

Tour diary...Pete Lockett

People often think that touring as a musician is a glamorous thing to do. There are certainly some glamorous moments but let me tell you, there is a lot more hard work, dead hours and boredom staring at a motorway than there should be in an ideal world.

On a recent trip to Denmark for example I got up at 4.30 am to meet at Gatwick at 6.30 am to fly at 8.30am. It was during the thunder storms and so it was a terrible flight. We had 1 hour or so at the danish airport before transferring to an internal flight, equally turbulent and bumpy. Then we were picked up at the airport and taken to a rendezvous with the tour bus and a three hour drive in traffic. Needless to say, by this time we are well into the late afternoon and go straight to the soundcheck which, because it's the first one of the tour is agonisingly long, thus giving us no opportunity to get to the hotel before the gig.

By the time we have packed up etc it's getting on for midnight and the hotel is an hour away. Seven hours later we were scheduled to leave the hotel to go to the second gig. Not a laugh, esp when I often travel with 150kg. Just imagine checking that lot in for a flight!

It's not always like that, besides the benefits and vibe of performing when it's a good gig makes it all worth while. Here is a short diary of the first fortnight of one of my recent tours with Joji Hirota. It is one of my percussion projects and goes under the name of 'Taiko to Tabla'



TOUR DIARY

It had been quite a year for Taiko to Tabla. Over sixty gigs and festivals, including the Edinburgh Festival, Bruges Festival, Rhythm Sticks at the South Bank, Glasgow Big Big World Festival, WOW festival, Pontardawe, Norwich &

Norfolk Festival and the Festival of the Sea at Portsmouth along with trips to Malaysia, Hungary, Italy and Thailand. For November and December we are set up with a thirty-date tour of Benelux to promote the release of our first album recorded in Belgium the previous February.

Mon 2 Nov

Possibly the worst moment of the tour Lugging the gear from my store into the car, down the motorway, through the tunnel and down the E19 to Bruges where we chill out in the hotel before the scheduled day of technical rehearsals on Tuesday. thankfully, this is the last I will hear of lugging gear until the last day of the tour when I have to take it back to the UIK. Thank the Lord for roadies! (we don't always have them so it really is a luxury)



Tue 3 Nov

Belgium beer inhibits waking. As I claw myself out of bed at 8am I begin to wonder how I'm going to last out for the next two months. Punctually at 9.30am it's time for the tour bus and Jo van Driessche, our agent, organiser and all-round spiritual adviser. A short drive to Haaltert later, we meet the crew and kick into twelve hours of sound-checking, light testing and rehearsal. We've left our cars in Haaltert at the sound & light company's place, and put our lives in the hands of our driver. I'm more than slightly concerned after a crazy pot-bellied Dutch lorry driver nearly took me out by being about 1 foot from the back of my car at 80 MPH. Very tiring. We stop off for the night at the five-star Astrid Plaza Hotel right opposite the main station in Antwerp. Three cheers for the promoter of the tour because this hotel will be our most frequented over the next eight weeks. Champagne please for the world percussion duo.

Wed 4 Nov

The day of the first gig in Eindhoven. PSV, the football team are at home and less than sober cultural advisers from some other town in some other country make a lot of noise. We silently sneak into the venue, past the crew's lorry which appears to have been hoisted up the outside of the building on a strange crane. Very modern. The gig turns out to be a great way to start the tour. A turn-out of over 500 with a total standing ovation at the end. Oh, to be a world percussionist.

Thu 5 Nov

Not quite the hotel we have in Antwerp, but who cares once you're crashed out for the night. We move on from Eindhoven to Venray at around three in the afternoon. Soundchecks get easier and easier as a tour progresses. A few changes need to be made once our humungous flight cases are unpacked, but this is mainly regarding the 'OTT' rock & roll lighting man with his new £***,000 computerised rig with more channels than one can imagine. The gig has also sold well and we get another standing ovation. Most heart warming.

Fri 6 Nov.

A drive back to Antwerp and back to our comfy residence. We get the afternoon and evening free to roam the chilly Belgium city. Unfortunately it poars down the whole time and so we get stuck in the hotel. This can really feel like a downer.

sat 7 Nov

We're based in Antwerp for four days now, commuting out to our gigs. It's Hasselt today, just a short drive away. The giant flight case still seems obscure to me, but it does make setting up and breaking down a lot easier. (When I say giant I mean it, all of my 150 kilos of drums fit into it!!) My set up on stage is very unusual, the only disadvantage being I don't trust anyone else to set it up. You really start to feel this, day after day.

The motorway is as relentless as ever. For those of you who think touring is glamorous, FORGET IT. Try eight laps of the M25 and then think again. The gig goes down well, but the people are certainly more shy in Belgium.

Sun 8 / Mon 9 Nov

A couple of days off to gad around Antwerp in more pouring rain and sort out the washing in the hotel sink. Very exciting. At least I've got used to the rain.

Tue 10 / Wed 11 Nov

Tuesday is our travel day to Haarlem. We're informed that this is one of the more important of the early gigs because a lot of press will be there owing to its closeness to Amsterdam. Quite some motorways later, we arrive in Haarlem, a quiet, pleasant little place indeed. Wednesday kicks off with an

interview with the Dutch drum magazine, Slagwerkerant and a whole host of other dutch magazines and radio stations etc.

Then it's to the venue for the infamous sound check routine. It's a nice theatre, which seats around a thousand people. It's great as a world percussion duo to get the chance to tour venues like this.

There are still a few problems with the on-stage sound, but it doesn't get in the way of another good house, and stonking response. We drive back to Antwerp after the gig, passing through two 30-minute delays on the less than adequate Dutch motorway network.

Thu 12 / Fri 13 Nov

I'm really thinking of a home break at the end of this week. Call me old fashioned, but I miss my wife and home comforts. Anyway, we move on to Oostend for two private gigs for a Japanese company. The plus side of this is that after each gig there's a free champagne bar. Will this mix with Belgian beer, think I. Oh well, who needs tomorrow anyway, especially when it's Friday 13th. I'm glad we're not on the motorway today.

Sat 14 / Sun 15 Nov

Back to Antwerp, check in the hotel. Lunch and drive off out to Breda for the last gig on this leg of the tour. It's been quite a relaxed schedule which is more than I can say for the next six weeks which have about twenty gigs packed into them. Anyway as from tomorrow I've got a couple of days at home. The flight goes from Antwerp to London City airport and all I've got is hand luggage. What a welcome face my wife Pam is at London City airport. Homeward bound, for a while!