

When electric guitars ruled the earth...™

BEN ROGERS' INSTRUMENTAL ASYLUM

The New York Mini-tour Road Diary...



Friday

Arrive in New York – to meet up with Al Kash (ex-Blackfeather, Dave Hole Band, Commander Cody, Bo Diddley) – our North American drummer. Ben hasn't seen Al since gigging and recording together in Perth back in the 80s. However easy to recognise him at the airport – not too many 6 ft 6" guys with white afros! Back to Al's pad on the Hudson River to work out what we're going to play and to organise what we're going to play it on!

Al surprises us with reviews in the local press.

Blackfeather



Al then



Al now



Saturday

Record store gig - River Street Beat Shop. Arrive to find shop front decked out with Hawaiian shirts, plastic flamingos and giant posters proclaiming our arrival. Beat shop owner Jim Barrett treats us like the rock royalty we imagine we are. Quite overwhelming. Strange man comes up to Nikki to buy a CD before we've even played. He returns later with a hardcover book of Alice in Wonderland which he's signed and decorated with a picture of the sun...

Gig fabulous! People lining the street and rocking out, cars slowing down as they drive by, drivers finding parking and racing back. Queues to buy the CD after the set and even more unexpected - queues to get them autographed! Meet Bill Milhizer - drummer from celebrated New York garage band *The Fleshtones* - who's come along to see us! Talk music for a while (he's friends with the Hoodoo Gurus) and then discover his real love – the gee-gees. He raves about Saratoga track (couldn't believe it wasn't on our "to-do" list) and speaks wistfully of his trip to the Melbourne Cup.

Leave the Beat Shop with more accolades from Jim and laden down with a fair bit of his stock – his generosity is mind boggling.

Maybe *Alice in Wonderland* was an appropriate metaphor for the whole Beat Shop experience.

Beat Shop Photos: Ed Bruhn



George with wild turkeys

Sunday

Party at Al's to meet the locals including author George Chesboro (cult detective series featuring dwarf hero, Mongo) and his wife Robin (Apache Beach publishing), and Tim Livingston (marketing guru from Sundazed Records). Eat, drink and yap on Al's deck in the glorious summer's afternoon, with wild turkeys wandering by. Later we tune into Jim Barrett's radio show with more raving about Ben Rogers' Instrumental Asylum, and an interview with Al Kash about our mini-tour.



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Monday

Wandering around Manhattan. Find a strange comic book shop inhabited (surprise, surprise) by strange, geeky men. Fascinated by a guy in wheelchair reading the comics and turning the pages with his mouth (without actually buying the book – guess they dry out eventually). Ben buys a souvenir – a model of Gort (The Day the Earth Stood Still).

Took photos outside Carnegie hall (just in case it gets demolished before we get a gig there...).

Tuesday

Needed to find the Chrysler Building - Nikki's "must see" in NYC. Brief period of standing in the foyer drowning in art deco glory while legendary drummer Al Kash battles the traffic outside. Downside was that flash card from camera (including Carnegie hall photos) went missing in action during the difficult leap out of the car during a nano-pause in traffic. Guess we'd better get that Carnegie Hall gig sooner rather than later. Reunited with Al we set off for Greenwich Village. Much calmer vibe than the heart of the city. Later, after checking out guitar shops in 48th St, set off to visit a pal of Al's with an amazing guitar collection. Admitted to the humidity-controlled guitar vault where over 80 guitars and electric basses hang waiting to be brought to life. Ben gets his hands on a D'Angelico New Yorker (the world's greatest arch-top guitar) and plays it whilst foaming at the mouth. Also plays a Selmer Maccaferri which was once owned by the legendary luthier himself. Nikki plays a few basses including a headless Klein.

On leaving Ben thanks our host for his hospitality and gives him an Instrumental Asylum CD. Depart with thought "Mmmm. Wonder how closely he reads liner notes", with particular reference to Nikki's "Irrational dislike" (headless basses!). Answer? He reads them very closely. And quickly. No sooner have we hit the freeway than the phone rings - "Sorry about the headless bass...". Oops. However, whilst Ben is crowing about Nikki's discomfort, she remembers his "Irrational dislike" – midgets in films. Was it only last Sunday we were discussing George Chesboro's current film option on his books featuring the dwarf detective? (And yes, we did give them a CD too.)

Wednesday

Open-air gig at Menands with two other bands – rockabilly act "The Lustre Kings" and blues band "Folding Sky". Jam session with the three bands at the end of the evening.

Nikki discovers the natives don't speak "Strayan" when she tries to work the refreshment system (science degree doesn't help here...).

Reel-to-reels at Sundazed

Thursday

Tour of Sundazed studios in Coxsackie. (Sundazed specialise in reissues such as "Lost Legends of Surf Guitar", "Garage Beat '66", and other classics from the uncharted depths of garage, psych, surf and rockabilly).

Open-air gig at "Dutchman's Landing" in the Catskills, once again with "Folding Sky".

Friday

Hatch plan to record an instrumental version of Blackfeather's hit, *Seasons of Change*. Al played on it the first time round and is keen to give it another rev.

Gig at "The Garden Grill" in Albany with Al's band "The Rumdummies". Huge fun – like being in an episode of "Cheers".

Nikki meets Gidget

Al "kashes" in

Ben jams with the 'Dummies

Nikki makes friends

Saturday

Day off – should be sleeping off the Garden Grill but visit Boston instead.

Sunday

Back to Aus and the real world. Thoughts of where to now. Talk to our local drummer, Denis (man-of-many-gifts), who offers to play the recorder bit at the start of *Seasons of Change* originally recorded by Bon Scott. Let the trans-Pacific recording session begin!

18 track album *Welcome to the Instrumental Asylum* out now on Blazz Music through MGM

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