

SATURDAY

2/13/2010

HOLLYWOOD CA USA

B. BELL

CONTINUATION OF 1/21/2010 AND ONWARD - LAKEHEAD, CALIFORNIA

WRITTEN BY WAY OF RETROSPECT

A mechanic could not be located at the hour of our pulling over, to doctor the troubled Scion. The band and crew checked in to the only motel in the vicinity and roamed, exhausted, toward the bar to which it was attached for a few pints of lager and quiet consolation. The watering hole was called Klub Klondike, a lonely place comprised of a long oaken bar and a pool table.

Until the sudden presence of the 100 Monkeys in the restaurant there were only two people inside, only one of whom can be called a patron; as the other man was the owner and sole barkeep of the establishment. The patron was a stocky man, likely in his early forties. He wore the uniform of the region, as did Leon, the owner, which was a plaid flannel button-up shirt and a thick beard. Leon was ecstatic to see a group of nine hungry and thirsty customers on a cruel snowy night that made the idea of patronage unlikely. Not anticipating much business that night, Leon had just terminated the bar's heating system and was no less than fifteen minutes from closing up shop. Upon seeing us he threw more logs on his stove fire and began to happily pour draught all around.

Klub Klondike turned out to be a great place to be stranded. It is almost a saloon, in persona, from the Old West: Log fires, scattered newspaper clippings posted to the walls yellowing with age, and twelve burgundy leather stools to compliment the long oaken bar. There was also a stage, a funny sort of thing to see empty though fully-functioning on a date the band would, under better circumstances, oblige in Sacramento. The band grew excited, as they had not yet, as it were, performed that evening. There was talk of setting up equipment right there on the spot to play, at the very least, for an audience of two and their own peers.

But first, it was decided, every one must eat, reflect, recharge. Upon overhearing such a claim, Leon replied with joy:

"If you kids are lookin' for some ol' home cookin', look no further."

He smiled, as did we all.

(cont.)

It was obvious that Leon, a man of sixty-two with a firm handshake and a bar well stocked with bourbon, knew how to cook American food as well and coincidentally had much of it already cooked. He uncovered from the back room something like three pounds of swine ribs, homemade mashed potatoes, beans, what-have-you, and massive steins of brew from the tap . . . Indeed, the night could have been worse.

The stage also became home to the majority of the band and crew at one time or another throughout the night, as a means for karaoke. Yet some of the group also retired early to their respective motel rooms, to rest or to brood. Those performing onstage were having fun, entertaining themselves if only because there was no one else, at that particular location, to entertain. And somewhere, on either side of the mountain we were beached, somebody, anybody, likely by the hundreds . . . were listening to the recorded music of 100 Monkeys on Ipods or behind the screen on a medium called YouTube, or were hoping for the safety of a band and crew absent from a gig not by choice but by circumstance.

It continued to rain and snow that evening, but all was quiet by a certain hour. Tomorrow, as it were, would be more driving.

"When I leave this town, pretty mama, I'm going away to stay . . ."
- Blind Willie McTell

THURSDAY - 1/22/2010

The early hours of Thursday were spent recovering from the night before, as the motel room in which the majority of the band slept remained without heat for the duration of our being there. Energy was sacrificed even in sleep, shivering. We mentioned this trouble that morning, in casual passing, to the management, a man who looked to be in his thirties, he, too, sporting both plaid shirt and beard. He was a big man, who did not tread his steps across the icy parking lot lightly. He received the polite complaint regarding a lack of heat as an attack on his integrity. He replied hastily something to the effect of our hesitance to inform him of the problem as it was troubling us the night previous. Though none of us replied such, it was well known that he was nowhere to be found the night previous. It was known, as well, that he closed the motel offices early, in fact, as he simultaneously puffed on a joint and turned on his television in the small cubicle of a place.

(cont.)

In any event the room was refunded, but not without unnecessary guff with a man of whom we had no desire to make qualms. This is a danger and a damper on the efforts of good, decent folk everywhere: the uncalled for attack on ethical things like patience and the attempt to be neighborly. The achievement of humanity ought to be on the minds of everybody these days, for it is now a global community in which we all live and function, and in which we will all one day die. Until that point, however, it is only logical to be kind, to soften the blow that is the current state of this world at war, in poverty and in darkness.

100 Monkeys, obviously, is not a model to which the United Nations should imitate, but their skills in both patience and cool adaptation is surely something to credit with praise. They had missed a performance for the first time on tour, and slept in a room with little heat in a place that may or may not have the official label of "town". But nobody within the group complain unnecessarily, for there would be no sense in it: It was not their fault. It was the fault of the sky; of the gruesome weather. The bearded management at the motel the morning we departed was not so wise, nor so patient or even coherent. The difference was, the repair of a broken heater was not, unlike the weather, up to the skies to determine. It was his own disposition for sloth that kept us cold the evening previous. It was his fault. It was not our fault, not for the heater and not for a cancelled performance in Sacramento. Circumstance will victimize us all in due time, but never point fingers unless the plan is to have them bitten. . .

Soon enough we were Santa Cruz, California, bound.

"

(cont.)

After stopping off in Redding to evaluate the damage done to the Scion, we were making good time en-route to Santa Cruz. The Scion, in which four of the group were lodged, was thankfully without any serious trouble. The only damage was cosmetic, and so of little concern to any one because a car is not a musical instrument or a recording studio or a venue; it is only a car, a means of transportation and not expression with regard to the IOO Monkeys. It seems more eyebrows would be raised over a thirty dollar harmonica if it were misplaced, if only because, for the band, it is a means of expression; of music.

The convoy drove through the winding California Grapevine in heavy rain and in darkness, but we were running well on time for the show at a place called Catalyst. The air was particularly cool that evening, and still. Upon approach to the city, it seemed pedestrians were scarce-which is a noticeable thing in a college town like Santa Cruz. Perhaps in that part of California, residents are not accustomed to meager rainfall and cloudy skies. The guess is that it is for such reasons that the turnout at Catalyst was not so plentiful. But, as per custom, IOO Monkeys played a full set for whoever was present, almost impartial to the slight crowd.

At the very least, they were in a new town - another hour away from rural, mountainous Lakehead and another hour closer to the next town on the agenda. And tonight, as it were, was a fifty patron improvement on the crowd of two the evening prior. Despite the numbers IOO Monkeys was still active, still proud, still good at what they do. They were and remain professional and mature with regard to stage presence and musical output. The Catalyst, as a bar, was also favorable . . .

FRIDAY

"We shall find peace. We shall hear angels, we shall see the sky sparkling with diamonds."

- Anton Chekhov

With Friday came our presence in San Luis Obispo, California, and a fine show at the city's Downtown Brewing Company. The weather was a bit warmer, and the crowd was yet a bit bigger. The band played a solid **seventeen** shows that night, an indirect compensation, arguably, for the weird void that was the two days previous. The opening band ~~XXXXXX~~ was a group of musicians long acquainted with IOO Monkeys, who practice fine, loud music. They are called Monster Attacks The

(cont.)

Pilot, and it is from the mutual friendliness and respect that is so evident between the two groups that nothing shy of true comradeship can it be called. If you play, in short, if you are good; humble, neighborly, and know your way up and down the neck of a stringed Tender, according to one of the 100 Monkeys, Ben Johnson, "They've got your back, and we've got theirs." This implies the defensive, the notion that, without some sort of community, unfavorable things may happen.

This is not too absurd a belief. Musicians are entertainers, poets, artists. History has shown that society does not always respect this breed, and even, sometimes, shuns their very standing. This is not currently the case with 100 Monkeys, on any broad spectrum, but Johnson's quote is evidence of a certain instinct; of a certain trait that runs deep in the hearts of many in the world of artistry - that respect is key.

SATURDAY

Leaving San Luis Obispo Saturday morning welcomed us all with sunlight and warmth and from the top of a knoll on the outskirts of town was found one of many intersections: **Crossroads Avenue and Main Street. Crossroads stretched east and west, and trailed to the foot of the early horizon. Main Street pointed north and south. The direction south was muddled by black clouds with the threat to burst with rain. The direction north was clear, and it was held by the blue of a good sky.**

We did not take Main Street but we did head north, toward Stockton and another show. The venue, a drug-and-alcohol-free place, was called Plea For Peace. If only the plea were for sturdy Rock 'n' Roll music, perhaps the goal would run a chance for being achieved. In fact, it was.

(cont.)

We were in Stockton, California for two days, a time considered prolonged when compared to our habit of rambling. It was agreeable to us all, to be able to relax.

DIVERSION - THIS DAY IN HOLLYWOOD

TUESDAY, 2/16/2010

Today marks the date for 100 Monkeys to arise from slumber before noon, and to compile their nicer suits and Stetsons in preparation for a faux swimsuit calendar photo shoot in a beach community called Malibu, California. Today is a nice day, like most of them in this part of the country, and the band will be gone from this hotel for a number of hours, playing a sort of high-end dress-up game with a notable photographer and bucking around in the water, changing the very definition of what, exactly, a "swimsuit calendar" constitutes. It is bound to be a both productive and therapeutic day, for the band and crew in entirety; ~~THE~~ the band will be working and splashing in the water at the same time, while Mr. Coslett, the sound man and Mr. Lawson, the known "Bananager" will be running errands, but not in haste - rather in leisure, and it is well deserved. It is true: The weather is much too favorable for stress.

Today will also allot this writer some time for quiet brooding, here at the hotel, by poolside with all the coffee, bourbon, and tobacco necessary for the literary process. The Update in Retrospect, excepting these Diversions, has not yet reached the twenty-six January show in Bakersfield, California, for a few things at present ought to be put to print before the storyline is looped back to today, all previous dates accounted for. Before delving into the past's Bakersfield and onward, there shall be ~~five~~ Subheadings thus.

Firstly:

#1 - 100 MONKEYS SCORES A FILM

It is not unknown that 100 Monkeys has been working strenuously on the score for a film during this month of February. Both Mr. Anderson and Mr. Rathbone of the band itself have ~~roles~~ roles in the film. Mr. Anderson - and his dear wife Christina - have had a significant place in producing the film. It is called "Girlfriend" and is now, for the most part, in post-production phases. But what is important to mention with regard to the band is the sheer number of man-hours spent on inducing proper music in proper context for the full-length movie.

(cont.)

The system of production for a legitimate film is also good to mention. Like ~~XXXX~~ in democracy, there is a jungle of checks and balances one must strategically convince and work around in terms of people. People have money invested. And time. And vision. Visions sometimes clash, because all parties involved think that what they are doing, or what they want to do, is right - and it is hard to dissolve an argument when values are involved. There is no disproving values . . .

The place of IOO Monkeys in the making of "Girlfriend" involves artistic vision, too. For the most part their approach has gone unchallenged and was, conversely, praised in many ways, as they have been able to adapt their musical ability to be able to match the artistry of the screen. This is tedious work. Arguably, it is nothing like the production of an album. In most films - again, arguably - music is meant to match the images, and not vice versa. To manage to do this, and to be content with the outcome, is the handiwork of devout professionals.

In lieu of their own endeavors as performing musicians, and in the realm of a world where people buy their albums to hear them specifically, and where full concert hall attendance sometimes happens . . . the crowd present for no other reason than to see "J. Action", "J. Rad", "Ben. G", and "Ben J" grasping their respective instruments, it is humble to donate time and music to a film in production, and somehow flaunting at the same time; to help establish the character of an actual movie that might be void of it without the backbone of IOO Monkeys. It is respectful infiltration, maybe. It is also persistence and stamina: the band sometimes spends all the hours of daylight cooped up in their rehearsal space, playing not from "Grape" or "Creative Control", but practicing half-minute long clips of sound for ~~XXX~~ any given scene in "Girlfriend". And, of course, retiring for an hour to the hotel only to return to work to adapt the noise to the film itself via computer and the fine work ethic of Scott Coslett, "The Scientist". Such work, it seems, is as tedious as a seamstress'.

Presently, IOO Monkeys is working against a deadline for the score. Or, they would be, if they were not at the beach in Malibu, trading fedoras and getting their suits wet. An interesting line of work it all is.

(cont.)

#2 - THE STREET POLITICS OF VENICE BEACH, CALIFORNIA

2/12/2010

Venice Beach is a fiercely popular spot for those who want to see the Pacific, walk the boardwalk, see local street performers, and, nowadays, receive California issued medical marijuana cards. There is a lot to see, without a doubt, but there is the underlying tone that the place is really some kind of far-flung bastard child of Hollywood, Disneyland, a Nineteenth Century traveling circus, and the historic California Gold Rush. It is comprised of a medley of influences and faces. It has the flash and flair, from the right distance, of the Hollywood Strip, or maybe even the Las Vegas Strip, but without the towering and overpowering presence of casinos, strip clubs, and fifteen dollar matinees at the Chinese Theatre. The stock of folk there, along the beach, is speckled with all sorts of personas; a kind of modern day melting pot where the similarity among people seems to be their affinity for expression and, certainly, the achievement of money.

This is what it is: Panhandlers offering the services of clowns and cardboard paintings, bead necklaces, and ganja pipes, all for a price, all under the same blazing sun on the cuff of the Western world, pushing so reverently against the Great Ocean. Perhaps this is why they remain. They can go no further, and so are forever damned to mingle and loiter and pester those who wear fanny-packs and T-shirts that say "Go Vikings" and "I Voted American: I Voted Ron Paul", who are looking to catch glimpses of the sands, waters, and locals of the edge of the westernmost State in the Union, and to purchase trinkets from those who live there to escape the normality of the city and country alike. There is society there, boiled down . . . the foam of the proverbial melting pot.

It is also a chartered city in Los Angeles County. Of course, there are laws and regulations there like anywhere else in America. There is also the counterculture of criminal activity, like in any place with a thoroughfare of people. This is something Mr. Will Schmidt, a close friend and associate of 100 Monkeys, Mr. Lawson, and this writer came to witness the day we walked along Venice Beach, scoping out any possible area to film a short music video. There are, of course, two sorts of people whose opinions are valuable with regard to public exhibition. The first of them is the law, and those who enforce adherence to it. The second is the general public, or, in this case, the people who live and work along the boardwalk, selling Bob Marley shirts and whatnot.

(cont.)

Mr. Schmidt, the potential director of the 100 Monkeys video, was hoping to shoot a rather simple though engaging piece with the ocean and the boardwalk to accompany the five musicians on camera. Easy enough. We figured the people to ask first were the boardwalk officials, who maintain an office on the beach itself. They informed Mr. Schmidt upon entrance that the boardwalk, by definition, is a public space, which means, in short, that filmographers - quite any one - has free reign to do what they please within the boundaries of public etiquette. This sounded good to us. No fees even had to be paid if the group were to film on only the boardwalk and not the beach, which is maintained as a Los Angeles Park, something to which a fee would likely have to be paid.

We began to search for a good place to set up in the future - as it were, next week. The street vendors station themselves along the boardwalk and, because they are situated there for lengthy periods of time, pay money to the city and, also, it was discovered, to what can only be called slumlords. With this said, we obviously had no plans to prolong our time there, but were concerned about the notion that we had to deal with the folk who actually live there. Who would willingly give up their daily bread to an entourage of wealthy (by comparison) white boys with guitars and cameras? We considered this question and thought we had come up with a good solution: Pay a local for X amount of time in his or her designated space, to compensate for any business lost.

Designated spaces are sliced according to size and placement along the boardwalk. Some spaces are ten feet square, some larger, and they are ordered by labels ranging from "A" to "D". We located a man standing in "C", painted silver and standing noticeably still and silent, a silver painted bucket in front of him beckoning for tips. Tips for what? Standing still in a spraypainted tuxedo? We decided to ask him who to ask to be able to acquire one of the "C" areas next week. After a moment, registering that we were not joking, he broke his silence and became animate. His silver dog, that was stuffed, retained his quietude. The man's answer to our query was severe.

He took our question as some kind of threat on his apparently hard-earned spot along the boardwalk. He responded, in broken English, something to the effect of: "People geat stabbed for that shit."

(cont.)

At this point, we began to realize our place as tourists and not as business-people, or gangsters for that matter. But we did find it interesting, and so convinced the high-strung silver man that we were no threat to his area, but rather wanted ^{to} understand the process of things. He had no trust for us or our intentions. We had cameras and pens and were inquiring about the potential infiltration of his income. He called over his supervisor, of sorts, who was in no way official excepting the legitimacy of the workings of the street. He was called Bukka, a small man of possible Middle Eastern descent whose fingernails were as long as guitar picks, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ his tone overbearing. He wanted to know our business.

We told Bukka and the silver man that we simply wanted to know how to get a space, for no more than a day, and that we did not want to offend anybody in the process. Both men laughed, shrugged, and Bukka stated:

"D . . . D is where white people go."

He pointed down the boardwalk, to the less populous end of it.

Upon viewing the "D" area, we had no choice but to rethink our ideas for a music video; the "D" space was home to what looked like the Hells Angels. Venice Beach is one of few places in the world where the only safe people are the tourists. Of course, this is only a personal account and is not meant to deter any interest in the place. We, however, were not in the mood to gamble with our lives.

#3 - A SCENE FROM THIS HISTORIC HOTEL

2/15/2010

It was a nice evening. Traffic had ceased to interfere with its five o' clock din, and 100 Monkeys was collected in the common area of our hotel room, conveying ideas to the producers and directors of "Girlfriend". A lot had been done that day. This writer was absorbing the acute silence, as silence is a rarity in Los Angeles, and typing a short story. There was some movement around the hotel. People checking in and out periodically. Nine to five hours are not often kept in this town. It is not unusual to see the nuclear family slyly move in around midnight. Hollywood is always awake, like Manhattan or Copenhagen.

(cont.)

The palmtrees remain impartial to all guests, swaying only with the insistence of the seldom wind. But what happens at their trunks, on street level, is in movement, always. The ripples of the water in the swimming pool, or ants marching between the cracks of the sidewalks, or the old man with a slouch and a wooden cane who leaves his room at the same precise hour daily with a fresh copy of Cleveland Business Week or the New York Times, passing under the line of trees, headed for a cushioned chair in the shade. Stillness would quell the very soul of Hollywood.

By such standards, Hollywood's soul blew into this hotel like a tumbleweed at around one in the morning in the form of a family of six, five of whom had one room, one of whom curiously had her own - including the infant she carried close to her chest, wrapped in a blanket, presumably asleep. All was quiet for maybe ten minutes, outside the blaring music coming from the room where the majority of the family was lodging, all male, all sporting the looks of irritable men. But the woman, maybe thirty, suddenly left her room quickly, in the direction of the source of loud music. In under a minute she was in and out of the room, moving offensively and shouting blasphemously about a mistaken pregnancy. She returned to her room, pulled the curtains closed, locked the door with deadbolt. A baby was crying. He or she was awake. A police siren rang, though not related to this disturbance.

Silence ensued. Creedence Clearwater Revival was right: There is a calm before a storm.

But a domestic disturbance is no storm. It is a flash of lightning, lucky to be void of thunder.

A young man emerged from the room, and sprinted toward the lodgings of the mother and infant. The other four men left, thirty seconds prior, through the hotel lobby's front door, for reasons ~~UNKNOWN~~ unknown. Common sense led this writer to figure the young man, maybe seventeen, ~~to~~ took advantage of the absence of his peers. He ran up the stairs, dodging the protruding ferns, and knocked on the woman's door. She gave him possession of the small child through the sill of the door. He took the baby's blanket, too, and the milk bottle and ran, cautiously, to his hotel room. Aside from inaudible argument, nothing else was heard. They left together, all six of them, the next morning,

(cont.)

The point is that things happen fast, they happen often, and if one blinks his eye he might miss the apocalypse, the enlightenment, a handshake, a footstep.

#4 - A SCENE FROM THIS HISTORIC CITY
2/16/2010

There is not only movement in this hotel. In fact, there is much more outside its walls that can be called whirlwind when the atmosphere is right. There is evidence of this everywhere. Eight-lane freeways run like rivers across the masses of this city, carrying cars by the hundreds, thousands, millions, each person in each car running late for something, or running just to run. Some people are rich. Some are poor. Some are willing to rob. Some are willing to donate. But they all live together, in this city, the desert on one end, mountains on the other, and the ocean on yet another.

One instance of one happening on one night is notable for means of contrast. A handful of the band and crew, after another hefty night of work on the musical score for "Girlfriend", those of us who were willing to take a walk banded together for a trek down to the region of Sunset Boulevard. It was an hour past midnight on a Monday. Needless to say, the strip clubs and night clubs were full to the brim with people of respective interests. Night people, they are called. We, apparently, were some of them.

The destination was anywhere measurably away from the hotel room, as many of us had seen little daylight while we were working. The sun was down, however. The moon was just as nice, its shape an inverted sliver on one of those rare nights the stars can be seen from this City of Angels. It was a fine time and place for a walk to catch a few breaths, as the north/south streets, on days like Monday, are relatively vacant. Hollywood and Sunset Boulevards, though, like their cousin Santa Monica, remain riddled with pedestrians.

A homeless man lurking near a dumpster in the parking lot of a liquor store and a tanning salon sat with a flashlight focused on his two-dollar California scratch card, peeling away its foil with hope for millions and the butt of a Bic lighter.

(cont.)

A few kids with bikes strode by in an intimidating formation, eyeing the four ~~XXXX~~ men of which this writer was one. The red and white light of a Ralph's grocery store made its label clear as we approached, and we found refuge there, to buy beer, grapefruit, and frozen buffalo wings - the keys to a good diet as far as Rock 'n' Roll is concerned. It was a quarter or half past one in the morning by that time, but business, it appeared, was plentiful. But a certain kind of insomniac presence was undeniable. At that hour, stock men and truck drivers load and unload oranges, chilled meats, loaves of bread publicly. Half the population of the store were employees, while a quarter of the people there were hired security guards, to repel any sort of late-night criminal stunts. The final quarter of people were the customers, primarily male and under thirty-five, some wearing robes, some sweatpants, all stoned as could be. It is a humorous sight; fifteen young professionals clambering over Hot Pockets and Stauffer's macaroni.

We made our purchases, an eighteen case of light Budweiser, six Texas Red grapefruit, and an assortment of food microwaveable and full of sodium. Things happen fast in places like this, as was stressed numerous times in these texts. We were in the store for no more than twenty minutes. As we entered the street - Hollywood - the youths on the bikes had been arrested for reasons it would be dangerous to ~~inquire~~. One was in cuffs, he was a teenager. His shaggy hair hung like vines from under his knit cap, which was red. He leaned stiffly on a side wall of a liquor store, his eyes facing the pavement, his mouth tightly shut, two police officers standing close, checking for identification and warrants. We kept walking, at the command of one of the five police officers in the vicinity. At the other end of a nearby parking lot was a similar situation. More cops. Another kid. Another night in the American West.

Back at the hotel we slowly retired to bed, weaned to sleep by beer, Southpark, and buffalo wings. Another night in the safety and confidence of a group of artists, travelers, counterparts.

(cont.)

CONTINUATION OF I/26/2010 AND ONWARD - BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

WRITTEN BY WAY OF RETROSPECT

We had come to Bakersfield from San Francisco, Stockton to San Francisco. We had little business in Frisco, but it is a good city with a good practice space for the band on the semi-industrial end of town.

The next show was at a place the locals called The Dome, in Bakersfield. The turnout there was good. The venue was the perfect size for the amount of people present. Local press was there, a journalist and photographer on assignment for the community's college paper.

The show in Bakersfield stands on its own as the epitome of a fine exhibition by IOO Monkeys, according to the scale of the show which was in many ways both modest and sincere. Things happened rather smoothly in terms of the setting up of equipment, and the breaking down of it. . .

After seeing enough shows, it becomes easier to criticize and compare, and more difficult to call "proper!" Perhaps the riddle is that propriety, on many visible fronts, has no place within the image and persona that is IOO Monkeys. The band has a lot of discipline and devotion, which is evident in every show this writer has witnessed, but a large chunk of the element of attraction is the attribute to the band called "spontaneity." If nothing utterly spontaneous occurs, it can take documentarians and the press aback and give them little from which to compare. The word "good" is almost too bland a word, with respect to language, when discussing something that refuses to mend to genre, popular culture, or any textbook approach to quite anything. This is not to say IOO Monkeys defies definition, but the point is that the question is not in defining them: It is trying to define all that is different from a band already so, well, different.

~~It~~ IOO Monkeys is comprised of the same ingredients of many up-and-coming groups. The band has management, merchandise, They want support, fanfare, and money. They also want something more, and that is the ability to honestly explain themselves, make themselves visible. In a word, it seems, the desire is to open up; to break down personal barriers; to create art that will not be created otherwise. To do such a thing, the very same path must be taken that groups with different intentions have. It is called climbing the ladder of Hollywood, and hoping, praying, not to lose any emotional baggage - the stuff

