

## THE WILD WEST

Touring is kind of like combining work with a holiday. You stay in hotels, eat out all the time, meet new people every day, and party more than usual (more than usual for some people). That's the fun part. Then, of course, there is the performing and plenty of interviews in each new city. But combined with everything else, even that doesn't seem like work. For me, touring is a great lifestyle. Time becomes almost non-existent. It doesn't matter whether it's twelve noon or twelve midnight, whether it's Monday or Saturday - it's like an eternal summer holiday. As long as you show up for soundcheck and interviews on time!

On Thursday, November 3rd, our crew, with tour bus and forty-two foot tractor trailer, left for Manitoba. This was the last part of our "Talkback Tour" in Canada - the Western Tour. That following Saturday, Sandy, Rob, Derrick and I flew to meet them in Winnipeg for our first show. We would have left with them but we were busy shooting the video for our first single from the "Talkback" album called "Old Emotions". As usual, we had a mascot follow us on the trip - a cowboy Smurf this time (to guide us through the "wild west" according to Pat, our promotion person) As you can tell, she's a bit on the silly side but we're glad of it.

We were picked up at the airport by our record company representative for that territory, Tom, and settled into our hotels rooms. This being our first time in Winnipeg, we went around checking out the record stores, to say hello and visit for a while. While making our rounds Rob and Derrick signed and sold albums by just walking into a store. There was hope for us yet in Winnipeg. As it turned out, our show at the Rendezvous Club that night was sold out. We were feeling great. The evening was super. Lot's of dancing (when you're on stage performing that's very important. It means that the performance is working). We also used new stage props that night: giant metal grid patterns behind us lit by black lights. These additions were working fine too. As far as first nights on a tour go, this was a great one!

We decided to drive to Regina that night (a six hour drive). Our tour bus driver Don turned out to be a super guy - an ex baseball umpire with lots of stories to tell. Plus Nash the Slash, our support "band", was riding with us. I could see that this was going to be a very interesting tour. I found a bunk in the back of the bus, and to the hum of the motor (and bumps on the road), I rocked to sleep.

I woke up the next morning as the bus rolled up to our hotel in Regina (it's November 6th, in case you've already lost track). I had breakfast and went to bed (I think it's usually the other way around). That evening's show was at the University of Regina theatre, actually more like a lecture hall. One of the new parts in our show that we were trying out involved Derrick coming down from his drum kit in the middle of "Walk The Plank" and performing a latin percussion timbali solo in the centre of the stage. We were kind of worried as to how it was going to turn out but this little musical adventure received one of the best reactions all night - without missing a beat. We were all surprised.

Since it was only a three hour drive to Saskatoon, we waited until the next day to make the trip. Nash the Slash pulled out his Trivial Pursuit game on the bus in no time. It was Nash and Rob against Carl (our manager) and I. Everyone seemed to have their best category. Rob was good at naming TV characters, I was good at rolling the dice. I can't remember who finally won. We hated to tear ourselves away from the game (by the way, Nash cheats) but we did have to perform that night. Centennial Hall was another great show. And this time we had Nash join us on violin as we ended the set with "Arias & Symphonies". It was kind of weird seeing a guy with bandages on his face everytime I turned around on stage!

November the 8th was a day off for travelling; kind of a weekend in the middle of the week. It was another six hour drive to Calgary and, you guessed it, we spent a good part of that time glued to the Trivial Pursuit board. And with the help of a couple of movies on the video machine, a portable keyboard, a good book, some snacks, and of course music, the world outside the bus soon disappeared. Once in a while we would peek out the window to see where we were and whether we were in a town or not, or if it was snowing yet. But apart from that a tour bus is a world quite unto itself. It has all the comforts of home (well almost).

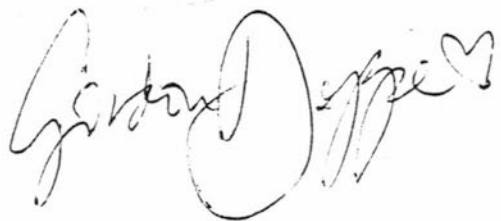
Next day in Calgary was a busy one. We had interviews to do everywhere we went, but this day was especially crammed with radio and TV appearances. On days like this you drink alot of coffee and end up trying to think of new answers to the same old questions. How did the band get together? How did the recording of the last album go? How is the tour so far? You be the judge.

Calgary is one of our favourite cities and, as we hoped, the show at the Jubilee Theatre was one of the best on the tour. The giant hall looked more like it was meant for symphony orchestra concerts and ballets, but once everyone got out of their seats and moved to the front to dance, we felt right at home. One member of the audience decided he wasn't being noticed, so he jumped up on stage to continue dancing there. When it was time to get off quick (I think the approaching roadies had something to do with it) he took a run and dove head first into the crowd below, as if it were a swimming pool. Only problem was, water doesn't move out of the way, but the crowd did.

We didn't know it yet, but the next day's show in Edmonton (November 10th) was going to be the last on the tour. As we would find out later that day, the Vancouver show at the University of British Columbia was not going to be (due to the B.C. labour strike which affected the university and blocked roads through the Rocky Mountains). But we didn't know that yet so hang on to that for later.

Sandy and I had our last drive on the bus for three hours to Edmonton. The show was at the University of Alberta Student Union Building Theatre which coincidentally was the last place we played on our last western tour after finishing the United States with Culture Club this past spring. That was a time I'll never forget, but then that's a whole other story.

After the show we all gathered together in one hotel room and said our goodbyes. Goodbye Nash. Goodbye Don. It had been a short tour, but it was a good one with a lots of good, new friends. Sandy, Carl, and I flew on to Vancouver the next day anyways. Ducking in and out of the rain between interviews, we spent two and a half days enjoying the city where I was born. I like the rain. Some good friends showed us around, rounding off the tour with a nice warm feeling. I felt that I would very much like to return and do the show that didn't happen. Some people and cities, do that to you; they remind you why you became a musician in the first place. It's people and sharing your songs with them no matter how far away from home they may be.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gordon Dyer", with a small heart symbol at the end of the signature.