band that had existed in an on-off fashion for many years, with a Revolving Lineup. The current form of the band didn't feature Al Jourgensen, and with Luc Van Acker off sick, there were doubts over the legitimacy of the lineup. No, I'm lying. There weren't. Richard 23 was back in the band, Chris Connelly was on-board too, as was Paul Barker. With two Acumen Nation members on loan, it was still an industrial supergroup worth seeing.

With R23 handing the first half of the show (the 'Big Sexy Land' album) and Chris Connelly the second half (everything else), the thing that amazed me is how such a motley assortment of musicians could come together to actually play a surprisingly tight set (despite a brief 'total technical' early on). It was also a reminder that even if their albums weren't the most finely-tuned things ever to be pressed onto vinyl or silver disc, there were more than enough good tracks to build a set, and with an encore of 'Do Ya Think I'm Sexy', it was a true case of a performance far beyond expectations. Who else could make Skinny Puppy of all people seem like an anti-climax?

Plus these snapshots.....

Already proving to be a great year.

- *Three bands beginning with B to start the year – Black Light Ascension, B-Movie, Blue Zoo. Sang along quite loudly to 'Remembrance Day'.*
- *Another punk double-header (The Rezillos, Spizzenergi) followed by a WGT-style venue hop to see Die Kur play a late set at The Unicorn.*
- *Unexpected appearance of Deviant UK supporting Orgy, reminded how good they could be.*
- *Last-minute decision to see Aurelio Voltaire the Dome. Don't normally go for this kind of gig, but this was entertaining! Solo singer-songwriters have to more than strum and sing to work a crowd, this guy certainly grasps that!*
- *Finally saw Pig and Cubanate, two elusive 90s industrial names finally back on the road.*
- *Diary of Dreams supported by Empathy Test – does Friday evening get better, ever?*

The End – And After?

The story ends neatly at the 20 year mark, with plenty of shows still to look forward to later in 2017 and new bands appearing all of the time. But will I still be going to these shows in another 20 years? Hard to say. The prospects beyond the next few years simply aren't as good as they have been of late, with the demonisation of music venues and the complications of Brexit refusing to go away.

Regardless of individual views, I can't deny that the free movement within the EU has allowed many bands to play here that wouldn't otherwise have been able to do so, not to mention a number of promoters and significant proportions of the audience who have come to the UK of their own free will and played a part in our live music experiences.

On the plus side, the growth of the internet has allowed music to cross borders even when the bands themselves do not, and unless they criminalise streaming or even block it at source, the sounds will always make it to these shores thanks to those who know where to look.

Also have to consider the health issues of gigging – it's probably already had a impact on my hearing, and the 'beer and junkfood' diet that accompanies such events doesn't help either. There are precautions one could take, but after 20 years of such behaviour, I'm simply not convinced I could enjoy the shows as much without the 'throw caution to the wind' mentality.

But anyway, as I write this, there are plenty of bands still left to see, and Brexit or no Brexit, we'll find a way to see them. But I do have other musical objectives in the DJ booth, and as I've said several times throughout the text, that is a story in its own right. And I'll have a go at telling it next year.

Jonny Hall – June 8 2017.

Some Top xx Lists

Some more lists for the TL:DR people reading this, or those who simply haven't had enough yet.

10 Bands Seen The Most Times

1. System:FX – 21
2. Die Kur – 20
3. Greenhaus – 16
4. VNV Nation – 15 (+1 “only saw half”)
5. Diary Of Dreams – 14
6. MaxDmyz – 13 (+2 curtailed sets)
7. Deviant UK – 13
8. Mechanical Cabaret – 13
9. RBN – 13 (later renamed Stok:Holm, but I never saw them under this title)
10. Killing Miranda – 12 (and there's a bit of 'previous' putting these two back-to-back...)

Bubbling under....Inertia and Deathboy on 11, AlterRed on 10. I reckon Global Citizen, Machine Rox and Black Light Ascension will all hit double figures soon.

Either Diary of Dreams or VNV count as highest scoring 'overseas' band, depending on what nationality you count VNV as, but the three bands above have all had members from overseas too, be it in the live band or as their primary creative force.

Killing Miranda win the prize for the “band seen the most times with exactly the same line upon each occasion”. Unless you count Chewbacca on keyboards one time. Die Kur will probably pass System:FX for first place before 2017 is out. Only about half of these projects are still gigging frequently.

20 Bands I Want To See But Haven't Yet

Oddly, I need only attend Rock Werchter 2017 to bag the top 2, but with barely anything else on the line-up I want to see and the fact that I've 'checked out' of attending outdoor festivals, we'll have to wait for a big arena show somewhere.

1. Radiohead
2. System Of A Down
3. Armageddon Dildos
4. The Cure
5. Die Form
6. Aphex Twin
7. Siouxsie Sioux (under any name)
8. Mentallo & The Fixer
9. Moby
10. Synapscape
11. Metallica

12. Machine Head
13. Rob Zombie
14. New Order
15. Spray
16. X Marks The Pedwalk
17. Acumen Nation
18. Staubkind
19. Garbage
20. Fortification 55

20 Best Performances, Ever

Keeping this to one-per-band, and barring the first few, the order is pretty arbitrary. If you want the story of each gig, go back a few pages

1. Rammstein at Brixton – December 2001
2. In Extremo at M'era Luna – August 2004
3. NIN at The Astoria – March 2005
4. Fear Factory at The Astoria – December 1998
5. Front 242 at WGT – May 2007
6. The Beauty Of Gemina at WGT – May 2015
7. Rotersand at Elektrowerkz – November 2006
8. ELR at The Water Rats – February 2004
9. Leæther Strip at WGT – May 2013
10. Deine Lakaien at WGT – June 2006
11. Diary Of Dreams at Gotham – May 2000 (but could have been one of many here)
12. CHANT. at Infest – August 2015
13. VNV Nation at The Scala – December 2012
14. Front Line Assembly (now with Real Leeb!) at WGT – June 2014
15. Saltatio Mortis at WGT – June 2008
16. The Human League at WGT – May 2005
17. Project Pitchfork at Islington Academy – October 2009
18. Kraftwerk at The Tate Modern – February 2012
19. Revolting Cocks at WGT – June 2017
20. mind.in.a.box at Infest – August 2010

Thank-You To....

This has been a story of one man's adventure in the world of live music, but it has not been a totally solo effort. A thank-you is due to all the below.

Mandy Graves for her significant role in the final quarter of this story.

Steve Weeks for getting me into events I would not have otherwise been able to attend.

Bryon Adamson for *modus operandi*.

Rob from Coventry (sorry mate, that's how everyone refers to you!) for my M'era Luna introduction.

The independent promoters (some still going, some not, all part of the tale): Flag Promotions, NMTCCG, Synchrotrax, Infest, Armalyte and the clubs Reptile, Dead and Buried, Slimelight and Monster Truck.

I cannot name every band, but a friendly wave to a number of local acts where I know at least one member (most are still going in some fashion, a few are not): Die Kur, System:FX, Maxdmyz, Mechanical Cabaret, Killing Miranda (now under a new name), RBN (ditto, can't keep these two apart, can I?), Deviant UK, Swarf. Earth Loop Recall/This Is Radio Silence, Black Light Ascension, DJ Translight, Inertia, Tenek, Global Citizen, Machine Rox, Paresis, Kommand + Kontrol, STAB Electronics, Bleak, Terminal Gods, Special Love/Grimbergen, Psyche, Lizard Smile, Rome Burns/Hi-Reprociwatisname, The Memepunks, Drilling Spree, Ventenner, Standgericht, Lilygun,

Rest In Peace

Musicians I have seen on stage who have since departed this mortal coil.

John Murphy (Knifeladder and Countless Others)

Paul Raven (Killing Joke and Ministry)

Mike Scaccia (Ministry)

Steve Strange (Visage)

Frank Tovey (Fad Gadget)

Peter Steele (Type O Negative)

Alan Vega (Suicide)

Chris Squire (Yes)

There is a good chance I've missed some names, I've only included those I know for sure.