



**D.I.Y.
TOURING
THE
WORLD**

Blink

ATTENTION

Much of this book is based on internet links, many of which will die as is the way, so please check these forums below for updates, and please notify me on the forums of any dead links you find.

<http://www.alowhum.com/forums/topic/resources>

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A large portion of any proceeds from this book will go to sites that I have used to help me book tours, and I hope you make donations to those sites yourself also.

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Thanks!

D.I.Y TOURING THE WORLD

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COPY EDITOR No single person is to blame

Visit the forums at www.alowhum.com for updates and discussions on
these topics.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Thanks for getting a copy of this book! Within I'll explain how I plan, book and manage international tours, backed up by anecdotes and hard-learned lessons. I believe that after reading, anybody can put this guide down and start booking themselves a tour around the world, whether or not you'll actually want to is another question.

One trip overseas will not magically make your band rich and famous. Instead, I encourage you to view regular international touring as a valid, ongoing lifestyle while advancing your musical career in gradual steps. Provided your circumstances allow it, there is no reason why it can't be easy, fun and something you do often without losing crazy amounts of money.

This book comes loaded with caveats. I have cited websites that I currently use and, given the web's tendency to completely overhaul itself every six months, odds are these could be redundant very shortly. There is a quick reference guide at the back of this book that lists all the websites I mention. Links die and new ones emerge, so I will try to maintain an updated list on the forums (www.alowhum.com). Here's hoping my website doesn't become a dead link.

The title is also a little grandiose, just being honest here. My experience is limited to touring Europe, USA, Australia and New Zealand. I'm just providing the starting point to plan, book and manage an overseas tour anywhere. I mainly use Europe and the USA as examples, but the basic ideas should apply to any territory you wish to tour, even if I don't discuss particulars here.

I've tried to take on an incredibly broad subject and so I may have breezed over some topics too lightly. Apologies if you're left with questions following your reading of this, but remember this is just one guy's opinion. This isn't a painstakingly researched guide written over a decade, involving input from touring gurus from all over the world – it's just the ranting of some guy from New Zealand who was tired of people asking "how to tour overseas". I do not declare my opinions or ideas in this book to be definitive and correct, they are just my experiences and your experience may be completely different.

If you have major gripes or are left wanting more, you can look for answers to any pressing questions on the forums I mentioned above.

Please read the *entire* book, it will probably only take a few hours. It's difficult to organise this information into sections so that it is user-friendly, without creating the need to repeat information that applies to more than one section. So, read the whole thing because there might be good information in a section you think you don't need.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

Even though I'm a staunch DIY jerk and squat shows are my thing, I have tried to cater to a broad audience here. Ideally any band thinking about touring will find something useful in this book, even if you're a solo folk act, a two-piece crusty punk band or a ten-piece funk-reggae act. What you won't find is tips on "breaking the industry". I am not going to discuss meetings with publicists, getting labels to your shows or how to make it *big*. If that's your ultimate goal you will still find this information useful for your quest, but for me touring overseas is much, much more than that.

This guide was written principally for bands from New Zealand (and maybe Australia). When it was nearly finished I realised most of the information is relevant to any band regardless of their geography. So if you're reading this from outside of New Zealand, please excuse the focus on New Zealand and the inevitable colloquialisms, I hope you'll still enjoy the read.



Blink in Chicago. Photo by SM.

BEFORE ANYTHING

WHY TOUR?

Why do you want to tour? This is the very first question you need to answer before you go any further. Whether it's just yourself or a whole band, you should establish tour goals. If there's more than one of you, everyone needs to be in it for the same reasons, have similar expectations and a really high level of commitment. It is tempting to have a relaxed attitude and 'see what happens', but consider touring carefully. This will be one of the hardest yet most fun things you ever do, but if you attempt to proceed without establishing goals you're headed for a messy and expensive disappointment.

INTERNET SKILLZ

Before you start, you need to make sure someone (or all of you) on the tour has decent internet skills. There are a ton of websites that your band can use to raise your profile. I'll talk about some of them below, but before you get carried away, work out if you actually have the time to maintain 20 different profiles, or if you'd be better off just having two or three. Should you really saturate the internet with your sketchy demos? Do you really need that *Twitter* account to keep in immediate contact with your six fans? Different web products are appropriate at different stages of your band's life; you don't have to use everything right now just because it's there. However, it is VERY important that you become adept at using the products you do decide to use properly. When it comes to booking tours you'll be doing it all online, so get some skills and keep building those skills. Learn basic HTML. Ask people for help if you are struggling, or ask *Google*. Search *YouTube* for instructional videos. Your online presence might mean very little, however your ability to effectively use the internet as a tool will make promotion and organisation of tours really easy. Below is a rundown of a few websites that I think are worth knowing about (currently). Unfortunately given the evolutionary speed of the internet, this section will probably be out of date by the time this book is printed. Ah well.

MYSPACE

MySpace (myspace.com) was THE go-to site only a few years ago but now it's pretty much dead. Ol' man Murdoch lost \$500m on it and now JT reckons he can save it turning it into some sort of social TV watching beast, but yeah... we'll

see. I know, it's kinda cool not to have one and I appreciate that, but *MySpace* is still used by some promoters around the world. Within a few years I'm sure it will be all over, but for now, it makes sense for you to have an account for your band - even if just to use to contact promoters/venues you can't contact via email.

Set up a *MySpace* page, no matter how punk or underground you think you are. Also, don't fill your *MySpace* page with a ton of unnecessary crap so it takes an age to load. Just have basic info, a few photos, some songs, your tour dates and videos if you have them. The 'friends' crap is irrelevant; I would get rid of that section (disable it). Even if you are 'friended' by real people who aren't spammers, they'll grow bored of *MySpace* soon enough anyway.

BANDCAMP

Bandcamp (bandcamp.com) is the absolute business. Every band should have a *Bandcamp* account as soon as they have some recordings. I have no doubt that if they don't fold they will become one of the most important musical assets on the net. I signed up in the first week and watched with interest as they added more and more excellent features. The best of which is seamlessly integrating your own website by customising your *Bandcamp* page with very little *Bandcamp* branding. You can sell (or give away) your tracks in any format the downloader wishes, even do the *Radiohead* thing and let punters pay what they want. You get pretty sweet statistics and you can generate download codes to give away or sell at shows... and this is only scraping the surface. Thoroughly recommended.

You can sell physical merch through *Bandcamp* as well and it's easy to integrate into *Facebook*. They have recently capped the amount of totally free downloads you can give away to 200 a month, and they also collect 15% of any revenue you earn which is slightly annoying but they are providing an incredible and easy to use back-end, so it's worth the cost. It's better *Bandcamp* stay in business and improve the site than offer it all for free and fail.

Bandcamp is also great for its little embeddable players you can place easily on your other websites, making it easy for people to play tracks/albums. *Soundcloud* (soundcloud.com) is also great for embedding tracks, although has limitations if used as a free account.

FACEBOOK

Everybody fled from *MySpace* to *Facebook* (facebook.com) because they were sick of being bombarded by friend requests from bands and spam on their pages. Unfortunately *Facebook* is going the same way with some bands abusing the event tool a little too hard. *Facebook* 'Groups' and 'Pages' for artists are becoming more standard than *MySpace*, which is slightly annoying as communication on *Facebook* is clunkier than *MySpace*. Shhh. Don't tell anyone that I miss *MySpace*.

However the *Facebook* event invite tool is excellent. I admit I do use it often, however I don't put too much faith in the RSVP replies. When I send invites to

an event, I don't do a blanket invite to my entire 'Friends' list. I take some time and only invite people who are in or near that city AND who might be interested in the event. Bands who invite me to EVERY show even when they know I live in another country; I actually avoid seeing them live. It's a great tool, but it's easy to annoy and alienate your 'Friends' if you abuse it, so don't!

A *Facebook* profile/page is essential. Set one up and make sure you have embedded music and tour dates on there. *Songkick* (songkick.com) offers good integration for listing shows and *Bandcamp* (see above) is great for having music on your page.

LAST.FM

Last.fm is an important website to know how to use. *MySpace* gives helpful but somewhat limited information from its music player function, but on *Last.fm* (www.last.fm) you can get a solid idea of how many people are listening to your music, how often, who your biggest fans are and which songs they prefer. Of course it only tracks registered users, but this can still offer a good cross-section of the people listening to your music. I've even stalked 'top listeners' of bands I work with in various countries, made contact with them and asked them to help organise shows.

In NZ *Last.fm* is still taking off for event promotion, but it is already a vital promotional tool in most large European and North American cities where posterage is not the norm. *Last.fm* is also huge in central/eastern Europe.

The great thing about *Last.fm* is it is not a site you need to update often and your band will probably end up on there without your input anyway. Generally a page will just appear if you have a few listeners because it works in a wiki format. If you find a page on there for your band, you can claim it and take ownership, meaning you can upload tracks and do other stuff.

Make sure once a *Last.fm* profile is active for your act that you at least keep an eye on it. It will give you a much clearer picture than *MySpace/Facebook* of whether or not people actually like you. People listening to your tracks on *MySpace* are often just surfing and not necessarily fans. However, if plays get registered on *Last.fm* it's because people chose to play those songs in a less casual way than *MySpace*.

Internationally, for promoters, *Last.fm* is pretty much the definitive way to compare how popular an act is in relation to their 'competition'.

YOUTUBE

Usually, whoever makes your video will upload it onto their *YouTube* (youtube.com) account. That's fine, but also set up an account just for your band, upload all your videos and you'll get access to *YouTube* 'Analytics' within the 'Video Manager', previously called 'Insight'. It ranks right up there as the most informative of all statistic tools. It provides very simple information but it's all you need and it's

much easier to use than *Google Analytics* (more on that soon). Once your video has a decent amount of hits, check it out in 'Video Manager' and click 'Analytics' and it will tell you several things, such as: How people are finding your video (were they linked from other sites, blogs, *Facebook*, etc) and what their interest level is like during a video, it will give you a graph showing when people stopped watching your clip and compare it to other videos.

Most importantly for me is finding out the viewing numbers from various countries. By entering a country into the 'Geography' search field, you can see which countries are viewing and how those people are finding out about it. This is particularly fascinating and important if you are booking tours because you can see if there's any interest before you get there, and then how impactful a show was by seeing how many people went on *YouTube* the next day to watch your videos.

If you care more about how your video looks online than the useful stats, use *Vimeo* (vimeo.com), where the video quality is better. Personally, I'm a stats sell-out, I'll always go where the figures are and *YouTube*'s optimisation has become so much better recently that, if you know what you're doing, the quality difference is negligible.

It's really common these days to not even download MP3s anymore. Many people use Youtube as their main library of music and a way to discover new music. So while the record industry is still lamenting the death of CDs they haven't even realised the MP3 is already on the way out. Therefore it makes sense to have much of your music on Youtube and other streaming services, even if it's just audio with an album cover as the "video"

GOOGLE (EXTRAS)

Yeah, of course you know how to use *Google* (google.com), if you don't I'm surprised you are even able to turn the pages of this book. *Google*'s great, but do you know how to use all the other awesome tools that they have made available? I hate to suck *Google*'s cock coz if there was ever a company that could actually become an ominous sci-fi-style Big Brother, *Google* are it, however, until they take over the planet completely I am happy to use these tools.

GOOGLE MAPS

Please tell me you know how to use *Google Maps*! Well, it's simple really, you enter in the address of something and the maps will show you where it is like, um, a map. *Google Maps* becomes the very foundation of booking a tour, so get familiar with its basic functionality; search for places, zoom in and out, move around, save maps and print them out. If you click on 'My Maps' you can create a customised map and plot out each stop on your tour. It's a handy way of seeing the general shape of your tour and approximate driving times between points. *Google Maps Street View* is also handy for previewing specific streets, landmarks and buildings,

which makes it easier to find them when you get there.

GMAIL

Sure, there are probably better email providers out there, but as far as having total integration with all of *Google's* other features (of which you'll use heaps), just suck it up and create a band *Gmail* account now. Sure, having a *Hotmail* address is ironically cool in a 90s way, and *Yahoo.co.uk's* are pretty classic, but *Gmail* is where it's at, especially if you have a personal and band account with *Gmail*. Using "Multiple Sign In" you can easily flip between various accounts.

GOOGLE DOCS & CALENDAR

So good. There are lots of different *Google Docs* available, but the ones you'll use most are word docs and spreadsheets (i.e., *Microsoft Word & Excel*). Spend time learning how to use these. I swear black and blue by *Google Docs* and use them for many things. I keep databases of contacts on *Google Docs* so I can easily access them from any computer anywhere in the world. I use *Google Docs* to communicate with various people or groups because you can share *Google Docs* with other users; Whether it's sharing an expenses spreadsheet with an artist on my label so we both see where the money is going or maybe it's a simple research doc for something that several users can contribute too. Some are just important documents I want to have an online backup in case my hardware is lost or damaged. I will talk about how using *Google Docs* makes booking international tours a piece-of-piss later on, but for now, do yourself a favour, learn how to use 'em. Sign up for a *Google* account, if for some reason you still haven't, and click on 'documents' at the top of the *Google* splash screen.

Another truly great function of *Google Docs* is that you can edit the doc on your computer when you are offline and synchronise it later when you go online.

Google Calendar is handy as well, though I tend to start them with good intentions and then never really stick with them. You can also share calendars with other users, so band members, friends and family can have a constantly updated schedule of your tour.

GOOGLE ALERTS

The best stalking tool on the net. Do you want to know if/when people are talking about you? Easy, simply set up a *Google Alert* and tell it what words to look for (like the name of your band). Any time that particular combination of words is used anywhere on the net, *Google's* robots find it and send you an email notification straight away. This is perfect if your band name is not a common phrase/word and awesome for being notified of blog/forum posts and other such jibber-jabber

GOOGLE TRANSLATE

You'll use this all-the-time when booking international tours in some countries.

When searching out sites on *Google*, the option of 'translate this page' will turn up next to result. Sometimes you'll need to do a direct translation and this is when Translate comes in handy. Probably THE funniest part about booking an international tour is reading *Google Translate's* fucked up translations.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Decent statistical data on your website; See where people are coming from, how long they are spending on your site, what they are searching for, what pages are most popular, etc. Best thing about this is, like *YouTube Analytics*, seeing which countries people are viewing from. But unlike *Youtube*, *Google Analytics* goes one step further and tells you which CITY people are viewing from. Can you imagine a more perfect way of working out which cities to visit around the world? This is why the future is possible.

If you want to know if your band is popular in a particular city, simply have your downloadable music on one page, track that page and see which cities are hitting it. If you see significant downloads coming from particular cities, um, maybe those are the ones you should visit?! Also, like *YouTube*, if you want to see which cities you made an impact in; check the visits AFTER the show.

There is a trick to linking a file (mp3) download to have it tracked as Analytics will usually only track page views, but if you add:

```
onclick="javascript:pageTracker._trackPageview('/artistname/recordname');"
```

to your file link, it will track as "artistname/recordname," so your entire link should look like:

```
<a onclick="javascript: pageTracker._trackPageview('/artistname/  
recordname');" href="http://www.yourwebsite.com/directory/artist-record.  
zip">
```

Like I said above, someone in your tour party should learn basic HTML, it will benefit heaps.

CAMPAIGN MONITOR/MAIL CHIMP

You don't need to worry about this too early on, but it's something to think about. When it comes to promoting your band/brand, the most valuable asset you will ever gain is a relevant, responsive database of email addresses. If you have not started already, start collecting email addresses through your various web profiles of people who subscribe to hear your latest news/tour dates. Do not spam these people, everybody is sick of junk email, so make sure emails to your database aren't too frequent and not about annoying/boring/barely-worth-mentioning topics. When you first start emailing to your small but growing database you'll most likely use BCC commands in your email account and bulk email everybody. Unfortunately, even though these may be legit emails many email providers will

divert that as spam. Putting a link in your email giving people an opportunity to unsubscribe will help, but it's still guess work, and how do you know if people even received it?

When you feel it's time to take your email seriously sign up to a service like *Campaign Monitor* (campaignmonitor.com). It's a pay-as-you-go service and even though there are various ways to incorporate free email monitoring systems, this is cheap enough and the statistics are incredible. Not only can you see the percentage of people actually opening your emails, you can also see what links people are clicking on, how often they're rechecking the email and who is unsubscribing. But most importantly you have complete confidence your email is getting through. It might set you back \$5-20 per mail out, depending on the size of your database, but trust me it's worth every cent.

Mail Chimp (mailchimp.com) is a service you can use for free to maintain a mailing list of up to 2000 subscribers, though there will be a little *Mail Chimp* logo on the bottom of your mails and there are a few other small catches to the free service.

KICKSTARTER

There are several variations of this type of initiative online; *Kickstarter* (kickstarter.com) is my favourite though. Basically it's a way of gathering funding for an idea. You start an account and pitch your idea, how much you need for it and what you will offer in return for those who contribute. For example, maybe you'll use it to gather funds for recording your album. You might ask for funding of \$2000 and you promise that people who contribute \$15 will receive an album, \$20 pledges receive a signed album and \$25 gets a signed album and a free CD of demos. The amount people pledge is not taken from their credit cards until the total goal (i.e. the \$2000) is reached. It is then your responsibility to deal directly with the pledges and send them the agreed item.

ONLINE FILE HOSTING

There are lots of online large-file sharing/sending tools on the net. Sites like *You Send It* (yousendit.com), *Mediafire* (mediafire.com), *Wetransfer* (wetransfer.com) and *Rapidshare* (rapidshare.com) are my favs. You'll likely use these a bunch of times. Basically, if you have an album of MP3s (or any file larger than, say, 5-10mb) and you want to email it to someone, just upload it to one of these sites. You'll receive a download link which you email to the person you wish to send the files to. They download the file from the site at their end. It's ideal if you want to send the same file to several people or if you just don't want to be the rude prick clogging someone's email account.

DROPBOX

Dropbox (dropbox.com) is awesome. Basically it has two main features. You

download *Dropbox* onto any of your computers you want to synchronise, i.e. your desktop, laptop, ipad, smart phone etc. Then whenever you drag a file into your drop box, it will make it available to any of the other computers sharing that box. This is a great way to backup things before you go on tour, or put all your main tour files into so you can access them from anywhere - because even if your computers all fuck up, you can still access your docs through the *Dropbox* website. The second main feature is you can choose to share your drop box with others. So instead of having to email files to people, you can share your box and they can grab the files they want.

Some bands before touring set up a *Dropbox* with recordings, video, photos etc and then you can share this with promoters who can take what they need from it for a show.

Setting up a 2GB *Dropbox* is free and 2GB is probably enough in most circumstances.

One day before going to print, *Google* announced *Google Drive* (drive.google.com). It's an almost identical service to *Dropbox*, offering 5GB of storage for free, seamlessly intergrated with *Google Docs*. A potential *Dropbox* killer. Worth a look.

COUCHSURFING & AIRBNB

Couchsurfing (couchsurfing.com) is a site you may end up using while touring. It connects you with people all around the world with couches you can crash on for free and the system operates on the expectation you'll return the favour when you're at home. It might not always be practical for more than two or three people since you'll take up a lot of space. It's based on feedback ratings so you need to be a rad house guest - respectful and friendly; if it's a night when you're going to be out until 2am and then up at 7am, or you're too tired to be sociable, maybe look at alternative options.

Airbnb (airbnb.com) works in a very similar way to *Couchsurfing* in that you stay with real people in their homes and it's based on feedback ratings, however, you pay for this service - but you can find really great deals. Available in 192 countries.

Not as comprehensive, but specifically aimed at putting bands in touch with places to crash is *Better than the Van* (betterthanthevan.com).

PAYPAL

Set up a *PayPal* (paypal.com) account as soon as you are able. It will enable your 'business' (the band) to accept payments from credit cards and other sites that accept them like *Bandcamp*. It will enable you to accept payments in various currencies and make payments in those currencies.

Also, if you sell MP3s through an *iTunes* aggregator like *CDbaby* (cdbaby.com) they'll want to pay you via *PayPal*. With *Paypal* set up you can also easily build a storefront like *Storenvy* (storenvy.com) where you can set up an online shop for free within minutes to sell your music and any other merchandise.

Chapter 3

TOUR PLANNING

WHERE TO TOUR?

So, you've established that everybody is on the same page and touring for the same reasons. And you've got your head around the internet. Now it's time to work out where and when you're going.

When choosing where to tour it's fairly sensible to go where the style of music you perform is widely accepted and popular. Personally, I believe music should be border-irrelevant and I just book in places I want to visit. Why spend large amounts of time in a territory you have no interest in?

I'll first chat a little about how to plan routing in the very early stages of booking, then I'll divide the book into chapters on specific territories that I've got experience on and advice.



Mein leben!

WHEN TO TOUR?

The easiest way to start is give yourself some definitive start/finish dates; otherwise you'll be running in circles for ages. Perhaps you want to start or finish around a showcase event like *CMJ Music Marathon* (cmj.com/marathon), *SXSW* (sxsw.com) or *Great Escape* (greatestescape.com). If you want to play shows in the USA and you think college kids will dig you, look at exam/term dates. Maybe you just want to go to *Glastonbury* as a punter? Make the most of the summer festival circuit? Go to *Oktoberfest*? Attend a friend's overseas wedding? Anything... just get those principle dates locked in.

Something to remember is the northern hemisphere runs seasonally opposite to us in southern, and vice-versa. In many parts of the world the seasons can be much more extreme than what you're used to. Getting stuck in the snow or suffering an oppressive, vinyl-melting, heat wave is a distinct reality (trust me, a heat wave is NOT fun).

If you want to book your tour around peak university student time, booking early in the term and far away from exams is ideal. Check *Wikipedia* (wikipedia.org) for school term dates around the world (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_term).



Driving in snow, somewhere in the Midwest, USA.

Popular northern hemisphere touring times for low profile bands is generally March-May and mid Sept-Nov. These are outside of summer so you aren't competing with festivals and people away on holiday nor the depths of winter so you're not getting caught in snow drifts and cancelling shows because you're snowed in. These are also the best times to tour NZ as well, and it makes sense. Have you ever tried touring at the height of a NZ summer if you're not a crusty mainstream pub rock band? Or in winter, trying to get people to venture out in the freezing cold and pouring rain?

Of course touring in summer can be a bunch of fun, and while it can be rewarding it's INSTANTLY a ton more work. Many venues are closed and promoters not working. Also accommodation options get scarcer because the cheap options are booked out with tourists, or the prices go up for peak season. When you have a bigger profile, booking summer tours/festivals gets easier, but it's very tough at the start and I don't recommend it. I will explain how to book festivals later.

Since it's likely this is the first time you have booked a tour overseas, let's allow six months to prepare, eh? This will become faster and easier as you build relationships, but if you're starting from scratch you'll need around six months.

How much a tour costs is a complicated equation and I'll delve into it later, but it's important to note here that most of your costs are upfront e.g. flights, rental vehicles, insurance; before you even play a single show. So you'll need some savings to get yourself started. Just a ballpark, if it's your first time overseas and you don't have much of a profile and you're travelling for a few months, look at around NZ\$5000 per person. This can range dramatically. I know people who have toured for months on the cost of flights + \$500, to people who have spent *significantly* more.

If you are truly determined to tour the world, it should be easy to save \$5000 during the year. Even on full-time minimum wage in NZ you could save \$200-250 a week if you get harsh on your basic bills and don't blow the rest on useless shit like drinking at the pub every night, game consoles, fancy cell phones, daily cafe coffees, label fashions, restaurants, etc.

It's time to decide what's important in your life. If you're not good with money there is lots of help available to improve your habits, find it and use it. Provided you have the 'goods' musically, there is no reason why you can't live simply but comfortably in NZ for six months, then tour the world for six months, rinse and repeat. If you book a good tour it is very possible to earn a large chunk of that money back. Therefore each time you go it will cost less, so you'll need to work/save less, until eventually, just maybe, you can live off making and playing music!

It's worth looking into funding options from your local arts funding bodies. although I feel it is unwise to rely too much on assistance or you'll gain an unnatural perspective on touring. Of course funding can sometimes be vital to make an impossible project that little more feasible.

In New Zealand, at time of printing, we are lucky to have a couple of grants *The New Zealand Music Commission* operate a program called *Outward Sound* (nzmusic.org.nz/international) with grants of \$10,000 and upwards (paid on completion of tour). *CreativeNZ* (creativenz.govt.nz) also offer arts funding for very uncommercial projects. They have a quick response process and offer up to \$7000.

Outward Sound is driven by financial not artistic outcomes and if you are willing to play the game it's worth doing, however, never place all your bets on getting funding. It should always be looked upon as a bonus and funding money is used to make the overseas excursion much more productive; funding shouldn't be a deciding factor in the tour going ahead in the first place. Sitting around waiting for the government to constantly give you handouts is not what this book is about, if you make shit happen anyway, if and when that money finally does come through it can take your project next level.

THE ONE PAGE

Before you start contacting anybody about bookings you'll need a place online that shows off everything a potential booker/promoter wants to see. Doing this well could mean MANY more bookings. Make it tidy, simple and extremely easy to use. *MySpace* will do the job in a lot of circumstances but it can get clunky and slow so I find it useful to also set up a single webpage. This doesn't need to be flash, it's not intended to be your public website, it's just for booking purposes. If you'd like to see an example you can find a page I created when I booked *Disasteradio*'s fourth Europe tour in 2011 (alowhum.com/eu/disasteradio)

As explained in section one, a basic knowledge of the internet and HTML is an absolute must. If nobody in the band, or connected with the band, can whip together a basic webpage and knows how to host files online, go enrol in a night course or find web tutorials. If you don't already have your own domain name, just find a free web host, there are 1000's of these online. Check *Wikipedia* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_free_web_hosting_services) for a list, including *Google Sites* (what don't they do?). Blog sites like *Blogspot.com*, *Tumblr.com* are also great options.

WHAT YOU NEED ON YOUR ONE PAGE

ESSENTIAL

ONE OR TWO PUBLICITY/POSED PHOTOS

Photos on the page need to be small files so they load quickly, but you must include links to download high resolution versions, so they look good when printed large on a poster. Seek help if you don't already know about this.

If you can avoid your band photographed against a brick wall, you win. But seriously, do not underestimate the power of a great photo. It sometimes makes the difference between getting a booking or not; Promoters know that a unique and interesting photo makes an act easier to 'sell'. A cool photo of *Disasteradio* that promoters loved often ended up on the cover of monthly gig guides, used on the front page of websites and featured larger than higher profile acts in festival booklets. I never used to think that a photo made a difference until I saw firsthand how much more traction a unique image gets. Worth the investment.

LIVE PHOTOS

Nice selling point if you can show photos of people enjoying a live show. Also adds more options for promotional purposes, some promoters don't like using posed shots.

MP3S

Ideally embed the tracks so they can be played just by clicking on them (*Soundcloud* and *Bandcamp* are good for this), otherwise provide download links. Have a few tracks at least, if not an entire EP or album.

VIDEOS

Embed videos into page if you can and also include links to view those videos elsewhere online. Ideally have at least one good quality video of your act playing live. It's much easier to convince a promoter who has never seen your band if you can show real footage of your band playing to real people. Live videos are more important than music videos, but both are great.

TECH RIDER

This is a specific list of the minimum gear you need a venue to supply e.g. how many mics, stands, monitors and channels on mixing desk. Give a simple explanation of the band set-up. You can get as detailed as you like, though you might scare off some of the smaller/DIY venues if they read like *U2*'s tech requirements.

BIO

I wish bios didn't exist. Personally, I don't read them when I'm promoting/booking. If I don't like a band's songs or videos, no amount of text can convince

me otherwise. Unfortunately you still need to subscribe to this old fashioned way of working so keep it simple, just two or three paragraphs. Hopefully your songs and videos already have them hooked, so you just need to make sure the bio doesn't turn anyone off. It might be read by people with varying degrees of English reading skills (depending on where you are touring), so yes, simple is best. Also, once you're booked this text can potentially turn up in promotional flyers, websites, programmes, etc, so make it good!

AVAILABLE DATES

Give an approximate schedule of availability. Don't be too specific as it may prevent a promoter from asking you to play an awesome show a day or two out of your way, though, if you are trying to avoid travelling long distances, it's a good idea to get slightly specific, listing general regions/days.

OPTIONAL

PRESS QUOTES

If you've got good press, you can throw up a few quotes here. Bear in mind the people looking at this have probably not heard of the local NZ media you are quoting so they effectively mean nothing. A good quote from *Vice Magazine* helped me almost book *Disasteradio* at *Vice Festival* in Germany, otherwise I'm sure quotes from *NZ Herald* and *Dominion Post* didn't mean shit. Quotes from online where you can link through to the original are much better than print quotes.

Gather the content, make the page, upload it and make sure that every link works. Check it in a few different browsers incase something goes wrong.

If you're struggling to gather the content ask yourself if you're ready to go overseas yet. If you haven't got good photos of the band, decent live video, good recordings, maybe you should just go on holiday with your partner and leave the band at home, you'll get laid more.

Seriously, I think too many bands assume the reason they aren't popular at home is because people don't "get them". Not so. It's probably because they need to do more work at home first, are super niche, or they suck. Yes sure, overseas there are more people to play to so niche genres get more support, but it's not the Promised Land where everyone who arrives is instantly successful. Just because this book shows you how to book a tour, it doesn't mean you should.

Once you've got your One Page up and overhauled your *MySpace/Facebook* and band website (if you have one) so they're current and looking good, it's finally time to get to business. I'll separate the info into territory specific sections but I recommend you read it all, even if you have no intention of touring a particular area. Along the way I'll bring up stuff that is relevant anywhere in the world and I won't keep repeating it.

THE USA

OVERVIEW

Where to start? The possibilities of touring the USA are endless. Again, it's about narrowing your priorities and working from there. If you're only interested in charming the industry then just fly into LA play some shows, fly to New York, play a few more then leave. But before you embark on a showcase/industry jaunt of the USA it's time for a reality check.

Bands with a bit of web buzz in the USA or UK can play good shows in New York and London, but playing outside of those cities is still hard work for them. Even NZ bands can get alright shows in NYC with a small amount of blog buzz. It's a HUGE market. If you have no buzz, or want to play in different places, it can be very hard work.

There are countless bands slogging their guts out on a daily basis. Going to the USA and doing one little tour isn't going to suddenly make people sit up and take notice; your band is a drop in the ocean. If you have fantasies about playing shows with some monopoly character-type dude turning up and offering you a gold-leafed contract and then snorting coke off hooker's backs, forget about it. Those days are over. If you're all about getting 'picked up' it makes more sense to hang out at home and perfect that killer record while building relationships with blogs/tastemakers and making mean videos. In terms of investment of time and money, staying home and working on those projects will further your band in the industry more than any 40-date tour ever will.

I've already mentioned this book will not tell you how to 'break through', it's about helping you create a lifestyle where regular world touring becomes integral, and it doesn't matter if the industry never comes knocking 'cause you can do it all yourself anyway.

SHOWCASE EVENTS

Now seems the right time to have a discussion about showcase events. You might have heard names like *CMJ*, *SXSW*, *Great Escape*, *Sound City* (liverpoolsoundcity.co.uk) or *Big Sound* (bigsound.org.au) banded about? These are overseas 'music conferences' or 'industry showcases'. They are multi-day events where industry players gather to discuss how awesome they are and watch a stream of desperate bands vie for attention. At the larger events in the USA and UK there can be 500-1500 bands playing over a week at multiple venues. My personal opinion is these events are a waste of time and that they can be gross and depressing. The industry is in denial that the internet has changed everything and the thinking behind these old fashioned events is a grim relic of the old days.

Are you a New Zealand or Australian band thinking about going to *SXSW*? Simple answer, don't.

If you've got a full and varied tour planned and playing at one of these events is just another show on the tour, do it - totally, but travelling long distance at great expense *just* to play a showcase is borderline psychotic. You need to treat them as you would any other festival appearance, i.e. not asking your parents to re-mortgage their house to help your band get to it.

I guess I need to explain. On the one hand, the basic idea of the event is a music lovers dream - bringing together 1500 bands from all around the world, young and hungry, all excited and aiming to play the show of their lives in every venue across the city - it sounds exciting, but *SXSW* is the devil. I'm not just being a 'DIY snob' here, it really is. First and foremost you (generally) need to pay just to apply - and not just a small administration charge, but around US\$30-40. Then if you do get selected you don't get paid and, more incredibly, barely any assistance is offered - you need to sort your own backline, accommodation, transport. Now this could almost be forgivable if it was an event with some soul - but basically it's an opportunity for awful corporate brands to reach their 'hip marketing quota' and come up with crappy cross-promotional concepts to tie-in their product with desperate artists. All at the expense of up and coming bands who personally underwrite the event thinking they actually have a chance of getting seen by industry.

For example, several years ago friends of mine forwarded me an email in which they were asked by a major US tobacco company to play their *SXSW* party and then HAND OUT FREE CIGARETTES to the attendees after the show! WTF? This band aren't absolute scum so they turned down the invitation.



Welcome to LA. Photo by SM.

One of the other New Zealand bands going that year took up the ‘opportunity’. If you look beyond all the corporate puppet-pulling going on, the line-up can be pretty amazing. *SXSW* pull in some pretty major names – not surprising given the huge amount of money sucker-punched from those desperate bands paying \$40 to apply. That is a massive revenue collecting device that pays for the big acts. And that’s where the kicker is, the line-up is actually too impressive; do you really think label dudes are going to pass up seeing *Kanye West* or *Bruce Springsteen* to come see your act?

Sometimes playing *SXSW* can be a huge break for a band, but generally it only works for those who don’t really need it. If you need to pay-to-apply, take that as a cue that you’re not going to benefit very much from playing. If you arrive at *SXSW* with some blog buzz, you’re asked to play the best parties, have some local Austin fans and you know media are going to attend the show – well, a killer performance can take your band next-level. Each year a tiny handful has an experience like this, like maybe 15-20 of 1500 bands.

There are a bunch of great parties happening at *SXSW*; some ace blogs and genuine non-Earth-raping brands put on decent showcases of cool bands. For a USA based band to go to *SXSW*, maybe spend a few hundred dollars, well

it’s perhaps worth it. For a southern hemisphere band, considering it’s pointless going if you don’t have a manager or somebody to really work the bullshit factor for you, it’s going to cost NZ\$10-15,000+ or therabouts for a group of 4 (flights, accommodation, transport, backline, food and maybe even visas).

New Zealanders have a warped idea that there are a whole bunch of A&R dudes cruising around checking out every band, looking to sign up a bunch of acts. When I tell decent US acts how much expectation and financial investment southern hemisphere bands put into those shows, it blows their mind. To them it’s just another party. Ask any of them if their band would spend \$10-15k on *SXSW* and I’m sure their reaction will paint the picture for you. There are better ways to gain a return on investment than something as foolhardy as going to a showcase.

Perhaps the only reason to play one of these events for a Southern Hemisphere band is if you’re trying for arts funding and a booking like this makes your application more appealing.

ROUTING

There are simply too many routing options to discuss when touring the USA so I will describe what I have done and you can pull bits and pieces from it to suit your own agenda.

Planning your routing is incredibly important and shouldn’t be rushed. Your routing will evolve but you’ve got to start somewhere with a solid, realistic base. Open up *Google Maps* and plot the definite points, i.e. where you arrive, where you leave and the location of specific events you must be at. If you’re coming from NZ it makes sense to fly into LA, for kiwis it’s usually the cheapest US city to fly in to or out of.

When I tour the USA I like to go cross-country, it’s the only way as far as I’m concerned. Now, stating the obvious, the USA is HUGE and getting across and around it is gonna take some time. I recommend spending at least five or six weeks in the USA. Longer would be fantastic, but I reckon that will give you a decent enough taster. You won’t have to rush, but you won’t have much downtime to kill. Of course you still can do a succesful tour in less time, I’ve done a US tour in a short as ten days. Sometimes these short tours make sense financially. Now is as good a time as any to weigh up work/life commitments with the band. If you can only ever take a week off here and there, does your lifestyle really match your desire to play music live?

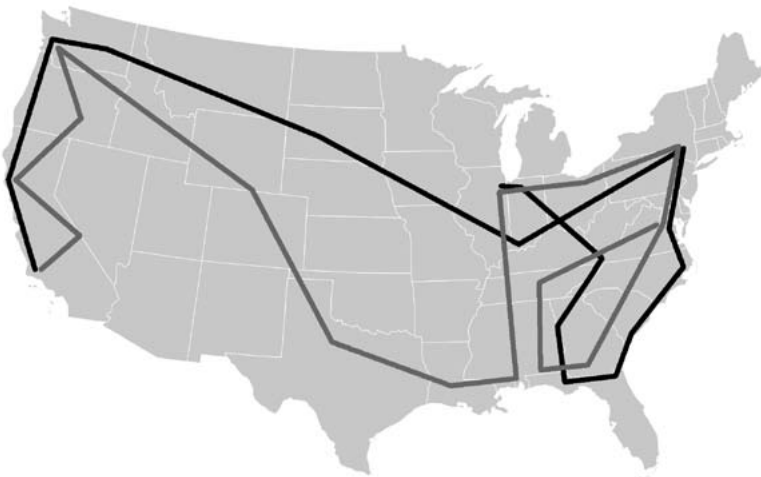
You will probably get a show that sends your routing off in a different direction or you’ll get a booking a few days off your planned stop in that town

and you need to fill a gap with new routing. You must be ready to adapt and solve routing dilemmas creatively.

When you plot, keep in mind a few things: try to end up in larger cities on the weekends (or big college towns); avoid driving more than four or five hours a day; allow some days off and time to check out tourist stuff; use the *Google Maps* 'Get Directions' feature for approximate drive times between any two points.

While you are plotting, keep a spreadsheet open at the same time and make lists of alternative towns that aren't too far out of your way. For example: after LA you want to head north to San Francisco and play a show in Bakersfield on the way. On your spreadsheet, next to 'Bakersfield' list other towns/cities which are reasonably close by (Visalia, Lancaster, Fresno, etc). If you can't get a show in Bakersfield, you could try those other towns. Instead of San Francisco, the alternatives could be Stockton, Oakland, San Jose... and so on for all the plotted points on your draft route.

The Midwest is a lightly travelled area for bands on tour – and while this may be a reason you are excluding it from your plans, I believe it is the very reason why you should definitely go. Midwesterners are often starved for quality bands coming through, as opposed to the big cities on the coasts which are constantly crammed with sweet bands. The eastern part of the US is more heavily populated than the west or central. To hit all the spots I would do something along the lines of: arrive in LA, head up the coast to Seattle, go east to the top of the east coast (Boston?), down the coast towards Florida, than at some point turnaround and start heading up the east but a little more central towards Chicago. This way you hit the major cities on the west and allow plenty of time in the east. To give you an idea, a very crude illustration of just a couple of possible routing options are below.



DATABASING

Realistically, there will be one person who steps up and shoulders the bulk of the booking responsibility. It's just a hard job to share, so it's usually best to save confusion and one person take it on. However, everyone else involved can lighten the load by contributing to databases. Don't worry if you're going by yourself, I've done the entire process by myself several times and it's doable.

Once you have a list of the cities you want to visit (from plotting your routing) create a *Google Docs* spreadsheet for each city (I promise I'm not getting paid by *Google* for all this pimping). There will be many of these documents flying around so you can keep these organised in folders by country/state/region. Share these between all the people going on tour.

There is no such thing as a database that is too big or wasted database time. Even if you end up with databases for cities/venues you don't visit - all going well, this won't be the last time you tour and you can use this information again in the future.

Let's say you have four people going on the tour. These are the jobs I would assign to each person at this stage. This process can be done in a short space of time if everybody is in sync.

PERSON 1

Surf yourself insane. Spend AGES surfing *MySpace/Songkick/Facebook* for bands of a similar music genre to yours with a small to medium profile. Copy and paste their entire tour schedules into one (*Google* shared) word doc. You can actually start doing this as soon as the idea for a tour is mooted. This is the best research and will give you an idea of routing other bands take. Be a copy and paste machine, just go nuts on it. Don't try to format it, just CTRL+C, CTRL+V and create one massive long list.

Once you've gotten a decent enough head start that it's going to take person 2 a while to catch up you can move onto the second part of your job, that is *venue research*.

Use your search skills to find as many music venues as possible in the cities you are perhaps visiting and add them to the spreadsheet for that city. You could search for shows on *Last.fm* and see where bands are playing. You could search *MySpace* for things like "Oakland live music venues" or you could use already established venue directories like *DoDIY* (dodiy.org), *Indie on the Move* (indieonthemove.com), *Venue List* (musicvenuealist.com), *Road Ass* (roadass.com),

or *Midwest Venues and Bands* (members.cox.net/mwvenues), just search and you will find. Don't worry about what a venue does and doesn't have; you are just creating a mass database of any live music venue in the towns you want to play in. Another list of US venues you can find is on a great thread on *Absolute Punk* (absolutepunk.net) called "DIY touring advice and booking contacts" where a bunch of people slowly contributed links to venues, and lists of their tour dates.

If you head to the 15th page of the thread, a poster (ViTOP) has combined all the information into one post (absolutepunk.net/showthread.php?t=1333192&page=15). The thread was started in 2009 so many of these venues will be totally dead, but if you're getting stuck, worth a look.

PERSON 2

Take the raw data from person 1 and start formatting. It's important to do this right as it's going to become a valuable resource in the future. Go through all the dates that person 1 found online (section 1 of their job) and pick out the cities that you are visiting. Copy the names of the venues and paste them into the corresponding *Google Doc* for that city.

E.g. if the tour date is:

March 28, 2010. The Damn Cool Bar – Carson City, Nevada

Pop the name 'Damn Cool Bar' in the *Google Doc* titled 'Carson City' that is in the Nevada folder. Easy.

Only do this for the cities you are visiting on this tour, however make sure you leave the original research document intact because you might want to review the data again for future trips and person 3 needs to use this list also.

PERSON 3

Look at the research that person 1 did (item 1 of their job), and look for bands touring around the same time and area as you. You're looking for potential support tours here. Nothing too drastic, e.g. if there's a band doing three dates on the east coast when you plan to be in Seattle, forget about it. But if there's a band doing a run of shows only a day's detour out of your way, its worth looking at. I'll talk later about trying to get supports, but yeah, for now, you're just collecting and collating research.

Start a new shared document called "Support Tours"; in it list the bands/dates that might work. Also collect the contact details for these bands (email address, *Facebook* page, etc).

PERSON 4 (PRINCIPLE BOOKER)

Open up the spreadsheet for each city, which should now have a few venues listed in each. *Google* the name of each venue and find their website. Spend a few

minutes looking at each website and try to gauge a few things:

- A) Are there particular nights of the week that suit your band? E.g. "free band Monday", "indie Tuesday", "rock Wednesday", etc.
- B) Are there regular club-nights or parties at the venue that might suit your act?
- C) Are there local promoters doing shows there that look like they might like your band?
- D) Are there any existing shows on or around the date you're looking to be in that city?

Copy and paste all the relevant information into your spreadsheet for that venue and move on to next venue. This takes time, but not as long as you think. If on entering the venue's website it looks totally inappropriate (e.g. it's a metal bar and you're a folk band), obviously don't bother checking it further, make a note in the spreadsheet and move on.

SUPPORT TOURS

The first bookings you should seek out are support tours, little jaunts where you connect with other bands. Around four to five months out from the tour start date look at the "Support Tours" doc that person 3 put together. Go through this list and pick out the bands that suit you musically and are hitting the same spots around the same time as you and look like rad peeps.

Check out their online presence. Get a feel for the best way to contact them. If they have a medium-large profile, odds are they have a booking agent that you have to go through. If it looks like they roll DIY, just contact them direct.

When approaching a band out of the blue for a run of support shows and they're not super chill DIY dudes, you should realise that you have fuck-all to offer them. Your profile is probably non-existent to them and they will assume you will be a hassle; wanting to borrow gear, places to stay, too much money, etc.

If you've already established a rapport with a band (they like your songs, are in touch already), they might help you out by organising a tour, sharing backline, they basically do all the hard work for you. That's great, however my rule of thumb when touring overseas (and I swear on this black and blue): *NEVER rely on anybody else for ANYTHING*. If you can't do it all yourself, don't rely on others. The number of times people have let me down I cannot express. In fact, repeatedly being let down led to me doing this guide. Consider the times people DO follow through with promises to be an exception, not the rule.

The first time I toured overseas I was only meant to be tour-manager, (driving,

roadie, etc). It was *Over the Atlantic's* tour in 2008. They had a US booking agent who we'd been dealing with eight months before the tour. We had our plane tickets booked; he said he would take care of the rest.

I emailed every few weeks to see how he was going and send him any leads I had. He always told me he had lots of leads and that things were under control. As the leaving date grew steadily closer and he would not confirm any bookings I became worried. The tour was meant to start in March, by February I had lost all confidence. To bide some time the band paid a big airline fee to push their departure date back one month. I flew ahead of the band on the original date and spent one month in Canada holed up in an attic, learning from scratch how to book a tour in the USA. One month to book a six-week tour!

I managed to book 20 shows in those four weeks. Our "professional booking agent" had booked four shows and taken eight months to do so. At the same time, our agents in Europe were doing exactly the same thing but worse; we planned to spend three months in Europe and they'd only booked five shows.

This was my rude awakening to the world of international tour booking and the start of my distrust in most booking agents. These agents turned out to be lovely people, really hospitable and their failure was not completely their fault. A few things led them to assume the band had a bigger profile and it would be an easy job, and they bit off more than they could chew. But yeah, we'd made a huge financial commitment based on their promises and it was a considerable let down. Relying *solely* on an agent was a mistake I would never make again,

Looking back on it now, I'm thankful this all happened. Through doing it myself I have made so many wonderful friends around the world. I also discovered that the thing booking agents make out to be difficult is actually fucking simple.

Please don't get me wrong, there are some incredible booking agents out there, amazing people who really work hard. I've worked with, and still work with, some amazing ones. Technically speaking I'm a booking agent, and I'm not a jerk? When you find the right people, who understand your music and understand your principles, hold on tight!

So, if you're relying on another band to organise your tour appreciate how much you are asking of them and that the odds of them flaking are VERY high. Even more so, if you email a band out of the blue and ask to ride on their coat tails, you need to make it clear that you are definitely not extra baggage. Explain that you have your own backline and transport (more 'bout this later), you can sort your own accommodation and that you're not expecting a ton of money. In the US sometimes bands can buy their way onto a tour as the opening act. It's called a 'buy on', it's a pretty lame and generally only applies to larger acts. If you're angling for a medium to high profile support tour don't be surprised if you need to pay to be on it (though you still may be entitled to a split of the door takings).

This is something you'll find as this section progresses, that in the USA

money is hard to come by. Financially breaking even when touring the USA is difficult and when you're fresh as a daisy it's even harder. The USA is similar to NZ in that venues don't generally pay guarantees for low profile acts. Audiences are often small and door charges are cheap. You're usually lucky to walk away with \$50-100 from any show.

Right now you're probably thinking "it's too much work for little reward?" It's depressing me just writing about it. It is hard, but the USA is so awesome to travel around (non-musically speaking) that it doesn't matter! Please allow me to divulge.

USA A-O.K.

The USA is amazing. I know it's tempting to bash it, but despite a few bad apples that have way too much power they are still a wonderful bunch of friendly folk. Everything you've seen in the movies is true and more. The landscape is breathtaking; it was MADE for road tripping. If you have no interest in exploring this incredible wonderland, you should probably put this book down now, go get head shots, suck up to a big talent agent and be the next *Ke\$ha* or something. Hopefully in years to come that pop-culture reference will become quite obscure.

Maybe after you've visited a few times and been all over, you'll just stick to the main cities, but trust me, you have got to see the rest of it first. Whether it's the Mars-like terrain of *Death Valley*, the stunning redwood forests of the Pacific Northwest, National Parks like *Yosemite* and *Yellowstone*, Midwestern roads so straight you can't imagine them ending, Amish communities, little farms on the tornado belt... you'll pull the car over time and time again just to admire it. And the landscape is just the start. What makes the USA so fascinating are the people and the living clichés.

You've already seen it in movies your whole life, but seeing it in the flesh is something else: Overloaded rusted-out trucks full of Mexicans driving around LA, ridiculously humongous *Chevy* utes, African-American families sitting on the steps in front of their apartment with their kids playing in water flying out of a fire hydrant, spoilt white jocks setting fire to a couch outside their frat house (adorned in Greek letters), irate New Yorkers yelling at each other, stars and stripes the size of a small house waving above monolithic *Wal-Mart's* in the middle of nowhere, over-the-top cheerleaders at huge sports events, takeaway coffee cups bigger than your head, dilapidated drive-in movie theatres, fireworks and gun shops on the state borders, meeting people in middle America who have never seen the ocean, a cowboy playing the spoons along to '*Sweet Home Alabama*' in a saloon. I've seen all these things firsthand and it's even better than it sounds.



Death Valley, CA, USA.

Road-tripping across the USA is something you *need* to do. Doing it with your friends in a band? I can't think of a better way. Just don't let the lack of people at last night's show ruin it for you.

Back to supports.

It's good to buddy up with another band for a run of shows. Give it a shot and don't shy away from approaching larger acts as well. It still haunts me how close I came to booking *Over the Atlantic* (OTA) supporting *M83* across the USA in 2008. *OTA* had some net buzz at the time and had already completed a successful US tour with *Beach House*. I was in serious negotiations with *M83*'s booking agent. I got very close but couldn't quite seal the deal. Very gutting; we were all huge fans at the time and woulda loved to get on that tour. Anyway, that rather depressing memory illustrates that even with some buzz it's still difficult to land yourself a good support tour.

When dealing with the booking agent of a larger act you have to play the game a bit, but there is no point lying. You have to prove you will have a decent draw and people are excited to see you. Booking agents aren't interested in giving nice kids from NZ a break - it's purely business decisions.

A different and much easier way to find a tour partner is asking an act to support YOU. When I was booking *Over the Atlantic* I was finding it VERY difficult to lock down anything in Oregon and Washington. I was throwing every idea at the wall and seeing what would stick. In my research of the Northwest (yeah, see, there IS a reason) I'd seen the name *PWRFL PWR* pop up a few times. He is a solo act from the area, so I knew we could make room for him in the car.

He didn't have a massive profile or anything, but he'd played quite a few shows. I emailed *PWRFL PWR* (Kaz) and asked if he was interested in doing a run of three shows with us (Portland, Seattle and Olympia). I'd do all the organising, he'd just come along. He was keen.

It totally worked. I instead approached venues with a package deal of two acts. It was a million times easier to 'sell' the show to those venues now that I had links to someone they were familiar with.

On a side note, the show in Portland turned out to be what we thought was the worst of the tour. The venue was cool but the vibe was awkward; people sitting down far away from the band and the venue was brightly lit. We packed down in five minutes after the performance and bolted, eager to drown our sorrows in huge slices of pizza. As we were driving away two kids literally chased our car 200 metres down the street. Turned out they loved the show and wanted some merch. The show wasn't quite as bad as we'd thought.

Hanging out with Kaz was not only fun but it opened my eyes to a totally new approach. Inviting a local act to support you opens up all sorts of opportunities for more bookings, accommodation, insider knowledge, show promotion, making friends, etc. Just make sure you balance it up with plenty of shows where you don't have to worry about anybody but yourself.



Fireworks on the border with a pair of massive utes. 10 points.

PROMOTERS OR VENUES?

In the US and UK, as in NZ and Australia, venues are usually separate entities from promoters. Ideally wherever possible you always want to work with promoters, the difference being that if you book a show direct with a venue - sure you'll end up getting some sort of basic in-house promotion, e.g. submission to regular gig guides, venue website, etc. but you won't get that true passionate personal push of putting on a show which only comes from a promoter. The way to find promoters is to look at posters or 'event pages' of various upcoming shows at a particular venue and see who is 'presenting' the show. Then research that promoter and see if their taste is in line with yours. If you are playing 'regular' venues in the US you ideally are really looking for a promoter to be involved. The last thing you need when organising an epic tour is to promote the shows yourself too. Think outside of the square when looking for a promoter; consider magazines, blogs, websites, record stores, labels and even just keen fans. Some of the most fun shows I've had in the US were when we asked fans of *Disasteradio* to put on a show for him in their hometown - kids who had never put on shows before took care of everything and it was great.

BOOKING SHOWS

Right about now it's probably dawning on you why I said that for your first tour you probably want to begin planning six months out. You've already done an assload of work and not a single show booked. It's so important to do decent research though and for the workload to be shared whenever possible. It helps everyone involved understand the scale and geography of the tour.

You can never do too much research; the more you do, the more you will understand how various scenes operate. You especially want to spend more time researching major cities like LA, San Fran, Seattle, Chicago, NYC, etc. Note down relevant blogs, street press, directory sites, record stores, websites, forums and anything you come across that might help once you've booked a show in that city.

By now you've approached several bands about supporting them and most likely you were shot down. Don't worry, the odds were heavily stacked against you. OK, forget about support tours for the moment (though keep them in the back of your mind while you continue to navigate the nets).

It's finally time to do some actual booking!

Juggling bookings over an expansive geographical area and time period is very intense, so break it down into smaller parts and work your way through in order. For example, for a six-week west-east cross-country jaunt, there is no point

contacting venues in Boston or New York yet because the plan is likely to change. For now just focus on the west coast, seems logical right?

Another way to make it a little less overwhelming is to set a daily target. For the US I expect a 5-7% success rate, or one booking for every 15-20 venues I try. I set myself a target of emailing 20 new people per day before I'm allowed to relax. Anything more than that is a bonus. If you have nothing fancy to offer, i.e. no buzz, no label, average videos, average press, well... the percentage of people replying to your emails will be lower and you'll need to email like crazy and spread the net wider, especially for the bigger cities.

To get a show in the main cities you might have to send 30+ emails, opposed to 5-6 emails in a small town. The bigger cities are swamped with foreign bands, so you're nothing unique in that respect. It's easier to get the attention of curious folk in the smaller US towns that don't get as many international bands passing through.

The secret is not to rush it. Slow down and make sure each email is correct and well written. Do NOT just copy and paste generic email content, they can smell that shit a mile away. You don't need to say much, just quickly explain who you are, where you are from, a link to your *One Page* and briefly mention if you have ANY buzz going. US buzz only, NZ buzz is irrelevant. Don't lie. Don't guarantee that "heaps of people in LA want to see you?" (Note: avoid using the word 'heaps' in the US. To them 'heaps' are piles of dirt... and you'll confuse them, heaps).

Arm yourself with as much local knowledge as possible so you target the right people. Read local blogs and label websites. Try to get an understanding of where and when bands like yours usually play and the nuances of the local scene. A good thing to try (which I often do) is send a polite email to local labels who work with similar bands to yours and ask for any advice on the best places and days to play in that area.

Check a venue's website carefully before you approach them. Most have a 'contact procedure' on their website/*MySpace* page. They get very sick of the numerous shitty or inappropriate bands emailing them, so don't shoot yourself in the foot by getting it wrong. Some venues like *The Smell* in LA have a more exclusive procedure where you have to go through the bands that usually play there, and you can't contact the venue directly. Some venues have very detailed instruction on how to deal with them; a very interesting read is the *Bottom of the Hill* website (bottomofthehill.com), a venue in San Francisco. I'd recommend a visit to their website and have a read of the 'booking' section, regardless of if you were planning on trying to book a show there or not.

Try to lock-in your weekend shows first. Look for shows already booked for that city that weekend. See a band you'd like to play with? Try to find out if there's a promoter for the show and email them about supporting. If you can't find a promoter, send two emails: one to the band asking if you can support them, the other to the

venue explaining you are around that weekend and would love to support 'band x'. Send emails to local bands you like and ask if they could help you put on a show, aim high, but also ask more realistic bands as well. Email local critics and tastemakers asking what's the best thing for new bands to do in that city? If you're getting bogged down, ask your tour mates to research cool bands from that city to approach. Overall I'd probably end up booking less than half a dozen shows this way. Even when you do book a show with a good band in a good city, they are never as much fun as shows at DIY venues, more on that in the next section.

Never over-estimate your position in the food chain. Even if you're *the shit* in NZ, don't necessarily try to headline at a venue on a weekend, in a city, in a country where nobody has heard of you. You won't have your usual gang of friends and workmates in the audience, pretending they like your music, wishing they were at home watching TV.

Often you just can't get a booking at a regular venue in a particular city. I couldn't for the life of me book a show for *Disasteradio* in San Francisco in 2009, I lost track of how many emails I sent. No point crying about it. We still went to SF and hung out, ended up having a great time. *Musée Mécanique* rules.

The live music scene is stronger than it has ever been. The proliferation of internet file sharing has led to more bands than ever touring and earning a living (I'll discuss this more later), however, this means big-time booking agents are booking tours for their acts 6-8 months out and filling up rosters – and what the fuck has your band done to deserve a spot at one of these venues anyway? Paying for flights and turning up doesn't count. Do you remember ten years ago when there was an international act playing in NZ every couple of days? Nope? Well, of course not, 'cos it was more like one or two a month! Glancing through a NZ gig guide the week before this went to print, there were over twenty five scheduled concerts by non-major label international acts within the next 60 days. If this many acts are now coming to lil' ol' NZ, imagine what it's like in the US!

You need to get your head around exactly how interested people are in your band. Without a really passionate, reputable promoter, support from local blogs/radio stations or awesome local acts, who is honestly going to come see you play? Don't get too down though, the DIY scene is here to save you.

US DIY SCENE

Here's where I tell you the address of the greatest website to ever grace the internet; the website that literally saved my ass in 2008 when that booking agent flaked. It has no doubt rescued many other people in the same way.

Drumroll...

Do DIY (dodiy.org), formerly *Do DIY USA*.

So, why must my first-born go through life named *DoDIY*? Well, in 2008 when I was hiding in that Vancouver attic (I wasn't allowed to be staying there); living on a diet of cheap soda and \$1 *Michelina's* microwave pasta and desperately trying to save the tour. I was almost ready to grab one of the raccoons that hung out on the balcony and let it claw my eyes out... then this website saved my ass.

You know how you plotted your approximate route around the USA, passing through a bunch of different states? Well, go to dodiy.org and you'll see a list of states. Click on a state and you'll see a list of DIY venues in that state, organised by city. What's a DIY venue? In a nutshell it's a non-commercial venue without a liquor license, which allows people of all ages to attend shows there. You'll find the occasional cafe listed too, which although commercial in nature, are small independently owned cafes that support the DIY ethic.

No bands will let you support them on their tour? No big city venues willing to take a risk on you? Don't worry. The DIY scene will not let you down. Doesn't matter what type of music you play; folk, punk, dance, indie, metal, hardcore... there is a place for you to play.

A wonderful thing about DIY venues is they tend to be most prevalent outside of the big cities. Just like in most countries, the secret to really enjoyable shows is playing outside of the biggest cities, but in towns big enough that there is some sort of scene. Generally if there is a DIY venue, it means there are people to come to shows. Playing NYC, LA, etc is overrated. The residents spoiled for entertainment and it takes a lot to impress them. If you want to really experience the USA, getting around the country and playing smaller towns and communities is when you meet real people and have a better time with a looser, wild audience.

In the USA the legal drinking age is 21. Although underage kids bitch about this it's still a doddle getting their hands on booze (just like NZ). A fantastic side-effect of this high drinking age is the massive DIY scene, borne from necessity so people under 21 could see bands. My ideal tour is one



The Raccoon that visited me each day in Vancouver.

solely made up of DIY venues, but unfortunately it can be quite hard to find DIY venues in the bigger cities. And well, sometimes you wanna spend a night in the big city, ya know.

Booking with a DIY venue is the total opposite of booking with a 'live music venue'. With regular venues you try to exude an air of professionalism, linking to your *One Page* (the thing I told you to make earlier), creating the illusion of being a booking agent and sucking a bit of cock to get a show. With DIY venues it's entirely different; you can just be yourself. In fact, if DIY venues get the impression you're a professional booking agent they'll most likely reject you. Keep your emails short, simple, friendly and just include a link to your *MySpace/Facebook* or website. Make sure they come 'from the band'. This is slightly tricky for me because I don't want to be the 'lame booking agent' (but I am), and I'm always surprised at the research DIY venues will do on not just the band, but me as well. They'll often come back with things like "your festival looks awesome"; or "some cool bands on your label". I NEVER get this from *proper* venues.

DIY shows can have a huge variety of styles/genres on one bill. Generally with DIY shows, as long as the bill isn't already full, if you don't suck and if your style doesn't clash horribly with other styles playing that night they'll find room for you.

It's so refreshing booking a DIY tour of the USA. DIY venues respect the difficulty of booking shows so at the very least you can expect a higher email reply rate and you'll deal with real people who aren't out to make a quick buck. In many cases if a venue can't book you they will offer to help in some other way. Once on tour we were keen to play a show in Arcata, CA. The DIY house party venue there had noise control problems so had to stop hosting amplified bands, but they offered us a place to crash anyway. They looked after us, threw a small quiet party and showed us around town. We probably had a better time than if we'd played a show. This treatment from DIY venues has happened to me often. These people rule, seriously.

The one problem with DIY venues is, as above, they are very prone to noise complaints. More than once I've been on my way to a DIY venue only to find out it was shut down suddenly just before we got there. This is a risk of doing these shows and a risk worth taking. It's about the only thing that makes booking DIY venues difficult, especially months out from the show; the future of any DIY venue is generally always uncertain.

Established DIY venues may be happy to book a show three or four months out, but most will be a little nervous about that. Just email them as early as you can, expressing interest and letting them know roughly when you will be in town. If they aren't happy to book you in straight away, just keep in touch, don't spam the dudes, but also explore other options.

Spontaneous opportunities will pop up on the DIY circuit too. In Jamestown, NY (small up-state town), *OTA* played an extraordinarily awesome show. We had



Over the Atlantic - House Party, Macomb, Illinois, USA

a couple of days off so some keen locals booked them for two other loose parties that same weekend. The same thing happened in Macomb, IL. *OTA* jumped on another house party the following night. We also met up with a band in Pittsburgh, PA who invited us to play a house party with them in Virginia. Turned out to be the worst show I've ever been involved with, a story for another time, but they meant well, so hey, cool.

Don't try to negotiate things like payment or whatever, you'll just get a split of the door. Touring bands (that's you) get the largest split but yeah, don't be expecting more than US\$50 per show (or US\$100 if you're really lucky). Playing house parties is never gonna make you rich, and don't ever expect to see any 'industry' at your shows (unless you're playing a 'hip' DIY venue in Brooklyn or something). But it's the most fun you'll have playing shows across the USA.

Thankfully petrol is so damn cheap in the USA (although you'll never hear an American admit this) so \$50 will get you enough gas to get you to the next date on your schedule and maybe a couple of burgers.

Filling your tank isn't monotonous in the USA. There are so many different petrol station chains in the US, many with incredible facilities for truckers, weird souvenirs, cool logos (*Tom's, Sinclair*) and perplexing names (*Loaf 'N Jug, Love's, Sheetz*). Generally petrol is cheaper outside of the main cities – this is the opposite of New Zealand where petrol is cheapest in the cities – so if you're heading into

a city top-up on the outskirts. A good idea before leaving home is to download the *Gas Buddy* app (gasbuddy.com). It's a free app on which you can check petrol prices and find the cheapest petrol in any city. Five minutes of pre-planning every so often can help save a few bucks.

You can't be a precious bitch about the equipment you're playing through in a DIY venue either. Some of the PA's are fairly piece-meal and sometimes you may need to mix yourself. If you don't sound any good in your practise room, you're not gonna sound any good at these parties. You should relish the opportunity to have full control over how you sound. You can ask members of the other bands to give you an indication of vocal levels, etc, but the rooms you play in are fairly small. You'll be fine.

Another legendary site similar to DoDIY is *Book Your Own Fucking Life* (byofl.org – often offline). Definitely with a punk slant, it's a really inspiring site and not only handy for finding venues but places to crash, labels, distributors, etc. Definitely worth a look when researching. Also check out *DIYPunks* (diypunks.com).

If you're struggling to book a show in a certain town and are really desperate to play somewhere, don't forget that some record shops have in-store parties, and though this will most certainly be a free show they are often a bunch of fun.

One of the most incredible projects happening anywhere, and an amazing resource for booking shows is the *All-Ages Movement Project* (allagesmovementproject.org). It is many things, least of all a directory of all-ages communities/venues all around the USA. I thoroughly recommend you order a copy of the book they published "In Every Town: An All-Ages Music Manualfesto." It's a hugely informative and inspiring guidebook to getting any DIY/all-ages scene/community off the ground.

Todd P (toddpnyc.com), a legendary NYC promoter has a decent bunch of links on his website for DIY shows in NYC, if you're looking at focusing on the east coast, or hanging out extensively in NYC, this is a fantastic list.



Toms. Another awesome service station chain on the US East Coast of the USA

ACCOMMODATION

This is the area I find most difficult organising. First time on an international tour I ended up sleeping in the car at least half the time. It kind of sucks but you get used to it.

Accommodation needs to be worked on early, *at least* a month before you leave. Unless you have lots of money all you are looking for is floor space.

Start by getting everyone who is travelling on the tour to ask friends and family for anyone they know in the USA that may have floor space to crash on. The odds of friends and family located at every stop along your routing are fairly low, but even a couple of nights helps.

When you play DIY shows they will likely be fine with you crashing out on the floor after the show. When you're playing at 'regular' music venues you'll sometimes have to suck it up and do that which sucks most about touring: asking randoms if you can stay at their place. I always feel sorry for these poor unsuspecting people. All they wanted to do was tell the band they thought they played a good show and they end up having a bunch of smelly jerks sleeping on their floor. I have met so many amazing people sleeping on their floor but it's always tough asking a stranger for this huge favour. So, if you're prepared to brave it, you can usually find some sort of accommodation on show nights. It's the nights off that are the main problem but there are several options:

KOA CAMPGROUNDS

These are everywhere and they all have cute kitset log cabins. A cabin has one double bed and a pair of single bunks. You're only meant to have four people in them, but we easily snuck in a fifth every time and put an air bed on the floor. If you do this, keep a low profile around the site so they don't notice the extra person.

KOA (koa.com) cabins are affordable. You're looking at around US\$60-70 per night to sleep up to 6-ish comfortably (though remember, you are only meant to have four in each). This is around \$15 each per night, which is cheaper than backpackers (which are not as common as you'd think in the USA). *KOA* is heaps cooler than a backpackers anyway; you get your own cabin, patio, BBQ equipment and depending on the season, access to swimming pools. You also don't have to worry about your gear and where to park your car because you're away from the city and you can park right next to your cabin.

I thoroughly recommend *KOA*. If you're going to use them more than 3 or 4 times it might be worth becoming a member and earning discounts, check their website for details. Of course you can also tent at *KOA*, which will be cheaper but more of a hassle.

Obviously it's a slight bummer spending \$60 on accom when you only made \$50 from the show, and you still have all those other expenses to cover. Oh wait... you thought this was going to be cheap?

MOTEL 6'S, 8'S, 9'S ETC.

These 'cheap' hotels and motels are everywhere on the highways. They're actually not particularly cheap and are boring, basic rooms, but so handy. You can usually score a room for around US\$40-60 for 4 people with two double beds in it. They

are cheaper in the central regions and get more expensive closer to the coasts, or near big tourist attractions. One on my absolute favourite things about the US is staying in falling down 50s-70s roadside motels, reminiscent of a horror movie; the ones with the broken ice machine outside your room, a weird looking inbred local at reception, dodgy stains on the ultra thin walls, cigarette burns, vibrating beds... awesome.

There are so many chains of personality-free motels littered all over the US, if you're on an interstate you're probably only ever ten minutes away from one. A better option is to try and find the small, independently owned motels. Along with supporting a local owner, there is the added benefit of staying somewhere original and interesting. Most places are open to doing a discount so try out your bargaining powers - especially if you arrive late and you can tell they're empty. If possible, don't just stay at the first place, ask around at three or four motels for the best price.

Sometimes a motel can work out very cost effective if you get a free breakfast included. *Days Inn* for example, usually offer a weird breakfast type thing where you can make your own waffles. If you were going to spend a few bucks each on breakfast anyway then it starts to make sense.

If you're feeling mega-cheap and a bit ballsy, you could get a room for two people and sneak others in. It's MUCH harder to sneak an extra two people into a motel room than a campground, but desperate times...



Disasteradio at a KOA in front of one of their standard cabins.

Spending money like this isn't the end of the world and sometimes you desperately need comforts like a shower, real beds, Wi-Fi, cable TV and a coin laundry. A few nights at accommodation like this can usually be absorbed by the budget. These motels are honestly everywhere but you can search *Kayak* (kayak.com) if you are struggling to find one. If you are booking a motel ahead of time, don't always just go for the cheapest. Weigh up the benefits of paying a little extra to be closer to a venue (you save on taxi or petrol costs running band members back and forth). Is off-street parking included? Booking fees? Cancellation policy?

Even if you decide not to stay in one of the larger chain motels, they are usually a pretty sweet spot to score some free unsecured Wi-Fi. They won't notice an extra car parked in the lot for a wee while.

SLEEPING IN THE CAR

Not as bad as it sounds. Sometimes, even when you have accommodation, one person may have to sleep in the car anyway. One of the worst things that can happen to any band on tour is having their gear nicked. On the *Over the Atlantic* tour our gear in the vehicle was *Tetris'd* so intricately as well as a stack of stuff piled in a tarp strapped to our roof that once we had loaded it after a show, I really didn't feel like unloading the gear into the accommodation then re-loading it the next morning and there was no way I was going to leave the gear just sitting in a car parked in the street overnight.

If there's nowhere safe to park the car and nobody is prepared to sleep in the car, then you *have* to unload it. It's not *that* big a deal, usually one or two loads each member will have the car empty. It is NOT worth the risk of having your gear stolen to get a slightly better night's sleep.

When you're *all* going to sleep in the car, spend a while looking for a good spot. US highways have mean rest-stops every now and then which heaps of truckers use. Sometimes it's hard to fall asleep with cliché urban legends about rest-stop killers floating around in your head, but you gotta suck it up. You can usually find a tree or two to park under so the morning sun isn't such a killer. I also look for a nice patch of grass nearby so in the morning I can roll out of the car and sleep on the grass. It's one of my favourite things about touring, finding a nice park and just sleeping on the grass. I remember fondly many of the random parks around the world I've had an early morning snooze in. Make sure at least one person stays in car during this activity.

When you know you have to sleep in the car that night, best plan is to drive as long as the driver can handle it. That gives everyone else in the car a chance to drift off, so when driver starts to feel tired they can just pull over and fall asleep. It works surprisingly well, and if people can't sleep they can just go for a walk.

A well planned tour shouldn't leave you with any sleeps in the car, but don't freak out if you have to. Sometimes when you have accommodation planned it fucks up and you have to think on your feet and improvise. My first time

in NYC one of the tour crew had organised for us to crash at a friend's place. When we got there, not only is the friend in another country, she didn't tell her flatmates we were coming and her whole apartment was being fumigated that night anyway. So, wanting to have a slightly comfortable sleep we went to the venue we were playing the next night, drop off gear to make more room in the car, then park somewhere near *Central Park* to sleep.

If you can't find anywhere to park up, look for a *Wal-Mart*. *Wal-Mart* founder Sam Walton was an RV enthusiast who was always getting hassled for parking up his RV. He made a little rule that you are welcome to park and sleep overnight in (most) *Wal-Mart* car parks. It's also a savvy commercial move on his part; hungry drivers wake up in the morning and usually want to buy supplies. If you plan

to sleep at lots of *Wal-Mart*'s it may pay to get a copy of the book "*Wal-Mart 'No Overnight Parking' Stores*" (US\$4.95) and lists 350 out of 2000 *Wal-Mart*'s that do not allow overnight parking (www.walmartatlas.com/no-park-walmarts).

There are many other places you can overnight park for free (that aren't Earth-raping giants of industry).

FreeCampgrounds.com (freecampgrounds.com) is a directory of free or nearly-free sites where RVs can park (I'm sure cars can too, or you can possibly tent as well).

When you wake up smelly and gross after a night in the car (in those post-gig sweaty gears) a good idea is to find a local swimming pool or recreation centre – or better still, find it the night before and sleep in their car park. It's real easy to roll in looking downtrodden and ask how much it will cost just to use the shower facilities. Often they will just wave you in and tell you not to worry about it. If they try to charge you... jerks. Many of the larger petrol stations



*Catching a snooze whenever you can.
Nik of Over the Atlantic.*

have impressive shower facilities for truckers. If they charge per use buy a single use and never close the door – just make sure the next band member in line is waiting for you to exit so they can jump in before the door locks.

If you get stuck, remember *Couchsurfing*, *Better than the Van* and *Airbnb*.

GETTING AROUND

Only visiting a few cities? Flights, trains or buses are the way to go. Work that out yourself, there are endless combinations. *Amtrak* trains (amtrak.com) and *Greyhound* buses (greyhound.com) both do multi-trip passes and discounts. *Kayak* (kayak.com) for the win as far as booking flights goes. A very cheap but limited-service bus company is *Mega Bus* (megabus.com) who are similar to *Naked Bus* in NZ in that if you book early enough you can get rides for as little as \$1 or so.

Obviously, I'm endorsing multi-state, keepin'-it-real, road-trip tours. If you are planning to go cross-country by car, there are two ways to do it: rent or buy. Both have their pros and cons.

You're a gambler? Buy a car; if all goes well this will be the most cost effective way, but there is always the chance of it backfiring badly. Buying a car in the USA is easy (craigslist.com) but getting insurance is the tricky bit. Give yourself a week or so before the tour begins to buy the vehicle and arrange insurance. You'll possibly need to pretend you are taking out a full years cover and find someone with a USA address that you can claim to live at. One company appears to offer short term insurance to tourists, no idea if they any good though: *USinsurance* (usinsuranceonline.com).

If you are buying a vehicle it's a good idea to make sure one of the tour party have an *AA card*. The breakdown cover you receive in NZ can extend to other countries as well. To find out what countries and to what extent, *Google: Reciprocal Services AA*.

In 2008 buying a car almost worked perfectly for me. I picked up a real sweet van for US\$1500 in Canada. Took it down to LA to meet the band, drove across the USA, it was brilliant. It broke down a couple of times but always quick, easy, cheap fixes; spent only US\$200 on repairs. I lined up a friend to buy it off me in NYC for US\$1000.

A sweet car that only cost US\$700 for seven weeks, plus I'd driven it around Canada for a month as well. I was feeling pretty smug. We leave NYC and land in London, upon which I hear that the friend I sold it too can't actually register it in the USA because it has Canadian plates. OH GOD! What an idiot I am. I didn't even think that I was exporting a vehicle. The proper procedure for selling a Canadian vehicle in the US is to present the

proper paperwork at the border, which I didn't know to do. Now this might have been a fixable problem, except the insurance had just expired. To get the insurance renewed the car had to be returned to Canada, and no US company would insure it to get it to Canada because it was not registered in the US!

The only way to make it all happen was to either put it on a train to Canada and someone meet it there to sort it out, or drive illegally to Canada hoping like hell to not get pulled over or have an accident. And seeing how police in the USA pull you over for farting, well, that would be stupid. And that's the story of how being a naive idiot lost me US\$1000. Years later a simple solution dawned on me – but you know what they say about hindsight. I have a European car nightmare story as well, but you can read about that later.

With renting vehicles in the USA you've got a whole heap of options. If you are returning it to the same place you picked it up its very simple. However, if like me you'd like to drive cross-country in one direction and fly out from a different city, you need a one-way rental. Extensive net research and quotes are vital. Only choose a vehicle as big as you need; for every size larger you go not only does it cost more per day, it will cost more in petrol as well.

In 2009 we scored an amazing one-way deal with *National Car Rentals* (nationalcar.com) and I tell you what (they are not paying me to say this) it was a damn pleasant experience. Everything went smoothly, the van was awesome, affordable daily charge, extremely economical on fuel and the air-con was kick ass. It meant we didn't have to worry about breakdowns, re-selling, finding insurance, etc, and we divided the cost five-ways between us.

When browsing US car rental there are a couple of things you need to consider very carefully. Is tax included in the quote? Most car rental companies will not include insurance in their online quotes. Usually the big boys, *Avis*, *Hertz*, etc *show* you how much your insurance will cost but the smaller companies more often than not will only tell you that you need to have insurance but they won't tell you how much it will cost - leaving you to find out the depressing financial news when you collect the car. Insurance is a huge cost to factor in when choosing who to rent from. There are two main insurance packages. 'Collision' insurance, often called CDW (Collision Damage Waiver) or something along those lines. This can cost US\$10-30 PER DAY, more likely at the higher end of that spectrum. Then, if you're nervous, you'll probably want to get liability insurance which will offer some protection against personal lawsuits in case you injure somebody. This is cheaper, usually around US\$10 per day. So yes, when you input your dates and see that quote come back at only \$20US per day, don't shout it from the rooftops just yet - there are probably hidden extras. Also, if you want to have more than one driver insured, this may cost you another US\$5 per day per driver. It's possible that liability insurance may already be covered under your personal travel insurance policy, so check the fine print. Some credit cards also offer free travel insurance products, check with your bank.

In other countries car rental websites are really clear and upfront about these costs, but I find in the US, they are all about sucking you in with the cheap quote than stinging you at the pickup desk.

One company that is reassuringly upfront with their quotes is *Economy Car Rentals* (economycarrentals.com), they actually rent in a few countries, but their US quotes include full insurance cover with no excess and their rates are really great. They act as an agent for partner companies, i.e. when I last rented through them in the US the car was from *Dollar* (dollar.com). Making the booking through *Economy* was cheaper than going direct through *Dollar*.

There are not many options for *cheap* car rental in the US, but I'd also recommend looking into *Enterprise* (enterprise.com), *Alamo* (alamo.com), *Payless* (paylesscar.com) and *Dollar* if you want a minivan or smaller. If you need a larger vehicle, try *Go Van Rentals* (govanrentals.com), *Bandago* (bandago.com) or *U-Save* (usave.com). There are a few rental companies that cater to bands, *Band Van* (myspace.com/bandvanla) and from LA *Triangle Rental Cars* (trianglerentacar.com). They do 12-15 seat vans which work out to around US\$90 per day including tax if hiring for a month or so. If you're awesome you'll first try *Green Vans* (rentgreenvans.com) who hire out vans which run on bio fuel – these will cost around US\$100 a day.

Before committing to a rental, you should have a look into relocation or 'drive away' deals. This is when you pick up a car in one city and deliver it to another city and pay little or no rental per day. The conditions might be prohibitive, but you may be able to hold onto vehicle for a long enough period to cover your tour. Some sites to check out are *Standbyrelocs.com* (standbyrelocs.com) and *Auto Driveaway* (autodriveawaydc.com). If you're touring by yourself or with a partner, you may want to look into a cheap campervan. *Escape* (escapecampervans.com) is that company that specialise in those god-damn awful custom-painted vans. They have a couple of locations in the USA (California and Florida). I bet they'll tell you how funky and quirky they look. You have my permission to punch them if they actually use the word "funky".

If you are really looking to save on rental and haven't booked your flights yet, let the cheapest air entry point dictate where you collect from. In 2011, I used *Kayak* to search heaps of quotes from rental companies all over the east coast of the US. I found a really great deal for Boston, so rather than fly into NYC from Europe as we had initially planned, we instead flew into Boston and ended up saving several hundred dollars on rental. Flights worked out cheaper too.

Also, where possible, try to bracket your rental in week-long blocks; many rental companies charge a *weekly rate* that is significantly cheaper than the *daily rate*. It may work out cheaper renting a vehicle for 2 solid weeks than renting for one week and then 5 days at the daily rate. So you effectively get a couple of days free.

You shouldn't need anything other than your regular drivers license to rent



Breakfast on the run in my first US car (Over the Atlantic tour).

a car, however, if you're travelling to multiple countries for an extended period you may want to look into an *International Driving Permit*. For New Zealanders getting one of those is a simple online application through the AA (aa.co.nz) and will cost \$30.

Extra-nerdy tip: If you know in advance the model you'll be driving you can take a close look at one before you leave to gauge its luggage space; even if it means going to a car yard and pretending to be interested in purchasing one. Organising all your gear into a tiny space is one of the biggest headaches of touring and the more prepared you are going into that first *Tetris* arrangement, the better.

USA TIPS AND TRICKS

(Info about backline with some USA specific details is discussed in the Europe section.)

Seriously, don't be doing any illegal shit in your car and don't speed. I think I've been pulled over twice in total after a dozen months in Europe, but in the USA once I was pulled over eight times in the space of three weeks. Once I was driving round a Chicago suburb looking for a park and got pulled over because they thought I was casing the neighbourhood. Another time I got pulled over because (in some states) when a cop has pulled another driver over on a multi-lane highway you have to change lanes and give at least one lane between you and the cop on the side of the road. I didn't know that and even though I had

slowed down he still chased me and pulled me over. I pulled the classic "Sorry officer, I'm from New Zealand and we don't have multi-lane highways there" and it totally worked. Once I got pulled over in Oregon because I looked a cop in the eye as I drove past, honestly.

RIGHT TURN ON RED

Holy shit, if this isn't the best law in the entire world! Obviously everyone knows to drive on the other side of the road in the USA, but did you know in certain circumstances you can drive through red lights? Research it before you leave otherwise you'll get irate drivers honking at you and you'll be wondering why. In the USA, if you are turning RIGHT (remember you are also driving on the right) and you've checked there is no traffic coming from your left or pedestrians crossing, you are free to make a right turn through a red light! This was brought about by the need to keep traffic flowing and lessen environmental damage by cars idling. It applies all over the USA except for New York City, or when an intersection is signposted to NOT turn on red.

HOLIDAY

Don't make your tour too intense; drives too long, not enough breaks, trying to play shows every day. I know in the short term it seems to be the answer financially and what makes a tour 'successful', but it is more important that your band stays together and enjoys touring together so make sure you have days off and do some tourist crap!

If you view your band as a business, you may as well work in a bank; it's a much better career. You're in the USA! C'mon! Go to a drive-in movie (drive-in.org), shoot a machine gun, gamble in Las Vegas/Atlantic City, visit famous movie locations (movielocationsguide.com), see the real *Twin Peaks* (intwinpeaks.com), go to a baseball/basketball/football game, go watch live comedy in a late night dive bar, see some Manatees in Florida, ride a swamp fan-boat, go to Venice Beach, Hollywood, Central Park, stalk some celebrities in LA/Beverly Hills (hollywoodusa.co.uk/celebrity-homes.htm)... shit, the list of stuff to do is endless. This is really important. It may look cool on your *Facebook* page to be doing 45 shows in 47 days, but you're going to be missing out/burning out and it doesn't look cool when your band breaks up.

Budgeting for days off is tough, but you need to do it. Even if you think you have a super-relaxed show day with only a two hour drive, it will still take all day and it's not the same as a proper day off, trust me. You'll sleep in, then piss around getting ready, get there early and drag the soundcheck on for too long. You need to have some evenings off and time-out from other band members as well, head out on your own.

One of my favourite things to do on tour is just hang out at someone's house one night, cook a big dinner, watch a video – forget for a little while you're on

tour and just switch off. Also, nights off here and there give you time to catch up with emails; shows coming up, touching base with friends, family, fans, etc.

Make sure everybody on the tour saves plenty of money before the trip. Each day you're touring in the US costs money. You've got fixed costs of car rental + insurance, motel, accommodation, food, petrol, etc. For every day you're on the road, this may be in the area of US\$250-300 per day, and perhaps you're only making on average US\$100 every second day. And that's not even taking your initial flights into account. This is why your first world tour needs to be fun, something you'll fondly remember forever. If you go on a gruelling tour and spend a lot of money, that's when playing half-empty shows really gets to you. It's wiser in the long-run to offset some of that fatigue and disappointment with relaxation and fun, even if it costs a little more.

TIPPING/TAXES

Tipping gets pretty frustrating, but it's how the USA operates and you need to roll with it. Unfortunately many people in the service industry work below minimum wage, i.e. they may only be on \$2 an hour and they survive on tips. A general rule of thumb is to tip around 15% of the bill (more if exceptional service) before tax. Don't be the dick who doesn't tip. (Unless of course you receive horrible service)

If you can't handle it then just avoid tipping situations, although that can be difficult. The worst thing is when you're at a restaurant or cafe as a largish group, it's difficult to split the bill. Sometimes the service will automatically include the tip (gratuity) within the bill.

Buying a drink from a bar the standard tip is \$1 per drink (more if it's a cocktail). When you're operating on an extremely tight budget, as I always am, an extra couple of dollars a day on tips is a killer - it chomps through your money pretty damn fast. And it feels dumb tipping any less than \$1, even when you're only spending \$1. The good thing is it makes you spend more money in supermarkets (where you don't tip) and less money in cafes/restaurants.

More frustrating than tipping though is the US's insistence on displaying most of their prices without tax added. For example, if you see a poster advertising a soft drink for \$1, it will end up costing somewhere between \$1.10-1.20 depending on what state you are in. There are state and federal taxes on most items, so you get two taxes added on top. There are a few states that don't tax as much, or at all, I know Oregon is one of them.

FOOD

Eating healthy on the road in the USA requires quite a bit of effort and I've never managed to do it well. Decent bona-fide supermarkets are expensive and hidden from the highways, thus requiring effort to find. Fast food is so plentiful, accessible and so competitive that a burger is obscenely cheap. Obviously, where

possible, try to avoid fast food cause it's poison, but the reality is sometimes you just need to fill the tank and move on, ya know. I'm not going to try and pretend that at 2am it's going to be easy to find a healthy solution when you're dying for a bite. Below I'll rattle off a few things that are cheap but not particularly of any health value.

When you can shop at supermarkets, do, but realise that mostly US supermarkets sell large sizes of everything and in bulk. You're best in these cases to buy things as a group. It can get very expensive very fast if you're not careful and without refrigeration your options are limited.

If eating well is important to you, as it should be, you need to make a really concerted effort to work out where to eat. Before you travel each day, research the city you are going too/passing through and find out where is good/cheap to eat - especially if you are vegan/vegetarian. Planning your food stops should be taken as seriously as plotting your show routing. For example *The Eat Well Guide* (eatwellguide.org) is an online guide you can search by city, zip code etc for sustainable farms, bakers, restaurants, organic, markets, etc.

Roadfood (roadfood.com) is a sweet website that lists locally owned places to eat. Some of these are super greasy, but if you want to support local business and also discover interesting places to eat, a great read.

Before you leave on tour, go to: theculpritandthecure.com and download the "*Stop and Go*" books, especially the *Fast Food Nutrition guide*. It's a free PDF download (there is also an app version). This will give you the full run down on eating fast food in America, what to avoid and what is sorta decent. It's a great resource, it lists all the major fast food chains in the states and their current menus. Then it breaks down the major nutritional information of each item and even colour codes them so you know at a glance what to avoid. It's a document that realises sometimes it is really difficult to avoid fast food, so it makes the best of a bad situation.

The easiest way to find supermarkets is to enter the name in the search facility of your GPS. There are a whole bunch of regional supermarkets like the fantastically named *Piggly Wiggly*. Nationwide chains include *Delhaize*, *Safeway*, *Aldi*, *Save-a-lot*, *Kroger*, *Trader Joe's* and *Wholefoods Market*.

Make sure you eat lots of fruit, raisins, nuts, vegetables and don't forget ace snacks like baby carrots with hummus.

BURGERS

Sampling who has the best burgers is a fun part of touring the US for me. Almost all the burger joints have some sort of \$1 menu, with something sort of decent on it. *Rally's* probably have the best range with five or six \$1 burgers. My favourite thing to do with these cheap burgers is what I call 'burger additions'. Pick up a cheap lettuce, tomato, red onion, capsicum, etc and bulk up those crappy burgers with fresh ingredients to make them more filling and marginally healthier.

Not taking into account nutritional aspects, the best/tastiest/value for money fast food places in America I reckon are *Sonic*, *Jack in the Box*, *Wendys*, *Rallys/Checkers*, *Steak'n'Shake* and the absolute king; *In and Out Burger*.

Avoid: *White Castle*, *Krystal*, *Taco Bell* and *Dairy Queen*. I know some of you will see that as a challenge to see for yourself, but they honestly suck.

SCROGGIN (TRAIL MIX)

For some reason NZ hasn't quite caught on to awesome pre-packaged scroggin like the USA has. The best you'll find anywhere is from *Trader Joes* (traderjoes.com). You can also pick up pretty good scroggin from any *Wal-Mart*. It's an affordable snack to munch on and good for keeping the driver alert on those long straight highways. Eat lots of nuts. (Get your head out of the gutter).

COFFEE

I am not a coffee drinker, but when travelling with *Disasteradio* (who is) he tells me that generally speaking, coffee from service stations is better than coffee from fast food joints though *Dunkin' Donuts* have some of the best 'fast/cheap' coffee around.

MANDARINS

For some reason much more affordable than oranges, and easy to pass around the van and along with grapes - mix it up with some scroggin and this is a not too bad way to keep the engine ticking over, great for long drives.

DRIED NOODLES/SOUP

If you aren't a noodle snob you can get a pack for 10 cents. I'll talk more about it later, but I recommend getting a cheap electric jug. Electric jug + inverter + noodles or soup = dreams come true. I tried to convince a band once to let me buy a microwave to take on tour as well, but they wouldn't allow it, dicks. Pulling over, plugging in the jug, boiling some water for a noodle sesh is always a good time.

MEXICAN

Holy crap! When you are in LA, or anywhere that has a strong Mexican presence, eat nothing but. Look for stands on the roadside in urban areas that are filled with locals. \$1 tacos, cheap burritos... this is not crappy NZ Mexican. I salivate whenever I think about getting some fresh tacos in LA.

MICROWAVE FOOD

Why I wanted that microwave! Microwave meals in the USA are actually pretty good and cheap. I come back to NZ each time with a profound appreciation for microwave meals only to be disappointed. If you know you are staying

somewhere with a microwave that night, swing by a supermarket and grab some frozen meals. I'm sure Americans can't stand them, but they don't know how good they got it.

IKEA

Just like all around the world, *IKEA* (ikea.com) do cheap breakfasts. From memory, last time I was in the US you could get a breakfast for \$2? You thought *IKEA* was all about furniture? Wrong.

SUBWAY

Relatively speaking, cheaper than in NZ. You can usually pick up a foot-long sub for US\$5-6, including the *fancy* flavours. They also have really nice flat bread. Great thing about *Subway* is that once you've adjusted your appetite to eating less per day than at home (it happens naturally), one foot-long sub will last most of the day. Eat half when you buy it, stash the second half away for later, though obviously perhaps make sure you don't get a sauce that is too oily, or too much sauce or it will kill it. Finding independent bakeries and buying a homemade filled roll super easily like you can in Australia or New Zealand is very difficult, so *Subway* becomes way more enticing.

CHINESE FOOD

Nearly everywhere, especially on the east coast. You can get simple chicken fried rice or similar for around US\$3.50 and that will easily fill you up. Approaching Chinese with the 'Burger Additions' principle works as well, usually if you're in a small town - close by to any Chinese takeaway will be a supermarket. After you've placed your order, head to the supermarket to pick up some fresh veges to bulk up the meal, head back to the restaurant to collect the order. Toss in some veges - next level.

CHILLI

Mmmm. Something Americans do so, so well. Perfect for colder days, just head to a diner and get a soup style chilli with bread. Usually cheap (but not always).

PIZZA

Americans are crazy about their pizza. You haven't had a slice till you've had a slice bigger than your head in NYC. A good, cheap band snack is *Papa John's* (papajohns.com); they are nationwide and do cheap takeaway whole pepperoni pizzas for \$5. Just walk into a branch and they have them ready, so no waiting around.

WATER

This one little thing will save you a whole bunch of money. Stop buying beverages.

Just drink water, and reuse the same bottle for the entire tour. Not only are there ecological benefits but you'll always have a drink on hand – and save money. Label your bottle so it stands out from the others. A good idea is to keep a massive carrier of water in the car that everyone can top up their smaller bottles with. Fill up the large carrier whenever the chance arrives. Buying beverages is for suckers. Obviously having lots of water on hand is convenient for performances as well.

Because of the many long drives and tight schedules, you need to work pretty hard to balance low prices and healthiness. If money is running low and things are getting tough you can always go dumpster diving. A wiki where people share tips on the best spots on places all around the world you can find here: <http://trashwiki.org/en/World>

So, that's all my US specific advice. Before I commence on my Europe and UK specific section, I'll list some advice that applies anywhere in the world.

GENERAL ADVICE



Eating well in the USA. Disasteradio and ChuckE Cheese. Photo by SM.

THINGS TO BRING FROM HOME

MULTI-BOARD

Seriously, this will be the wisest thing you do. Rather than buy separate NZ to US/UK/EU adaptors for each electrical device you have, bring a multi-board from NZ that you can plug them all into, that way you only need one adaptor to go between the board and the wall.

BACK PACK

Take your time when choosing luggage. I made the gigantic mistake the first time I went away, taking everything and the kitchen sink. Last thing you want is a bag that's too big and heavy. It should ideally be a light back pack as you'll likely be staying in lots of apartments (pretty much everybody living in a city in Europe or the US lives in one) and it sucks lugging a huge bag or suitcase up five flights of stairs. It should be small enough to fit only the bare essentials but with the option to expand if you need to cram some more junk in there.

When I toured the *French Horns* in 2006, Matt the guitarist came to NZ from Australia with (honestly) one plastic shopping bag containing two pairs of underpants, a spare t-shirt and a pair of socks for a two-week tour. While that is a little on the extreme side, you should be inspired by this.

It's good if everybody on the tour takes a similar amount of clothing so you always run out and need a laundromat at the same time. Only take what you need to get through one week, this is not a fashion show. You can always buy more clothes along the way; op shops are plentiful and clothes are cheap at department stores and big supermarkets. *Goodwill's* are everywhere in the US, so if at any point you need some new digs, just drop on in (<http://locator.goodwill.org>). A separate laundry bag that scrunches up small to separate dirty from clean is handy.

LAPTOP/WI-FI DEVICE

If you are the tour manager, this goes without saying, you'll probably need to use the net daily. And if you're not the tour manager and you don't think you will have much desire for the internet on tour, you will, and it also sucks to be the one/s without the internet while everyone else is happily online. It also sucks to be the one/s with the internet while everybody is trying to scab five minutes of email while you've got work to do.

If you don't have a netbook or small laptop, consider investing in a really decent smartphone that is Wi-Fi capable, or a second hand crappy old laptop –

you're not looking for something capable of rendering animation and editing full HD video, just opening a browser and that has Wi-Fi. You'll obviously need to look after your device and that can be a hassle, but if you don't have something you can use to access the internet, seriously, you will regret it.

THINGS TO PICK UP OVERSEAS

GPS

Don't even kid yourself that you don't need this. They save you from arguments, stress and brainpower and in addition to the main function (telling you how to get from this town to that town); they also have other awesome features.

Most half-decent GPS units will have many restaurants (fast and otherwise) already loaded in their software, so if you desperately need some Wi-Fi or cheeseburgers, it's only a few taps away. Finding a supermarket in the UK is as easy as typing in 'ASDA'.

Finding your park...Invaluable! When I drop a band off at the venue with gear and drive a few blocks to find a park I invariably get back to the venue with one of the band going, "aw, I need my wallet, where's the car bro?" Rather than drawing a map I just hand over the GPS, because I made sure to save the parking spot in it. It will lead the forgetful band member straight back to the car. You can also wander aimlessly around a city sightseeing and get as lost as you like, and when it's time to go back just switch on the GPS.

My other favourite GPS feature is finding alternate routes and quick detours. For those times on the highway when you see a traffic jam up ahead, just tap 'detour' and the GPS will find a way around it. Also, when you have spare time and can't face another boring highway, instead of choosing 'shortest time' choose "shortest distance". This new route will take you on an awesome tiki-tour via small villages and interesting back roads.

A good GPS should also have a "avoid toll roads" function. This may not seem important to you now, but this function could save you more money than the cost of the GPS unit alone. If you're doing a drive more than a few hours, "avoiding tolls" adds practically no time at all when driving in the US. In some European countries, France in particular, avoiding tolls can make drives become epic, so sometimes a balance is needed.

Before you reach for the cheapest GPS unit on the shelf, find out what maps come with it. This is where they sting you. If you buy a GPS in the USA it will usually only come with USA maps and European maps might cost you heaps more money (you buy extra maps online). Do your research here and work out the overall smartest deal.

Maps can (sometimes) be found online and downloaded if buying them legitimately is not an option.

WIKIREADER

I can't recommend Wikireader enough (thewikireader.com). On tour you'll constantly speculate on the constant stream of questions that pop up when you're somewhere new and chatting about stuff in general all day. A Wikireader is a small device that contains all of Wikipedia (sans images), no net connection required. Any question/argument can be settled in moments plus its fun to browse when you're bored. Cost is around \$100. If you're too cheap for that and have an old iPod, you can download Wikipedia onto it and access it offline.

BLOW-UP BED

Sucks to say it, but your first stop in the USA should be *Wal-Mart*. Yeah, I know they're the devil, but they let you sleep in their car park (such a sad justification). It's depressing to be part of the problem, but unfortunately when arriving in the US you're usually time poor and cash poor, so a cheap, easy-to-find, one-stop shop is sometimes your only option. If you are able, please avoid this Earth-aping beast and support locally owned companies.

OK, so assuming you're like me and you succumb to the devil's lure; after carefully choosing your GPS unit, look around for sleeping gear. You probably bought a sleeping bag with you, if not, pick one up here. How long are you on tour? Have you scheduled accommodation that consists of crashing on floors? A decent blow-up bed is vital so choose wisely. Consider how much room you have in the vehicle; don't be buying a deluxe-queen-size-double-thickness bed. Definitely invest in a powered inflating device with car cigarette lighter attachment. Last thing you want every damn night is blowing them up manually with a cheap crappy pump. When you arrive at your accom each night one person can blow up all the beds while everyone else unloads the gear.

If you are really on a budget, you can buy an inflatable *Li-Lo* style pool accessory; these will only set you back a few bucks as opposed to \$20+ for a normal air bed. You can also get cool little blow-up beds which inflate by tapping them with your foot. They're slightly more expensive but they're real compact for packing away and should be considered. If you're a hard man like Ash from *Over the Atlantic*, you'll just rock a \$2 yoga mat as your bed for months.

Whatever you decide, look after it! It's so easy to puncture them and gaffer tape can only do so much. Buying your third or fourth blow-up bed is a depressing experience. If you can it's a good idea to lay down something extra under any blow up bed 'cause those things have a habit of suddenly deflating during the night. The best solution though is to get a thin self-inflating mattresses, this is how I roll (or unroll). Buy a quality one and it will last a lifetime (in theory).

Pillows are also cheap from *Wal-Mart*. Take size into consideration. While bigger pillows are handy for wedging in and around backline while travelling, you should also look into smaller cushions. They'll usually keep their shape for longer and take up less space (obviously!).

POWER INVERTER

An inverter is a unit that runs off your car's cigarette lighter and has an electrical plug outlet. Good for charging cameras, phones, running laptops and an electric jug! A 140w inverter should power at least a laptop will set you back around \$15 from a *Wal-Mart* or service station. If you want to run a couple of devices at once, e.g. cellphone charger, camera, etc, you'll probably want 300w or larger - these will cost a little more.

ELECTRIC JUG

A bizarre thing you'll discover about the USA is that they haven't embraced the electric jug. It's incredible. You'll be at someone's house, wanting hot water to whip up noodles or coffee and every time they'll hand you a saucepan or a stovetop kettle, which takes 10+ minutes to boil. When you explain the idea of a quick, efficient electric jug they just stare at you blankly. Seriously. You might have to journey to the deepest, dustiest corner of the appliance section to find one, but they do exist in America.

ADAPTERS

Pretty obvious, I'm sure you don't need to be told this. If you want to run your NZ electrical devices overseas (other than Australia) you'll need adaptors. US, UK and Europe are all different. A common mistake is assuming UK adaptors work in Europe and vice versa. You can usually pick up those all-in-one plug adaptors which will convert your plug to any number of a bunch of other countries. It's usually a good idea to pick one or two of these up before you leave home.

Voltage is usually not an issue for NZ equipment overseas, but double check to see if your musical equipment can deal with it. The problem usually lies with US made equipment leaving the US, not the other way around. The USA uses 110 voltage, whereas in NZ we use 240, so if you plug a US appliance into an overseas power board, well, often you can blow that sucker when you pump all that extra juice into it.

Look on your power adaptors for "Universal Power 100-240v" etc. This will mean you're home free.

EATING STUFF

I recommend each person on the tour has their own container for their groceries, or a shared tour container, whatever you prefer. It doesn't take long for the car to become smelly and filthy if food isn't kept tidy, and if you get food stains all over a rental car interior you might be charged extra. Try a stackable modular system (with lids) if you are struggling with space. Also, each person might want a bowl, cup and utensils (or a 'spork'). If you're doing the DIY sandwich thing a sharp knife, cutting board, dish brush and dish soap are also recommended.

BUNGEE CABLES

Pick up a pack of 4 or 5 of these from *Wal-Mart* or a servo. They have endless uses. From keeping luggage from falling on top of you or stretching between trees to form clothes lines to their most conventional use, attaching to a roof rack (if you end up needing one).

Other handy things include: Gaffer tape, paper, pens, Sharpie/Vivid, a stamp, extension cords and pocket knife (remember to not put it in your carry-on luggage).

LONG-DISTANCE DRIVING

If you're doing a hard-out tour of Europe or the US, you're going to end up with long drives, especially if you've got a low profile and need to take gigs when you can get them. In Europe you might need to drive through several countries in one day to make a show and it's not out-of-the-ordinary to have ten-hour drives a few days in a row. Ideally there will be more than one driver on the trip. If this is the case, get in the habit of switching often. Don't wait till you get tired.

I've done some stupid solo-drives in my time, 20+ hours in one go. Looking back it was idiotic, but we all make mistakes. The following tips help me with long drives, hopefully they help you too.



Luxury camping. Guitar lead clothes line.

Firstly, obviously, a good night's sleep beforehand is ideal, though on tour that's not always possible. If it means skipping the party now and then, so be it; safety is more important.

Pay close attention to *your* body and signals of fatigue. Everyone's different. Personally, I zone-out after two and half hours of driving, but after four hours I'm usually fine. I plan the drive around this, especially if I am the sole driver. I start by telling myself that I'm only doing a two-hour drive. I keep looking at the clock every ten minutes and count down those two hours in chunks. At two hours I pull over and take a proper break. I'll walk around, have a big drink of water and perhaps read something. This resets my system so I can do another two hours in the same way. It might be dorky, but try a skipping rope, frisbee or hacky sack – a few minutes fresh air and exercise will reboot your brain and keep you fit.

Once you start zoning out, getting your yawn on, that's it. It's pretty difficult to get that energy back, so don't let yourself get to that point. For me this means, usually four hours into drive, I start to crank the cheesy alternative-rock. Ask any band I've toured with and they'll tell you this consists mostly of *Blink 182*. I purposefully save music for later so that when I do put it on, I am not sick of music and it generates a fresh reaction from my body.

There's also the unspoken rule of the person who rides shotgun always being up for a conversation. Nothing is better for keeping a driver alert than conversing. In 2008 I had to do mental drives and I'm pretty sure I would have killed everybody if it wasn't for Ash from *Over the Atlantic* and his incredible ability to drag out an inane one-topic conversation for five or six hours. This was also great for the others who just wanted to sleep, our conversations were so boring - one stone, two birds.

I also like night driving. After a show I've got tons of energy so if we don't have accom nearby I like to get a few hours driving out of the way. You don't have bright glare to worry about and I find it easier to keep alert because I need to concentrate much more in the dark.

If the monotony of a long, straight highway is a problem take an alternative route. Constant turns, traffic lights and roundabouts will keep you more alert.

If you feel tired, PULL OVER. Don't try to be a hero. It's just NOT worth the risk. Always plan ahead and ensure there is a sober driver to get to the accom and secure the vehicle for the night.

MERCH

This is your life saver and sometimes the only way you can afford to eat. Come up with a system of keeping the merch in good condition from the start. When you're constantly unloading and loading gear, keeping your merch in cardboard boxes is useless; your CD cases will crack and break, your vinyl and digi-packs will get dog-eared. Look around for a sturdy suitcase that fits all the merch perfectly and has plenty of protective padding. You can fill in gaps with padding as the quantities decrease or downgrade to a smaller suitcase later on. Sometimes you can find a suitcase and pack the merch in a way that all you need to do is open the lid, throw it on a table and it's ready to sell. Generally you end up selling merch in a dark corner of the venue. I recommend a compact, durable light that runs on batteries (because finding a power outlet nearby is usually impossible). *IKEA* sell handy little LED light strips for €4 that run on 2xAAA batteries and do a great job.

Make one good merch display sheet with descriptions and prices. Look after it so you don't have to find a piece of paper and scribble down the same thing every night. Keep the descriptions VERY simple especially if you're visiting countries where English is not the first language. When you format the sign leave space to amend the prices as you move about on tour. You might want to drop/raise the prices, or change the currency; for example in Poland you need to have prices in Zloty and Euro. Ask the locals what merch usually costs, you don't want to be undercutting the other bands on the bill, or be embarrassingly overpriced.

If you're entering a new continent without proper visas/work permits, it's best not to carry a whole bunch of merch with you. It's pretty hard to talk your way out of that one. Post the merch to a friend and pick it up when you get there. If you do take merch with you, package it well for the flight. If your CDs normally sell in jewel cases, leave the cases at home and take the CDs on a spindle. Wrap the CD sleeves carefully so they don't get damaged. Once you touch down, allow time to find and purchase empty jewel cases, maybe 20-30 at a time because they take up a bunch of room and damage so easily.

If you are travelling around with vinyl in summer, look after it. Temperatures can rise rapidly especially in a parked car so make sure where possible you insulate and keep out of direct sunlight at all times, better still, remove from car entirely.

Get your music on *iTunes* (itunes.com) before you head off on tour. Allow several weeks as it can take some time. A good aggregator is *CDbaby* (cdbaby.com). They charge a smallish, one-off fee and make sure your songs are available on whole bunch of MP3 distributors including *iTunes*. Also, upload your songs

to *Bandcamp* and print out a bunch of download codes. You can give these away, sell separately or include with t-shirts or other kinds of merchandise.

If it's a decent sized tour it might be financially and logistically worth it to get CDs and/or vinyl pressed in the continent you are travelling to. For Europe a great company to use is *GZ Media* (gzcd.cz), based in the Czech Republic. Don't be nervous about dealing with a Czech company, they are professional, reliable and English is no problem; I fully recommend them. The process is simple and they will send your order anywhere, but if you feel more comfortable going through a US-based middleman, you can use *Pirates Press* (piratespress.com). They act as an agent for *GZ* and prices should be the same.

For vinyl in Europe, *GZ* are great again, but I've also dealt with Netherlands-based, *The Record Industry* (recordindustry.com), who were exemplary. There are many others, a good list is at: http://elpasorecordsonline.com/pressing_plants.html. This includes US plants as well, some of the more popular US plants are *Rainbo* (rainborecords.com), *RTI* (recordtech.com) and *United* (urpressing.com).

Duophonic (duophonic.de) in Germany will do a run of 50 records and ship them to NZ, but it won't be cheap. You're looking at a unit cost of around NZ\$20 each by the time you ship and pay Customs. One of the main problems with short runs of vinyl is that you may be restricted to white labels and it will be expensive to get colour sleeves. A regular print run of labels or sleeves will have



Disasteradio's merch stand, 2009. Photo by SM.

a minimum quantity of 500, so even though you're only using 50 of them, you may have to pay for 500. If this is the case, look into screen printing the covers (screen printing is more a cost-effective process for smaller quantities) or some other creative solution.

A few things to note about vinyl, that you may not be aware of: You need to master your album specifically for vinyl, ask around or check the net for info on this. For 12-inch, ideally you want 16-20 minutes per side. More than 20 minutes per side will start testing the quality. The main reason it's so cost-prohibitive to get vinyl sent to NZ is the cost of shipping. It can work out almost as expensive as the vinyl itself. In addition, you might have to pay Customs duty if the package is intercepted on entry to NZ. To avoid duty, ask the manufacturer to split the delivery up into smaller packages, avoid sending an invoice on/in the packages and address them to a personal address, rather than a business address.

T-shirts are great, but organise ahead and pick them up on your first stop because they take up too much room in your luggage. It should be easy to find companies to suss out. Again, *Pirates Press* in the US is good but there are hundreds of others you could approach also. Shirts can get annoying to carry and are easy to get wrinkled and dirty. Order in small quantities and come up with a plan to keep them tidy. At first maybe keep it simple with two sizes, one design; unisex (or mens) M and XL. It sucks so bad when there are a bunch of people trying to look at merch and some drunk fuckwit is blocking everyone's view, taking ages to try on every size/colour/design and asking their friends for their opinion. Sure, you might miss a sale or two by not having every size in his and hers styles, but to be honest the majority aren't fussy and will compromise on a 100% perfect fit if the design is cool and they really liked your band. Limiting the sizes means you don't have to keep rifling through all the shirts messing them up trying to find the right size. If somebody looks bummed that they can't get a shirt in their size, cut them a deal on other merch – give them a handsome discount off a CD, a free sticker, etc.

Occasionally, 'regular venues', especially larger ones, may take a 15-25% cut of your merch sales, (assholes).

Try to have more than just one or two items of merch. People like variety and choice and the more time they spend looking the more likely they are to buy. Also, some people will like your band so much they are keen to buy everything you have. If you have a new album you're trying to sell for \$10-20, perhaps make a little CD-r demo/EP for \$5 or free with the album? Think about offering a hand-packaged live album, a 'demos' CD, stickers, posters, vinyl, cassette, USB sticks or perhaps a second shirt design? I personally prefer to keep it simple with one shirt design, but if you have the space and can afford the outlay, a second design means that instead of deciding whether to buy the shirt or not, the decision becomes "which one to buy?!" You could do a short run of Peter King lathe cut records (peterkinglathecutrecords.co.nz). These are pretty unique and always pique

interest overseas. If space and money is scarce come up with a hand-packaged concept that you can easily create while on tour and burn off CDs as you go. People appreciate hand-made stuff, even if it's just a plain CD shoved into an envelope with a crudely drawn picture on it – you might be surprised at how popular that stuff is.

A great solution is to order blank packaging from a manufacturer like *Stumptown* (stumptownprinters.com) and have it shipped to your first stop. You could get an ink stamp or stickers made at home or overseas, burn off CDs as you go and pop into the really nice packaging options available. *Groovehouse* (groovehouse.com) do blank packaging and will even make the stamps up for the artwork (including a stamp for the spine).

Don't shy away from trying "pay-as-you-like" or "name your price." This works great at festivals where sometimes merch stands are a mess. After a successful *Disasteradio* performance at a festival, I would often leap into the audience with a box or two of CDs and wander through the crowd asking for donations in exchange for CDs. We usually wouldn't give change, people just throw money in a box and we give them a CD. Curious people will wander over to see what's going on and end up buying a CD too. This worked awesome, we sold WAY more than if we'd only sold them at the merch stall. I also did this after really successful club shows and everybody is standing outside. "CD for a donation," gets more reaction than if you walk around saying "CD \$10!?" Head to a circle of people chatting and you'll often find they'll all buy a CD. Some might only pay a few dollars, but some will want to look cool in front of their mates and will pay a lot. In Europe we tried a fixed price of €10, which was slow but steady. When we switched to "name your price," not only did we sell many more units, but the average payment was only slightly less anyway, around €7-8 per CD. It will be different for everyone, but don't be afraid to experiment with your pricing and techniques. Ask yourself if it is more important to get your music out there, or to make an extra buck or two and be heard by less people?

ACCOUNTING

You always need to see, at a glance, exactly where the tour stands financially. It's important to get this right from the start. Have one place to keep your cash, like a small bag/purse type thing. You must NEVER leave this unattended, so choose something that's easy to carry about. To avoid confusion one person should take responsibility for it. Also keep three small notebooks in this bag.

Pop some starting cash into the bag, to cover your first few days on the road.

Enter this amount on the first line of **notebook #1** (accounting) then list every expense no matter how small and keep a running tally, e.g.:

5/7 – Opening balance		\$300
6/7 – Petrol LA	-\$60	\$240
6/7 – Parking LA	-\$3	\$237
7/7 – Milk	-\$2	\$235
7/7 – CD Cases	-\$30	\$205
7/7 – Show Payment LA	+60	\$265
7/7 – Merch Sales LA	+48	\$313

You'll see exactly how much you have in band funds at any time, and the more detailed the information you keep, the easier it will be to budget for your next tour.

Notebook #2 is for merch sales. At the start of the tour record the quantity of each item. Give each show a separate page. At the top of that page write the date, venue and city then tally sales from that show. At the bottom of the page, total the tally and transfer that figure into *notebook #1*. A page should look like this:

7/7 – Echo Curio, LA		
CDs \$10	III	\$30
EPs \$5	II	\$10
BADGES \$2	IIII	\$8
TOTAL		\$48

Notebook #3 is for personal lending and other notes. Trust me, sooner or later people on the tour borrow money from each other and it can ruin the tour if it turns nasty. To keep it under control immediately record all amounts lent (and paid back) in *notebook #3*. If everyone agrees, tour members can potentially borrow money from the band fund; just make sure it's recorded in *notebook #1*, just like any other expense or income. Use the rest of *notebook #3* for general notes & reminders that might be useful for future tours.

COMMUNICATION

Someone on the tour should have a cell phone, for emergencies at the very least. There is no point listing companies and plans here as they'll be out of date before the book is published, plus it's a convoluted affair at the best of times. International roaming with your NZ phone can be EXTREMELY expensive. Check your plan carefully before you leave and adjust

it if you have to. For the USA you might save money by picking up a cheap pre-pay when you arrive. Last time I picked one up at *RadioShack* (radioshack.com) for US\$15 which included enough credit for my entire time there. If you love your phone and can't bear getting a shitty, temporary one, it's worth looking at SIM cards and 'unlocking' your phone. If you're travelling to lots of countries look into a 'global SIM', *Google* for details. If you want to use the net on a smart phone research the best data plans. The cheapest way is usually a data SIM card for each country you visit, but if money is no real issue, grab a SIM from *Abroadband* (abroadband.com), at the time of print it is \$20 for a SIM, then €0.60 per MB for internet in 59 countries around the world. They are awesome for Europe because they work everywhere, but be careful, just checking email can get expensive pretty quickly.

One thing to check very carefully is your ability to add credit. I learnt a hard lesson in 2009 when I purchased an O2 SIM card in the UK to use throughout the UK and Europe. I paid £5 a month for a special "Europe Traveller" deal, which I can't remember the exact details of, but it was good (and it's worth enquiring about those sorts of deals when looking). Anyway, the SIM card worked great and was cheap. But when I was in Austria I had to add more credit and I couldn't.

Some UK companies have a ridiculous policy of rejecting non-UK registered credit cards in certain circumstances. This is totally insane; aren't credit cards supposed to be global? The only explanation I've been offered by one of these companies was a vague mention of "terrorism"? WTF? Anyway, I couldn't use my Visa online to top-up, so I called O2. I couldn't use my card over the phone either. There were no O2 outlets in Austria, so I had to ask a friend in London to buy a top-up voucher and email me the code. SO STUPID.

CALLING CARDS

If you want to call home a bunch, get a calling card. It's very easy, very cheap, available everywhere (convenience stores, gas stations, etc).

SKYPE

Get a *Skype* (skype.com) account sorted before you leave. It's a brilliant way to keep in touch and sometimes handy when booking the tour. Using *Skype* on a smart phone with free or cheap Wi-Fi is an affordable way to make calls.

WI-FI

Thank God for Wi-Fi. How did tours happen without it? Cruising down a main street of any large city you can often find a signal to latch onto. Walking around with a laptop trying to find a signal, at 2am in central London or NYC probably isn't a great idea, so it's helpful for the main tour organiser to have a smart phone/PDA thing so they can tap the nets discreetly. If you roll into a largish town, you'll find most cafes offer free Wi-Fi to customers.

Or just look for *McDonalds* or *Starbucks*. Some have it cranking for free and you can just pull up in the carpark and rip into it. Others may force you to make a purchase to get a code, but with plenty of \$1 items on the menu, this isn't all bad news. On my first tour I bought SO many \$1 cheeseburgers just to check my emails, that it *was* all bad news.

IMMIGRATION/VISAS

“What’s the deal with visas?” is easily the question I am asked most by bands who are thinking about touring. Legally, of course you need them. In reality, hardly anybody bothers doing them properly.

Visas in a nutshell: if you work in another country (as a foreigner) you are taking away potential earnings from a resident. Therefore you need to either pay for the privilege to be there, prove that your work is benefiting that country or prove your work cannot be performed by a resident.

I can see how this arrangement is fair for normal working situations, but for small touring bands it's a load of shit. I doubt any bands (at this level) end up making more money than they are spending. Pretty much everything you earn from shows will be spent on petrol, food and accommodation; all you're doing is shifting money from one local's pocket to another. If the US offered an inexpensive temporary visa for small-time touring bands, they would make a ton of money, save everyone a lot of hassle and enhance the local culture, but, they don't.

So, let's look at the ways you can tackle this. The following is a rough, informal guide for New Zealand passport holders; the rules are constantly changing so check the immigration website of each country for the latest information.

Obviously the desirable way to enter a country is legally. Certainly takes a wee bit of stress off.

New Zealanders do not need work permits to work in Australia, and vice versa.

Getting a work permit/visa for the USA is a bit tricky and expensive. The most common visa for a musician is the *P1*. To get one of these you'll need a sponsor in the USA - a company who wants you there and will complete the required paperwork. If you don't have a label, agent or otherwise to organise this, a company like *Tamizdat* (tamizdat.org) will take care of all the red tape for you. You're looking at around US\$1350 to get the ball rolling. If you haven't submitted your application 100 days before arriving in the US, you may have to pay another US\$1225 to expedite the application. Ideally allow six months to organise a visa because if there's a problem they send you a RFE (Request for Evidence) and this will put you at the back of the queue, adding another 100 days to the process. The *Tamizdat* website has a great deal of information on what you'll need to get a US

visa. No point me repeating it here.

If you're on a reasonably high profile USA label, have a good promoter, a good booking agent or are booked at a profile festival, those companies/people should sponsor you – but it's a hell of a lot of paperwork, so don't be surprised if you're left to take care of it yourself. Obviously this is not a cheap procedure but split between of a group of four musicians it's not the end of the world, maybe only an extra NZ\$400 each for a whole lot of peace of mind.

Alternatively, there is a nice arrangement that applies to a few people. If you're from New Zealand or Australia and have completed at least one year of tertiary study, or graduated within twelve months of applying, you might be eligible for a 12-month work visa for the USA. If your band are all tertiary students and taking a year off to live/work/tour in the US, then this could be your ticket, (http://newzealand.usembassy.gov/swt_faq.html#q2).

Getting a work permit for the UK is significantly easier and cheaper than the US. Visit the *Home Office* (homeoffice.gov.uk) and check out the immigration/visas part of the site. You can apply here for a work permit, for bands (creatives) it's called a *Tier 5 Entertainment Visa*. If you are doing lots of UK shows you're pretty much an idiot not to organise one. It's a very easy procedure that can be done by email in around 24 hours (don't hold me to that) and costs less than £200 for your entire band (depending on numbers), so cheap. They last up to a year and you'll need a company to sponsor you, such as a booking agent, festival, label or management company. Otherwise, Lissa Brayley (lissapia@googlemail.com) runs a sponsor service and can arrange on your behalf, simply send her an email. If this address bounces, you'll understand why I am reluctant to make this book more of a 'directory'.

If you're not getting paid, playing a charity event for example, you may be eligible for a *Visitors Entertainers Visa* (note there's no "Tier 5" on this one). Ten minutes searching the *Home Office* website in the immigration/visas section should give you a good idea of how this works.

I've heard about a sweet Canadian visa where you do not need a work permit as long as you don't perform in a bar or restaurant, which could make playing the DIY scene totally doable. Go to Canada's immigration website (cic.gc.ca). Navigate your way to 'work temporarily' then 'jobs that do not require a permit' and 'performing artists'. I wouldn't recommend sneaking into the USA via Canada without a US visa; the USA/Canada border is one of the toughest I've been through. A Canadian working holiday visa might give you easier access to the USA. However, I am not sure how they would react to an entire band trying to enter with that visa.

If you're under 30 (I'm assuming many of you will be) another option is working holiday visas. Heaps of countries offer this to people aged between 18 and 30. Basically, you pay a smallish fee then work with no issues for one or two years in that country. Use this option wisely, generally these visas can only

be applied for and used once. For the UK, if there are several of you going, it is probably cheaper, faster and easier to buy a *Tier 5 Entertainment Visa* instead of individual working holiday visas.

Doing Europe legally is tricky. If you have a UK or European passport already, you're sweet to work in any country in the Union. If you don't, a work permit for one country does not extend the same privilege. You'd need to apply for work permits in each country you wish to perform in. I don't even know if anyone at all does Europe legally. I've booked shows at big European festivals and asked them "do you organise the visa" and they're like "Visas? Eh??"

Now, I don't endorse or encourage entering a country illegally, I just know that many musicians do it. Like I described at the start of the immigration section, bands at this level are not exactly stealing money and jobs from locals and running back to NZ laughing. Every penny earned from shows is returned to the local economy, and probably more. I can't imagine jobs being lost and local culture being destroyed from exposure to international bands passing through; if anything it stimulates and enriches local culture.

If you have time and money, *all efforts* should be made to do it by-the-book. When you divide the fees over the group, they aren't that scary, but yeah, the costs just keep piling up eh? I would guess that around 90% of foreign low profile bands touring the US enter without the correct paperwork. *Tamizdat*, is not exactly cheap and before that it wasn't uncommon to pay NZ\$3500-5000 to get US visas - who the hell had that sort of money?

If you're decide to enter a country, play shows (for money) without the appropriate visa and not tell border control this, the most important thing to realise it is illegal. Don't be like the NZ band *Opshop* who, when entering the UK weren't even aware of the need for visas and told immigration they were there to play a show, they were sent straight back home again. Stink.

If you have a New Zealand passport you can visit a bunch of countries for 3-6 months (leisure only) and you don't need to apply/pay for a special visa. You can just roll up with your passport. You might be asked to show that you are leaving within the agreed time and that you have sufficient funds to support yourself while there (so you aren't working or going to cause trouble). For countries *without* a scheme like this you will have to apply for a visa before your arrival. For the USA you will need to complete an online pre-approval form about a month before arrival. Check each country's immigration website for the latest info.

You need to be aware that immigration officials are not stupid. I've been through lots of borders. I've been pulled aside myself and I've watched them deal with suspicious travellers. I've seen them waive through people obviously lying about relatively unimportant issues. I'm positive they're mainly looking for big fish; overstayers, smugglers, etc. Nailing underground bands trying to tour on the cheap is not high up on their agenda.

Just don't stress out about it, I've flown into LA shortly before SXSW and seen dozens of super hip dudes, all obviously in bands, pacing around, sweating,

splitting up to go through immigration and I bet being caught out in a lie straight away when asked if they travelled by themselves or not. Immigration officials know what's going on, just keep it simple. A complex web of lies is going to be your downfall. If you are really nervous about going through together I guess you could arrive on separate flights - though that's just getting paranoid. A band of legends once told me that two of their tour party got paperwork from Las Vegas ahead of arriving showing they were booked to be wed shortly after arriving in the US. What sort of asshole immigration officer is going to hassle a couple on their way to their wedding? Genius.

I am sure this is a very interesting subject. I'd love to hear from those of you who didn't arrange visas and if you were hassled. And to those of you who did arrange visas, how much did they cost and what was the process like? Please use the online forum to ask questions and/or describe your experience.

If you're driving around the UK and Europe, at some stage you'll probably cross the channel on a ferry. This is a different kettle of fish to flying because you'll likely have everything with you, merch, backline, etc. This can lead to moments of pure paranoia but ferry immigration is one of the most relaxed anywhere. If you're feeling nervous, I've heard of band members going on as walk-on passengers and sending the vehicle through with one driver and the gear. If asked, the driver says they are on holiday and if for some weird reason they're questioned about equipment, they are returning gear left in the UK by a European friend or a similarly lame story?

Immigration is processed before you board the ferry, so you can relax and just roll off the ferry to new adventures as soon as you dock; and in the unlikely event you are rejected you don't have to turn around and go back. (Remember to switch the side of the road you drive on between UK & Europe!)

There are no longer border controls between most European countries. Sometimes you'll be pulled over and asked for passports, but these are generally quick checks and not in-depth. I've been pulled over a couple of times leaving the Netherlands and had the car searched from top to bottom, but I'm pretty sure they were looking for drugs and not concerned by the CDs we were carrying. Sometimes there are checkpoints with dudes carrying machine guns checking cars. It can be intimidating, but as I've mentioned a few times, I'm pretty sure they have bigger fish to fry than catching bands playing a few shows without the correct paperwork.

EXCESS BAGGAGE

Perhaps the biggest cause of anxiety for travelling bands is that moment you pop your bags on the scales at the airport and wait those few agonising seconds as the airline employee decides to be a jerk or not. Firstly, do your homework! Find out exactly what you can and can't get away with and what the excess charges are. Airlines are constantly revising their baggage allowances, and they are getting tougher and tougher at the check-in counter, so check your ticket carefully. Sometimes it's worth it to pay a little extra for a ticket if the baggage allowance is better.

It's pretty much pointless taking things like a keyboard stand on a plane. If you have a limited amount of pieces any item that counts as a piece but doesn't weigh much is a waste. You can attach them to another item but you need to do this properly. These days airlines have cottoned onto bands strapping all their shit together with gaffer tape and they won't allow it.

If you can, check in as a group. Most airlines prefer you to do this anyway, and it means if someone's bag is a little underweight then it won't matter so much if somebody else is over.

One area where you can usually take the piss is with your carry-on baggage. Check with your airline, but usually you can get away with two carry-on bags: One laptop bag/briefcase/ladies handbag and one small cabin bag weighing approximately 7kg.

Now, it's your carry-on that you get carried away on (Ba duh dum tish). Carry-on is rarely weighed so you can often get away with going overweight.

Before you leave find a perfect wheeled, lightweight carry-on bag, something like an exec has - that won't arouse suspicion. Then pack that sucker FULL of all the heaviest stuff. A wheeled bag is important because if they spot you staggering around trying to lug your way-to-heavy cabin bag, you'll get in trouble. Plus you have to be able to lift it over your head to get it in the overhead storage, so obviously don't make it dangerously heavy - but if you are going to over in weight with your overall baggage, going over in your carry-on is the way to go.

I'm sure I'll hear back from somebody who got caught tryna smang a 30kg bag as carry-on, and it'll be all-my-fault.

If you're going to be the person with the super-heavy carry-on bag, make sure you get onboard the plane super early - so you're not standing around trying to find space in the filled-up overhead storage, sweating, then the flight attendant tries to help you with it. BUSTED. Packing for your first flight should be relatively easy, but for subsequent flights (after you've been on the road for a while) it might take a really long time to sort

and pack your collective luggage to the correct weight allowances. Allow plenty of time to get to airport and double check the cut-off for check in. Avoid crappy flight times - it's not worth it. One of the worst things about touring is getting up stupidly early for an early morning flight. If it's only an extra \$20 to get a sleep-in, for everybody to be in a better frame of mind, do it.

BUDGETING

I've tried to write about budgeting so many times, but it gets so messy. So, this section is going to be kind of weird. There are too many possible scenarios, involving the length of time, countries to visit, how to get around, how many of you, the level of (dis)comfort you're expecting, etc. A budget should be the first thing you do when you decide to tour, so that each member knows what they could possibly be in for. Always create your budget for a 'worst case scenario' so there are no nasty surprises.

Things to consider in your budget are: Flights, car rental/purchase, airport transfers, parking, petrol, accommodation, ferries/tunnels/bridges, toll roads/vignettes, taxis, trains, buses, car servicing, backline, food and personal travel insurance.

Insurance is easy to forget and tempting to ignore, but I STRONGLY urge you buy travel insurance. Buy it as soon as you buy airfares; insurance should cost the same regardless of *when* you buy it, and if you have to cancel your trip you might be able to claim on your unused airfare. Not only is your gear covered but, more importantly, I'm sure you've heard about how messed up the US healthcare system is? We take it for granted in NZ that emergency treatment is generally free, but if you injure yourself in the USA and require an ambulance ride, surgery and a hospital stay it could bankrupt you for life. Seriously. Even in countries with a good healthcare system foreigners might pay a lot more than its citizens. It's just not worth the risk, so buy insurance! There are lots of companies, ask around for the best price but check that the coverage actually covers you and your gear. Companies I've used are *State* (state.co.nz) and *World Nomads* (worldnomads.co.nz). Some credit cards include free travel insurance, check with your bank.

When it comes to a food budget, an easy solution is to pay each tour member a daily payment, or 'per diem'. This might be €10 per day per person in Europe, or US\$15 in the US. These amounts should be fine if you're careful with your spending.

Your biggest costs will be airfare and rental/purchased vehicle. Once you know those costs and the length of the tour, you can add the per diems. This will be the bulk of your budget, so you should now have an idea of the show guarantees you need. For example, say your rental car is going to cost NZ\$3500 for 90 days and there are four of you on the tour. Per diems will be NZ\$20x4 per day, over 90 days that's

THE UK & FESTIVALS

\$7200. So for the most basic requirements we're looking at around \$10k. But what about accom? Assuming you get, on average, one gig (and free accom) every three days and wrangle other free accom for 1/3rd of the trip, you still need to pay for approximately 30 nights of accom. So at NZ\$70 per night for 30 nights you're looking at another \$2100. It's pretty difficult to budget petrol without specific routing but let's just throw a figure out there of \$50 per day. That'll be \$4500 for 90 days. Now we're looking at \$17k for four people to tour for 90 days. This means you'll need to earn NZ\$1200 per week to cover all these costs. That's not impossible, especially in Europe, where that's only around €800 per week. Three shows a week guaranteeing €250 each gets you pretty close. Obviously there are still a bunch of other small costs to take into consideration before you can cover all your tour costs and start paying back your flights.

Sorry, it's vague, but it gives you something to aim for; in Europe you should be doing 3-4 shows a week, earning a total of €700-800 or more. If you're happy to slum it, or subsidise the tour with your own money, you can get away with less. As already mentioned in the USA chapter, covering costs there is really, really hard. Be prepared to subsidise this part of your trip with your own money, or money you make in Europe.

Seriously, don't forget about travel insurance. It sucks, but you gotta do it.



Ghost Town. Bodie, CA, USA (www.bodie.com). Photo by SM.

ARRIVING IN LONDON

Most international flights arrive at *Heathrow Airport*. You might be knackered after a long flight so before takeoff get familiar with getting to your first nights' accommodation using *The Tube*. Last thing you want to do is drop £70-100 on a taxi because of tired desperation. The Piccadilly Line from *Heathrow* to the 'City' costs around £4-5, there is also a slightly more expensive *express tube*.

Also have a think about how to get around London. A good plan is to buy a pass (*Oyster Card*) at the airport and load it up with credit. There are multi-trip, multi-zone and weekly deals so, again, take a look at the tube map and the pricing to get a feel for what you'll need before you arrive: *Transport for London* (tfl.gov.uk). Most central London locations are within zones 1 and 2.

A car in London is a massive pain in the ass and only makes sense if you have to cart around backline, though most bands cart their backline around on *The Tube* anyway. It can easily take an hour to drive across town and every time you enter the *Central Congestion Charging Zone* it costs £8. Make sure you read up on this as you will get snapped on camera and fined if you don't get it sorted.

Parking in London is also ridiculous. In 2008 I spent a few weeks in London. I asked around and found a few parking sweet spots. One parking area was free 11am-4pm and another was free 6pm-8am. So I got in a routine of getting to the car at 8am and hanging out in it for two hours. Then I'd begin the one hour drive to the 11am spot. At 4pm I'd return and drive for one hour to the 6pm spot, wait for an hour then leave it for the night. If I hadn't gone to this effort I would have been dropping £25-40 per day on parking. And you cannot let your parking meter expire AT ALL in London, man, the wardens are everywhere. Unlike in NZ where you get a little \$12 slap on the wrist for being slightly over, in London they fleece you for £60 immediately, even 10 seconds over.

If you can't find sweet free parking spots you need to find a cheap parking building. You might get one for £20-25 a day. Sure, this sucks when you realise it's around NZ\$45+ a day, but it's better than continually getting parking tickets.

LONDON

London is massive. Thanks to easy-to-get youth visas there are several NZ bands living in the UK at any given time, usually slogging their guts on the thankless, depressing pub circuit.

It's a sad fact, but being *NME's* "next big thing" is still a big deal. You can become huge in, say, France and it will mean almost nothing in another European country. However, if you become huge in the UK, that will mean something across all of Europe. Therefore focusing on London seems logical for those bands playin' da game, even though everyone else has the same idea.

Any given night there is literally 100 shows happening in London, including awesome internationals. Most bands on the pub circuit are absolute shit and just trying to create an image/sound combo that'll get them noticed. It's not unusual to see a band who's *MySpace* reveals that members have been in six or seven other bands the past few years.

I have a love/hate relationship with London and the UK. I have had some amazing times and met some amazing people, but in the end, basically all the pub/venue owners are jerks. Because there's a never-ending supply of bands wanting to play shows and kids wanting to be club night promoters, venues make no effort to look after you. Unless you've got a ball-busting agent who has worked some magic, nine times out of ten you won't get any rider, meals or accom. In fact you probably won't even meet anyone connected with the venue. Nobody will thank you for playing and even though you often play on a stage cowering in the shadow of a huge alcohol sponsor banner - you won't get any of that booze for free.

Funny thing is, you don't even notice how crap it is because it's similar to how you're treated by most NZ venues. Once you in play Europe (more on that soon), the thought of going back to the UK is so depressing you want to cancel all your bookings. Each time I go to the UK I trim the amount of time I spend there. The first time was almost two months; the last time was only one week.

Now, everyone's experience of the UK will be different, so please don't let me put you off playing there. It's fairly easy to book shows, the distances are tiny, the supermarkets are amazing and you can have a great time - in fact the last time I went and only spent a week (and three months in Europe) I actually missed the place! I also have made some really good friends there and enjoy catching up with my old NZ friends who have moved there. For me a perfect UK tour would be around two weeks and involve six or seven shows, maybe two of those in London.

If you're new to the scene and don't have any friends to buddy up with or know any promoters, generally there are two types of shows that are easy to book:

CLUB NIGHTS

In New Zealand (particularly Auckland) there have been attempts at creating UK-style indie club nights - the most goddamn awful thing to ever exist. Many UK venues ONLY do club nights. For example, at *The Dogs Hairy Scroat* Monday is "Tiny Tim's Totally Folk Night", Tuesday is "Fucked Up - The newest indie club night in East London", Wednesday is "Sweet and Pretty - all twee all the time", etc. It goes on and on like this for practically every venue in London.

On the one hand, being so genre specific makes it easy to find shows to play. But on the other, these nights can be pure tedium. This is how a club night typically runs: the kids putting on the show advertise the gig. They start DJ-ing around 9pm. Your band will perform around 11pm, then the kids DJ till closing. Not only is it painful listening to the same DJ tracks every night but it's also offensive when you see hundreds of kids coming to these shows, paying £5 a pop, and the organisers only pay you £50 at the end of the night. You're the one from out of town with all the costs, and you already spent most of that £50 on stupid London parking. It sucks but it's a necessary evil if you want to play London. There are a few good club nights that are innovative and fun and don't just play the same boring indie hits over and over, but generally its same-shit-different-night.

SHOWCASE GIGS

These are nights where they cram four or five acts on one bill. Often they have nothing musically in common, bands don't talk to each other, nobody shares backline and the entire audience empties out between each band. Barely anyone makes the effort to watch bands they don't know. You'll get paid less than a club night.

It won't always be as depressing as I've described, but generally shows for low profile acts in the UK will be structured something like this and it's tough. Just like any other territory, once you've made a few friends you might start playing shows with bands you like and build a profile.

Obviously these are generalisations as there are many other types of gigs that can happen, but these are the most common formats for unknown acts. I know this all sounds really negative so don't let me be a total downer. London is an amazing city; amazing architecture, incredible history, always something to do, etc. There are some rad parties, I guess I'm just trying to point out that while, yes, from an industry point of view it makes total sense to focus on London, from an enjoyment point of view, London is back-breaking and expensive.

THE REST OF ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

NZ bands who have given London a fair go will have differing opinions on it, but pretty much everyone will agree that playing anywhere in the UK outside of London is very hard work. I look upon my touring in the UK very fondly, I've met and stayed with some amazing characters and am looking forward to getting back there to see them again, but financially, it's tough.

The main benefit of touring around the UK is that the distances are tiny. It's usually just one to three hours driving between major cities. Compared with the travel from Auckland to Wellington with hardly any cities worth playing in-between (offending most small town NZ in one statement!), in the UK you can drive the same distance and hit heaps of towns worth playing.

In Europe, if people have come out to see you, you've usually won them over from the get-go, in the UK, you gotta work bloody hard to engage them. I've seen support bands tear a fucken hole in the roof to lacklustre appreciation only to have some boring cardboard headliner play a few recognisable average hits to rapturous applause. I've seen packed, sweaty rooms with a band playing their tits off and only the very front row are dancing, the rest just bobbing their heads.

The rest of the UK is not as self-conscious as London, but some of that attitude does bleed through. The London club night scenario applies to the rest of the UK as well. A good starting point to find club nights and club promoters outside of London is *Get a Gig* (getagig.info). This is a city search that will pop up the names of promoters and venues in the area. Sites like this are never conclusive, but a great starting point. What I do is note the contacts that pop up here, then visit their *MySpace/Facebook* pages and do more research. First I'll look at their top friends (usually a venue will have their club nights in their top friends) then I scroll down the comments and have a look at all the posters that have been spammed there. I'll look for recent events that look like they've been well promoted, click through to the promoters doing those and see what bands they are into. Another great resource is this list of cities and promoters/club nights: gringorecords.com/UKbooking.html or the boringly named *Venues and Bands UK* (venuesandbands.co.uk).

Booking in the UK is basically an insane click-through-surfing-mega-fest. I spend hours and hours just browsing peoples top friends, clicking links, searching terms like 'electro club night', 'indie promoter', etc. (Even though 'indie' is such a redundant term, people in the UK still love it and it can apply to almost any genre of music to make it more appealing).

As mentioned earlier about the US, I always do my research before I email club nights and promoters. Only on rare occasions do you actually email the venue direct, less than anywhere else. UK venues usually have fuck all to do with booking bands; they delegate that out to promoters and club nights. Booking shows in the UK is easy-ish. It's easier than booking direct with USA venues, but not as easy as DIY shows in the USA.

Make sure when you approach a promoter you display knowledge of their regular club night; that you're available that night of the week and the genre/style of your music is a suitable fit. Mention the name of their company or club night in your email, and don't get it wrong. I still cringe when I think of the band who emailed me asking to play at *Camp A Low Hand* (you know who you are).

Sometimes these promoters will let you crash on the floor at their house or a friend's. It's unlikely you'll get any rider, but they might make you a meal at their house. The promoters are generally just kids who are tapped into the local scene; they're usually clueless to the difficulty of world touring and often don't realise the huge difference a free meal makes.

You might negotiate a fee for the show, but more likely it'll be a tiny split from the door takings. If they ask you to name a fee and this is your first visit it would be cheeky to ask for more than £100. If you're not desperate for shows just ask for £100 but say you're flexible. If you're desperate for shows ask what they normally pay bands and you're happy to work with that. You might score £250 from a better club night or gig, but earning more than that per show on your first or second tour without a reputable booking agent is going to be very unlikely.

Routing a UK tour is easy. Worst case scenario is you book shows on two consecutive nights at opposite ends of the country, it's still only a day's drive. The motorway system is brilliant and it's easy to navigate your way around. Though it seems like every time I drive around the M25, which is the London 'Ring Road' there is at least one accident or hold up.

The UK landscape is boring-as if you stick to the motorways. Whenever you're able, GET OFF THE MOTORWAY. This is where your GPS comes in handy. Take it off 'fastest time' and you'll end up driving through cute farms, narrow lanes with stone walls, villages, castles, lakes, stately homes; you actually get to see the real UK. Honestly, if you don't travel this way for at least some of the time you'll leave the UK thinking it's all ugly industrial-urban sprawl with a few farms, occasionally interrupted by service stations.

The UK can break a band the bad way. It can be depressing playing to small turnouts in ugly pubs, playing with bands who worship *Oasis* or *Foals* way too much, hearing the same DJ tunes every night, getting no respect from venue owners, never making enough money and the weather generally being nothing special. Well, you can be excused for never wanting to go back, but it gets better each time and it's worth doing at least once to see how you feel about it. I'm looking forward to going back again, even just to hang out with some of the

amazing people I've met. Having bacon butties made for you by thick-accented locals after shows is such a memorable experience and with a pair of gumboots, the festivals can be very enjoyable.

Check out *How Does it Feel to be Loved* (howdoesitfeel.co.uk). It's a London club night but the website contains a bunch of interesting information. Click on "UK Promoters" for a list of the better clubs around. It has a London gig guide (highlights) and the "Indie Travel Guide" is a very basic rundown of some of the bigger music scenes around the world. It's a little out of date, but still worth a read. Also, have a look at *UK Indie Touring* (ukindietouring.com) before hitting up the UK. It's got decent coverage of venues, festivals, industry, labels and more.



A typical UK country village.

FESTIVALS

Without a booking agent and a decent profile, festivals are bloody hard to get, but it can be done. There are literally a thousand+ summer festivals each year in the UK and Europe, ranging from tiny single-stage 100-person events through to giant beasts like *Glastonbury*.

When booking *Disasteradio*'s 2009 Europe tour my aim was to base it around the summer festival circuit. I started booking in September/October for the following June/July/August. There is no hard and fast rule on how far ahead festivals book bands; some will have their line-up almost fully confirmed eight months out, some will still be booking a few weeks before the event. I like to start approaching festivals at least six or seven months before to allow plenty of time to find other shows between festival bookings.

The USA has lots of festivals as well, but they're usually spread out over the year and there's not that intense mid-year concentration that UK and Europe have... where festivaling is a summer tradition and rite of passage.

Now, I haven't had *huge* success with festivals but I have scored a few fantastic bookings. If you're reading this, I've probably booked more European festivals than you, so I will continue.

Like everything, I begin with research. I create a spreadsheet that looks kind of like this:

DATE	NAME	COUNTRY	CITY	WEB	CONTACT
July 2-5	Mean Fest	Spain	Madrid	www.mean.com	mean@gmail.com

Also include a column for notes on each event. For example some may only accept applications through sites like *Sonic Bids* (sonicbids.com). Others may require very specific info or have a closing date.

Then you start looking for as many festivals as you can find. No matter how long you look you will never find every single one. There are always more, it is nuts how many there are. The starting points are big sites like *Efestivals* (efestivals.co.uk), *Virtual Festivals* (virtualfestivals.com), *UK Festival Guides* (ukfestivalguides.com), *FestivalNet* (festivalnet.com) and *Music Festival Junkies* (musicfestivaljunkies.com). These sites will have the big boys but finding smaller independent festivals takes more searching. Trawl *Last.fm*, *Facebook* & *MySpace*. *Google* search 'intimate festival', 'boutique festival', etc. Like I described in the USA section, have your tour mates copy and paste band tour schedules and look for festival names. *Sonic Bids* will also have a good amount listed as well.

Don't expect a huge response rate from festivals, most of the 'professional' festivals only deal with booking agents. It's hard getting your foot in the door. Some events may only have three or four spaces for unheard-of acts and you're battling an enormous amount of other bands for one of those spots.

In the summer of 2009, *Disasteradio* got booked on ten choice festivals; four of those were booked by his agents, I booked four via email and two via *Sonic Bids*. To book those four festivals I must have sent around 200+ applications (not as difficult as it sounds). Totally worth it though, a European summer just isn't complete without a few festivals.

Not being a reputable booking agent with festival connections is obviously a hindrance, so you need to come across as professional as possible. If the festival's website includes details of how to apply, I strictly adhere to those. If they don't, I send a polite email (to an address from the contacts page of the website) asking if they are currently accepting applications for performances. If I don't hear back, I'll send a simple, standard application through a few weeks later anyway.

The bulk of larger festivals in Europe are switching to *Sonic Bids* as a way of accepting band submissions. When you sign up to *Sonic Bids* you pay a monthly fee to have an EPK (Electronic Press Kit) hosted on the site. Once you've sorted your EPK you can apply to events registered with *Sonic Bids* by paying a small fee each time. I admit this makes it easy, and when it works it's awesome. But it bums me out that bands that don't even stand a chance are paying all these fees. If I end up using *Sonic Bids* and charging bands to apply to *my* festival, somebody please punch me super-hard in the nuts.

If you use *Sonic Bids* you need to have a really realistic idea of how good your band is or you will waste heaps of money. Even though I morally object to this system there were some bookings I really wanted so I felt it was worth it to risk US\$100. This got me eight or nine applications. I only chose events I thought we stood a chance of booking and we got two of those. Those bookings turned out to be really important shows; at *Truck Festival* in the UK, *Disasteradio* killed it and quite a few people attended his next London show after seeing him there. And at *Wilsonic* in Bratislava he played after *Jazzanova* (a huge band in Europe) to 3000-4000 people. *FM4* radio in Vienna loved it and invited him to a live-to-air the next day. Also, a friend helped us throw together a last minute show in Vienna a few days later which was attended by a good number of people who saw him at *Wilsonic*. So, even though I hate the idea of *Sonic Bids*, it worked well for us.

Festivals pay a lot better than club shows, although the spectrum of what you're paid can be vast. Just to give you a basic idea, if it's a 1000 or fewer person event a standard fee might be £/€250. For 1000-3000 person events it ranges more from £/€250 to £/€750. For events of 3000-5000+ you can receive around £/€1500. Obviously higher profile acts can ask for more, but I assume if you're reading this that is not the case, so your asking price probably falls close to these.

EUROPE

Sometimes you can negotiate payment inclusions; a smaller payment but accom and travel are covered, or a bigger fee and you cover accom and travel yourself. I usually go for the latter because I don't need flash accom and we've got our own transport, so I'd rather have the larger fee. European festivals will usually sort accom for you, but the same can't be said for UK festivals who only offer hotels for the larger profile acts. If you want to hang out at the festival, odds are you'll need to tent or book your own accom nearby (if the locals haven't already booked it out), and don't forget your gumboots. Why on Earth the UK has a proliferation of multi-day music festivals when it's frankly impossible to get three days of fine weather in a row beats me.

The festival booker will sometimes tell you flat out what their budget is, most often they'll ask you to name a fee. Do your research; see how much tickets are, how many people attend, whereabouts a band of your profile will be on the line-up and then quote accordingly. Use the above figures as a guide but make it clear you're negotiable. A small event may only be able to offer £50, but it could totally be worth playing. Bigger events may be turned off if you undersell yourself.

Summer festivals are what I base our summer routing on. Once I have a few booked, I work out where we have to be and try to fill in the blanks.

I don't recommend the summer tour circuit for your first trip to UK/Europe. Booking them is difficult and you'll have to work your ass off to get a handful. Plus a problem with touring over summer is most of the clubs shut down over this period and its slim pickings for club shows. For your first tour you're better off hitting up venues in touring season (talked about at start of this book) then come back to Europe for a summer of festivals once you've broken the ice.

I'll take the opportunity here to roughly estimate the response rate you can expect from cold-calling without a booking agent. For every 100 emails sent, I would expect the following:

- USA regular venues: 5-15% response rate, 3-5% actual bookings.
- USA DIY venues: 25-30% response rate, 7-10% actual bookings.
- UK club nights/showcases: 10-15% response rate, 5-7% actual bookings.
- UK/EU festivals: 1-2% response rate, 0.5-1% actual bookings.
- EU shows: 3-5% response rate, 1-2% actual bookings.

OVERVIEW

Touring Europe rules. It's more difficult booking shows in Europe than anywhere else, but holy crap it's worth it. Breaks my heart the number of silly NZ bands who break their backs in the UK and never make that short trip over the channel to actually enjoy the benefits of being in a band.

As I mentioned at the very beginning of this book, the definition of success is different for everyone. For me spending months travelling around Europe, having lots of days off to hang out with friends, swim in the Mediterranean, seeing majestic sights, exploring new lands, playing unique venues, being treated with respect, seeing great bands, going to crazy festivals... to me THAT is success. And you know what? Being in a well organised, carefully prepared tour, means this can be achieved for little investment. A few tours later, you could be living this lifestyle and making money.

Fuck playing massive shows to fuckwits, catching flights everywhere, doing press conferences, having to deal with industry bullshit, stressing about reviews, credibility, press, sales. You can enjoy a great musician's lifestyle without the rockstar headaches.

In a nutshell, what makes Europe amazing is that venues do not follow the UK/US/NZ/AU way of treating acts. Basically it is *standard* that you're paid a guaranteed fee plus accommodation and meals are provided. It doesn't matter the profile of your band or how rich/popular the venue - you're treated with respect. It doesn't even occur to European venue owners to treat you poorly. The

most dissapointing meal I've had from a venue in Europe was when the owner ran out of time, apologised and took us out for kebabs. The owner of the venue! Have you ever been treated like that in NZ?

Sometimes it's just plain ridiculous how well you're treated in Europe. When touring *Over the Atlantic* we visited an amazing venue in a small town (I won't say which, so they don't get every man and his dog asking to play there).



Europe.

When we arrived, we were welcomed by the friendliest person ever who welcomed us to his venue. Once we'd dropped off our gear he took us upstairs to our comfy accommodation to chill out. He then took us down the road to a flash restaurant and said, "Order anything you want?" After a slap-up feed, we went back to the venue for the show. Upsettingly it was one of the smallest turnouts we had with maybe seven payers (at €5 each). This didn't faze the owner at all. Immediately after the show without me having to ask, he paid the agreed €250, closed the bar and proceeded to shove drinks down our throats all night. I was still new to Europe at this stage so I was totally weirded out. We had a day off the next day and his accommodation was awesome, so asked if we could stay another night and offered to pay. "Don't pay a cent" he said, and gave us free drinks the next evening as well. As we went to leave in the morning he met us with breakfast and goodie bags. OK, by now I'm struggling to pick my jaw up from the ground, then, he asks to have a photo taken with us because he loved the band. WTF?

This is it. This story sums up Europe touring. The people who book the shows actually love music.

I spent the next day trying to work out how much money he lost on us. Then I realised awesome people like him probably appreciate that we took a risk going all that way at great expense, so he was happy to take a risk too. Even though the show itself hadn't been a success they made us feel like kings and invited us back. I've booked four more shows with this venue which have been much more successful; it's always my first port of call. I would happily go back to that venue, even if it became too small for the artist.



Over the Atlantic and me with Fred. Fred rules.



*Best free tourist activity.
A visit to Mont St. Michel in France. Photo by SM. Tummy by Blink*

Now, that is an extreme example, but you can generally expect to be fed, housed and more rider than you can handle. It's something you don't even need to negotiate, just assume they will be awesome. Even when you play at DIY style venues and squats, they will look after you, don't doubt it.

BOOKING SHOWS

Yip, I'll say it again, research and then research some more. Europe's a big place and you can't be darting about, willy nilly. Just like for the USA, you need to divvy up your crew, create a folder for each country and a spreadsheet for each city in that country that you are interested in visiting and then go hard on the net. For some countries there are probably only a couple of cities worth visiting on your first tour. To narrow down the target cities, wiki "largest cities of the European Union by population within city limits" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Largest_cities_of_the_European_Union_by_population_within_city_limits) This gives you a list of the 100 biggest cities in Europe ranked in order of population.

Again, finding venue information is the same as I have described in earlier chapters; get one of your crew to copy and paste tour schedules of other artists and just *Google* that shit till your fingers bleed. A good way to find active venues

is through *Last.fm*; Click on 'events' then 'jump to another location' and enter the name of the city you are researching. It will display shows currently listed on *Last.fm* for that city. Note down those venue names. This is not a conclusive search but it will turn up the bigger 'professional' venues. Finding the 'cool' venues isn't that difficult, just find out where bands you like play. There are some great directory sites around also, *Live Unsigned* (liveunsigned.com) has a great list of European venues (including squats and DIY spaces), searchable by country and city. *Bacteria* (bacteria.nl) is a site with lots of information about the DIY scene in the Netherlands, visit the site then click on the "BYOFL" and "Links" buttons at top. *Squat Radar* (<http://radar.squat.net>) lists events happening at DIY spaces throughout Europe, not just gigs, but anything. You can search by country – this is a handy way to find out names of active DIY spaces currently doing shows. A fantastic list of venues throughout Europe can be found at *Kick Zine* (<http://kickzine.org/book-yr-own-show-booking-contacts-in-europe>). It's quite old and many venues are out of date, but it's an amazing starting point, a HUGE list. Another (rather old) list of links of European squats can be found under 'links' at *Alert Antifascista* (no-pasaran.org)

Just like the USA, start off by enquiring about support tours. Getting a support tour in Europe is much more likely than in the USA.

Something you'll discover quickly about Europe is in some cities the local music scene is tiny, particularly outside of France and Germany. Most good bands in Europe tend to move to the bigger scenes like Berlin, Paris, etc. We take it for granted that in most largish NZ cities there are lots of local bands to play with and a wide range of genres. This does not exist in Europe. There are some local bands, but you're not likely to find a multitude of supports to choose from. That's why when bigger acts tour, it's easier for them to take a tour buddy than to find local supports in each town.

Generally the bar manager/owner is also the booker and is totally onto it music-wise. Bar owners outside of Europe are usually business men with barely any understanding of music. This is not the case in Europe and is why you are treated so well. Also, this means you can book straight with the venue. When you're booking with the venue or promoter, they usually 'buy out' your show, which means they'll pay you a guaranteed fee and they either control the door charge or aim to recoup the fee from bar sales, or both. I've only done a handful of



Carting luggage through another beautiful main street in another small European town. Keep your luggage manageable.

European shows where the fee was a door split, and those were usually squats. When working out what fee to charge try to get venue to make offer because otherwise you may seriously under quote or look like a prick.

There are several types of venue in Europe. Forget about playing in crappy pubs or on stages emblazoned with liquor sponsors. Venues in Europe have character and class and no two are the same.

FUNDED VENUES

These are venues that receive funding from local council/government. They do not particularly need to make a profit and usually pay handsomely. You'll find these venues awesomely specced out with an incredible PA, a ridiculous lighting rig and heaps of staff. You can expect around €500 per show, good food and nice accom.

SQUATS

A depressing thing about Europe is seeing exciting squat venues and having to come back to NZ where we don't have that option. In a nutshell, many countries in Europe have laws where if you find an un-occupied building and can prove you've been living there for a certain amount of time, when the owner wants to toss you out they have to take you to court and the law is usually against them. So owners give up and these interesting places become more-or-less permanent squats. Many have been operating for decades as kick-ass, not-for-profit venues. Some of them are world famous. (wikipedia.org/wiki/Squatting)

For instance a squat in Ljubljana called *Tovarna Rog* has dozens of artists living and working onsite and several venue spaces including one room that is bigger than most venues in NZ. They operate a bar that's so cheap it's basically by donation and there's a labyrinth of rooms to explore.

Squats can be anywhere; old banks, airfields, schools, caves, boats. There are no limits to where people can live and throw parties. There are pretty much two kinds of squat venues; those running semi-professionally as squat bars (you'll find a bunch of these in Amsterdam, damn, that city is loose) and those that are more like artist-run collectives that throw DIY parties. Either place you won't get a huge fee, but who cares, it's so inspirational playing these venues, it doesn't matter. If it's a totally DIY squat, they'll tell you they might pay around €100, but can't guarantee it – will depend on show. I've never found they couldn't make the fee they offered. Squat *bars* might give you a guarantee but will be around the same amount, €100-€150.

REGULAR VENUES

I hate using the word 'regular' because there is nothing regular about them. What makes them 'regular' is that they're doing music a few nights a week, host touring bands often and they aren't govt/arts funded. You can usually expect a guarantee of €200-€400, but it can vary as much as €50-€700.



Disasteradio at Lila Eule in Bremen. Photo by SM.

Regardless of fee, you'll always get treated with respect. An amazing tradition that most of them do is the sound-check snack. *So So Modern* tried to introduce this on their last NZ tour but just got confused looks. While you are sound-checking, the venue will set-out a bunch of snacks and drinks. Then later, just before the show, the venue owner/manager will provide dinner for everyone working on the show, either something they made at home, at the venue or a bought meal.

Something that will make you shit your poorly-treated NZ asses is The Rider Fridge. Yip. Just how it sounds... your backstage area often has a fridge with booze, soft drinks, snacks and water. This will vary from venue to venue, but there's usually some sort of treat awaiting you backstage.

Once you've done your initial research, rough routing and dates, start looking for bands you're keen to support (just like in the USA section).

What makes Europe different to USA & UK is that unknown bands can headline shows and there's a much better chance that people will come along. So while you may find it scary, don't shy away from headline shows. However, as I mentioned before there's a lack of local supports in Europe, so you'll probably be the only band on any given night with a DJ either side. Therefore, don't even consider touring Europe until you can do a strong one-hour long set. This is a

lot of pressure as it can take 20-30 minutes to loosen up the audience; you're essentially your own support act. At a few shows on the *Over the Atlantic* tour they'd play 17 songs and drag some of those out till they'd played for 80 minutes. Shit, if an underground band played for 80 minutes at a NZ show I would claw out their eyeballs, but in Europe you have to keep cranking as long as the crowd wants it. If you can't play for more than 45 minutes, you need to make this clear from the start and try to get support acts. This might limit the places you can play, but it can be done. Sometimes it's a good idea to tour with a solo act friend who can bolster the length of the night and then it looks better as you're 'selling an evening' to a venue, not just one act.

As always, do your research before you send that first message to a venue; know the kind of bands they host and the days of the week they do shows. Don't worry about translating your messages into the local language, pretty much everybody under 40 speaks fantastic English and I've never had a problem. Having said that, do keep the message short and the language simple. One of my favourite things is *Google Translate*-ing venue websites so I can understand them and laughing at the weird results. It's also fun receiving emails back from venues. They usually speak better English than they write so their emails can be hilarious.

If you've got gaps in your booking, anywhere in the world, consider open mic nights. Not as shitty as it sounds, these can end up being a bunch of fun. They usually happen on Mondays and Tuesdays, when playing often sux anyway, and usually have a built in audience. You'll meet some characters and it's really fun being a honed overseas performer in this situation. Of course you won't get paid, but you might sell some merch and maybe book a proper show later on.

GETTING AROUND EUROPE

If it's just one or two of you public transport is an easy and affordable way to go. If you're under 26 you're eligible for a *Euro Pass* (eurail.com). For this you specify the number of countries and travel days. For example, if you have shows in five countries and travel on trains about 15 times, first class, the youth rate will be around NZ\$900, for an adult the same trip would cost around NZ\$1300.

Disasteradio toured like this the first time he went to Europe on his own and it worked great. But the third time he toured he had lost the youth rate and for a few shows he would have to fly anyway, so I booked a combination of flights and trains. This is still affordable, especially if booked months beforehand. Generally you can get a first class seat on a five/six hour train ride for less than €60. Venues are usually happy to pick up and drop off artists at the train station. Airline competition across Europe is fierce, especially if you travel in and out of the

major hubs. If you're reasonably organised, the most you will ever need to pay is around €200, but most of the time you can pick up crazy deals. In 2009 I booked four of us from Frankfurt to Stansted (just north of London) on the incredibly cheap (and pretty rough) *Ryan Air* for €12 total. Visit *Eurorail* (eurail.com) for train info. Try *Expedia* (expedia.com) or *Kayak* (kayak.com) for air deals.

If you are considering catching trains around Europe (or anywhere in the world), the first site you must check out is *The Man in Seat Sixty-One* (seat61.com). This is one of the most informative and well written travel sites on the net with a complete breakdown, country by country, of how to best approach the trains in that territory (even the section on NZ is incredibly in-depth and more than you'd ever need to know).

If there are more of you on tour or you've got considerable backline to carry you'll probably want a vehicle. A cool thing about France is a weird vehicle tax dodge. Basically, the French have to pay a big tax on brand new cars so French car companies came up with a smart way around this called 'Buyback Leasing'. They 'sell' brand new vehicles to foreigners, who take them on little trips around Europe, then the French car company 'buys back' the cars. They then tidy them up and sell them to locals who'd prefer to have a slightly used car and avoid the tax. It's totally above-board. *Peugeot* (eurolease.co.nz), *Renault* (renaulteurodrive.co.nz) and *Citroen* (eurolease.com.au/citroen) all offer this and any travel agent will handle the booking for you. There'll be some conditions on this, such as a 17-day minimum, and one drawback is that you may not be able to get a super large car/van. However, if there are 2-5 of you travelling around for a month or



Europes turn for great named Petrol Stations. Photo by SM.

more with a small amount of gear, this is PERFECT. You'll get a brand spanking new car that will probably use, like, a cup of petrol per week.

In 2011 I got a brand new *Peugeot* station wagon with a roof rack for NZ\$4100 for 102 days, including really good insurance (like, insanely good). Although we didn't have too much gear on that tour, I have toured in similar sized vehicles with four people and full backline (using a roof rack); so it is possible to tour a full band with one of these deals. NZ\$4000 may seem like a lot of money, but when you consider that I spent that same amount just on repairs, in *one week*, on a vehicle I bought in 2009, well, it puts it in perspective.

If you're a big band with full backline and 'Buyback Leasing' is not going to work, there are still a bunch of options. The obvious and easy thing is to rent. I've rented five or six cars in Europe now, some for as little as three days, some for a few weeks... and it's a joy. It IS frustrating watching that money disappear, but not worrying about the car breaking down, well, that's priceless. If you rent for a few months you could be staring down the barrel of a rental fee of a few thousand Euros. I haven't discovered any particularly awesome companies, I just use the main ones, and you know their names.

If you have money to burn (or you got funding), there is a company in the UK/EU called *Tiger Tours* (tigertours.co.uk) who specialise in renting vans to touring bands. You'll see these vans around at festivals and big events. They hire out big ol' vans, backline and even drivers. If you have funding, wanna feel like Iron Maiden or just want to do it in style, this is the way to go (more on this route later).

If you're on a TIGHT-as budget, which most of you will be, you can buy a car... though it doesn't always work out. I think it's best here if I describe the two times I've bought cars in the UK and what went wrong/right each time.

In 2008 when touring *Over the Atlantic*, there were four of us, plus backline of one drum kit/hardware, guitar amp, bass amp, guitars, plus our personal stuff. I think this is probably the most common set-up to tour with. A few weeks out from landing in the UK I spent time researching cars on *EBay* (ebay.co.uk) and what I'd get for my money. I wanted as small a car as possible because we had no money and it had to be economical. I finally found the perfect ride, a Ford station wagon with roof rack. It was £500 and located in Oxford, a two-hour bus ride from London. So I made the purchase and got a bus ticket. I gave myself three days to organise it, which was VERY tight.

Finding and buying the car was the easy part. Thankfully the people I bought it from were awesome and let me hang out at their house to sort insurance. Well, what do you know? I couldn't find anyone to insure it, nobody was interested. Seemed short term insurance for a non-resident without a UK bank account was impossible. This is when the lying started. Now, you HAVE to have car insurance in the UK, not just cause it's sensible but if you get pulled over without it it's an instant £1000 fine. After exhausting my legal options, I told an insurance

company that I had a visa, had just arrived, applying for residency and in the process of setting up a bank account. The people I bought the car from kindly allowed me to use their address as my residential address and they made the first payment from their bank account (the first payment had to come from a UK bank account). I took out a one-year plan, paid for my road taxes and set out on the road. Each month I would go into a branch and pay that month's amount, each time having to explain that "my bank manager was still setting up my account". After three months I cancelled the policy. If we'd had an accident during that period I doubt the insurance would have covered it since all the info was false, but hey, I tried. I found out how I could have done it legally afterwards, more on that later.

So, anyway, the car was awesome. £500 and it was sweet-as for the just under three months on the road. It had a few minor breakdowns, but we didn't spend more than £100 on repairs, total.

Having a small car was hard work. We had to '*Tetris*' the backline hard-out every night and constantly pack and re-pack the ridiculous amount of crap we had under a big tarp on the roof rack. That tour was totally on a budget, if that car hadn't worked we would've been fucked. On the last drive from Scotland to London to catch our flights home the drive shaft was knackered and the clattering was so loud we all had to wear ear plugs. Not to mention that during the last show in the UK, some prick in Aberdeen smashed the passenger's side window, so we had a flapping piece of plastic adding to the symphony.

One of the low points of that entire tour was at 4am somewhere in northern England when I was driving this stupidly loud car down the motorway, driveshaft making a racket, window flapping, when a couple of cops drove by on the motorway and looked in at me strangely, signalling for me to pull over. They looked in the car and saw the gear and the window and asked me what happened. I told them about being broken into, they asked if I'd reported it to the police, I explained we hadn't as we had to leave straight away from Aberdeen to make it back to London in time. They then asked to see some ID and drivers license. Well, about a week before I'd had my bag stolen including my wallet and passport, so even though I'd organised a replacement passport, it was waiting for me in London. My license was long gone, and so was Rhys's whose had been stolen that night when the car had been broken into.

So there we were. 4am, a station wagon full of band gear, no drivers licenses, the driver having no ID whatsoever and driving a broken into car that hadn't been reported to the police. It hit me how dodgy we looked and my heart sunk... our flights left in less than 15 hours and I was sure we were done for. I didn't even have the ownership papers for the car since they were stolen along with my bag.

What I did have was my ticket to leave the UK. I pulled this out, showed it to the coppers and proceeded to tell my sob story, finishing with an, almost in tears "I... I just want to go home."

They let us go.

Thankful to not get detained by the cops, but still depressed I continued to London. Because of the smashed window, the person I had arranged to buy the car wasn't able to buy it as they had nowhere safe to park it. We didn't have time to get it fixed so I dropped it off at a wreckers, getting nothing back for it. I thought at the time, this was an absolute failure... but looking back, this seems a fairytale and hey, £500 for three months is a great deal.

When I went back to Europe the next year I was bolstered by my successful UK car and feeling wiser after my STUPID car mistake in the USA. I'd researched insurance and found a company called *Down Under Insurance* (duinsure.co.nz) who does short term insurance on vehicles for non-UK residents. Wohoo! Another is *eCar Insurance* (ecarinsurance.co.uk). In the USA, *USinsurance* (usinsuranceonline.com) offers short term car insurance to foreigners.

Again I searched *EBay*. This time we had a little more budget and we didn't want a roof rack. I found a tidy little *Toyota Townace* with MOT (the UK's WOF) for £950, still considerably less than the €3000-€4000 we would have to spend on a rental. Feeling chuffed; I headed to Liverpool on the train to pick the *Towny* up. Everything went fine, sorted the insurance online in five minutes, we were all go!

For the first month I was in heaven, the van was trucking along. Sure, it was a little slow up hills, but it was plenty big for six of us and gear, we were living the dream.

The problems first started in Venice, Italy. The brakes started squealing, a warning that the brake pads were wearing out. "No biggie" I thought, "I've had brake pads replaced before." A quick tap on the GPS found a *Toyota* repairer a short distance away. We rolled up, I told the others to get some lunch and waited for the verdict.

After umming and ahing for an hour, double checking the chassis number and a few calls, I was told this model of *Townace* had never been sold in continental Europe and nobody had parts for it.

FOR FUCKS SAKE! Man, I hate learning the hard way. Take this advice right now and remember it. If you intend to tour Europe in a car you buy in the UK, um, make sure parts are easy to get in Europe.

This was the beginning of (I must admit, some rather legendary) tour damage control by me. We decided to get a few more opinions and carried on to Slovenia and up to Vienna. By the time we got to Vienna we had talked to enough mechanics to know we were not getting parts easily. I got on the internet, found a few *Townace* people in the UK, made some calls, tracked down parts and arranged for them to be delivered urgently to Vienna. At the same time I ordered a few filters, cam belt, etc, just in case. The parts delivery and repairs meant we were stuck in Vienna for a week so I had to book *Disasteradio* last minute on a flight to a major gig of the tour, *Synch Festival* in Athens.

Well, the van got fixed and we headed out on the next leg. Now, I've driven MORE than my fair share of dogs and lemons. I'm used to vans that overheat, but

this was something else. The second I went over 3000rpms it would rapidly heat up. I had to masterfully drive this beast the rest of the way. We continued having issues; we lost the radiator cap (I swear not my fault) during one of our numerous radiator top ups, but SO luckily managed to find one that fit by digging through the back of a Belgian guy's warehouse. After a while the ignition started playing up, sometimes it took 20-30 minutes for the van to start. This drove us nuts so just outside of Barcelona we took it to a *Toyota* mechanic in Tossa De Mar and got a new ignition installed. Cue the pain.

That week in Tossa (huge tourist spot, but still awesome) was one of the most amazing weeks of my life; lounging around in 35-40° (but breezy) heat on a gorgeous beach, swimming all day in the Med, living in a friendly little Spanish town, sooo good. Also amazing because all the while we were ordering more and more replacement parts and watching our funds disappear. Each time I imported a part from the UK it cost £100 JUST for delivery, in addition to the cost of parts and labour. So we eventually collect the car and head north. Within 15 minutes I realise the alternator is fucked, so we turnaround. Cue another three days at the mechanic. This time we had to make some shows though, so I arrange a rental and we drive to Luxembourg for a show then onto Eindhoven, Netherlands. We left Disasteradio & his wife there and Sally and I drove back to Spain to pick up the van, taking back roads to save money.



Yeah, sure the car broke down forcing us to stay in Tossa De Mar, Spain. What a week though.

We got back to Tossa, dropped the rental, picked up the *Toyota* and headed BACK to The Netherlands to pick up Mr & Mrs *Disasteradio*. Another 15 hours driving, trying to not think about the €2000 we just dropped. We picked them up and set out to the next show in Germany, within one-hour (literally) I smell brake fluid, smoke, the brakes go all squishy and I roll to a stop.

This is one of those moments. One of those times when I ask myself what the fuck I'm doing and why I don't work in a bank, have a mortgage and white picket fence. After some serious soul searching and a scurried budget to see if we can continue, we decide to leave the van by the side of the road. We emptied it out, took the plates and removed any record of ownership. We'd had enough. We'd sunk too much money. Screw it.

I then pulled off some more legendary tour management; I got a hold of a friend who got a hold of another friend to pick us up and (thank you Autobahn) we made it to Münster, Germany by midnight for the show (it was late night party so that was sweet).

The show went off in case you were wondering.

From then I had to juggle a mish-mash of rental cars, taxis and flights. Our final travel costs, including the initial purchase, repairs, emergency rentals, etc, indicate we spent NZ\$3000 more than if we'd just rented from the start. It's frustrating but I try not to get hung up, it's just a roll of the die.



Removing plates from the Townace, before leaving in The Netherlands. Photo by SM.

We took the risk. After the money the biggest annoyance was that we were forced to downsize to station wagon rentals; we missed our big stupid van. If the van had of made it, it would have been awesome. So, what's the lesson in all this? Well, for one thing, if I buy a car again for use in Europe, I'll get a *European* car. But before purchasing I will seriously weigh up my rental options, very seriously. Before making the decision to buy, you need to look at the "real" cost of a vehicle. Let's break it down.

Say you find a second hand van for NZ\$1500 and the best rental/lease deal is NZ\$4000. Well on the surface it seems straight forward, but think it through. The last time I toured Europe we drove 33,000km (almost the circumference of the Earth!). When you're talking those sorts of distances the petrol you save by driving a brand new vehicle versus a van from the 80s or 90s could be huge, somewhere in the region of NZ\$500-1000 (plus the environmental impact). That cheap van will probably have about 200,000km on the engine already. You'll be adding another big chunk to that in a very short time, so you should expect some sort of breakdown. Let's be conservative and estimate around NZ\$600 for servicing and repairs. Will carefully driving an old car with a tired engine add an extra hour onto most daily drives? Does this mean everyday your crew needs to get up one hour earlier and spend an extra hour in transit? It's hard to put a value on an hour's sleep – but it is a serious consideration. How tight is your tour schedule/budget? If you break down and have to cancel a few shows, how bad will it fuck things up? Assume you may have to cancel two shows while your van is getting repaired, that's around NZ\$500 lost (not counting merch and losing a good contact who may not book you again in future), so already the 'real' cost of a second-hand van is around \$3500.

I am not trying to put you off buying a vehicle. In certain circumstances I would definitely do it again, for instance if I was mainly focusing on the UK, I'd be all over it; it's easy to buy, easy and affordable to arrange insurance and the distances are small. Even if you do break down it's not difficult to grab a train to make the next show in time. It should be simple to arrange repairs if you buy a common make and model. I would also seriously consider buying a vehicle in the USA again, providing I could secure short term car insurance without the web of lies, and the tour schedule was relaxed, with room for breakdowns and delays. Besides, if your tour is so full that a breakdown would cause a *major* inconvenience, well, theoretically, you should be earning enough show fees to afford a rental.

Routing/ booking the UK is easy, it's no big deal to do a show in Scotland one day, Wales the next, then England after that, the drives are all short. Not so for the rest of Europe! While the roads are generally fancy and fast, the distances are huge. There is a trick to driving Europe affordably, and that's to plan ahead and check your road options. Germany and The Netherlands' motorways are free, but France and Italy charge like a wounded bull to use theirs. The Czech Republic

and Poland sell daily and weekly passes (vignettes) to use their roads. Keep this in mind when booking shows, because if you have to boot it across France to make a show, you could end up blowing around €100 on toll roads in *one day*. There are always alternative, free roads but they'll take longer. You also have to weigh up petrol costs versus tolls and sometimes it may be cheaper to pay tolls (total Tour Manager headache shit). Some of them are worth the extra time/petrol, such as Mont Pellier to Clermont-Ferrand or the absolutely gorgeous drive up the middle of France from Brive-la-Gaillarde to Vierzon.

To give you an idea of the differences, once when in a hurry, we had to go from Barcelona to The Netherlands it took approximately ten hours and around €80 on the toll roads. Going in the other direction it took 18 hours using the free roads.

When you're booking and planning routing, *Mappy* (mappy.com) is an amazing tool. Choose 'United Kingdom' from the pull down menu at the top left (so it's in English) and click on 'Itinerary'. Enter your start/end points, click on 'more options' (just under 'vehicle') and choose from several options like 'shortest' or 'fastest' route, or 'avoid tolls'. Then click on 'calculate costs'. Choose the type of vehicle you think you'll have and the petrol type. Click 'OK'. It will give you a rough estimate of drive time, tolls and petrol costs. Once you're out on the road your GPS should be loaded with toll road information, otherwise buy a recent map that includes this info.

Fuel prices vary greatly and you should always have a good awareness of the countries with cheaper petrol and try to fill up in those only. Even neighbouring countries can vary wildly; at the time this went to print petrol in Luxembourg was €1.16 a litre, whilst just a few miles north in The Netherlands it was €1.57 a litre. Diesel is generally cheaper than petrol, though in some countries the difference is negligible. To get your head around gas prices, keep an eye on *Drive Alive* (drive-alive.co.uk/fuel_prices_europe.html).

Best places to get petrol in Europe? Supermarkets! You'll find it's sometimes up to 20 cents a litre cheaper, the supermarket/petrol model is one we seem to be



Disasteradio and me taking the "slow plunge" in Austria. Photo by SM.

following here in NZ. Worst thing you can do? Buy petrol from the side of the motorway. These are always more expensive than one a few minutes away from the motorway. Sometimes when you're in a hurry you just got to do it, but if you plan your fill-ups smartly and drive economically, you should cut those visits to a minimum.

If you really want to drive economically, keep off the motorways, you'll drive shorter distances and run the car much more economically, driving off the motorway is much more interesting also - the only benefit of travelling on motorways is speed, so unless you're in a hurry, don't do it.

Standard insurance might not cover you in certain countries as well. For example, you might be covered in Greece, but not all of the countries on the way to Greece. Check that fine print.

The most sensible thing to do in the UK, if you can afford it, is to hire a van and driver, and possibly even backline through one of the multitude of companies who offer the service. I am not sure why the proliferation of this service exists in the UK and nowhere else, but try looking into companies like *Bob Slayer* (bobslayer.com/minibus), *Doozer* (myspace.com/betsyvanhire), *No Name* (myspace.com/van_hire), *Road Dog* (roaddogtouring.co.uk), *Elephant Riders* (elephantriders.co.uk), *Blacklight Tours* (blacklighttours.co.uk), *Bare Necessities* (facebook.com/pages/Bare-Necessities-Tours), *Ooosh Tours* (oooshtours.co.uk/index.php) or the many others available.

These services are around 100 quid per day including driver, more if with backline. However, deals are out there, shop around. Unless you're planning on being in the UK for more than a month or so, this might be the best option.

Many cities in Europe are really stressful to drive around; for me the toughest are Brussels and Amsterdam where you're competing with trams, crazy pedestrians, cyclists, reckless motorcyclists and aggressive drivers - psych yourself up and take it slow, you got to be seriously on the ball.

ACCOMMODATION

As I've already mentioned several times, in Europe your accommodation is generally supplied by venues. For those nights in between you'll always find a cheap backpackers or hostel around. Some of my USA tips also apply here, however, if you're touring when it's not snowing, I only have one thing to say: GET TENTS—GO CAMPING. Now, I can almost hear the sigh you're emitting as you are reading this. Yeah, NZ campgrounds can be pretty depressing, I'll admit that, but until you've gone camping in Europe you ain't experienced shit. I would rather go camping than stay in a hotel, that's how sweet it is.

First off, get yourself an *ACSI Camping Card* (campingcard.co.uk) which comes with a printed guide to 1000's of campgrounds in 29 European countries. The best feature of the card is that outside of peak season it gets you really good discounts. The peak season for most sites is pretty narrow (two or three weeks) and even during peak season you can still find reasonably priced sites.

So anyway, how does it work? Well, all the sites in the book have off season rates of either €11, €13 or €15. This is for two people and includes a tent, showers, Wi-Fi and use of all facilities. Now, put away your kiwi idea of a campground and open your mind, this shit is next level. We were staying at campgrounds where the Wi-Fi is blisteringly fast and while we were downloading stuff to watch later we'd go play tennis, have a swim in one of the immaculate heated pools or go to the beach, sunbathe and have dinner. Repeat. WAY nicer and cheaper than some crappy hostel.

When you get your *ACSI* book its fun to go through and look for the really awesome campgrounds. We stayed at a place outside of Barcelona that had five(!) private Mediterranean beaches (including a nudist beach). Also, forget about scungy toilets and showers, this shit is first class. Camping in Europe is a pleasure.

Don't bother taking camping stuff from NZ, just buy it there. You can pick up a tent in the UK pretty easily for £20, in Europe you're looking at around €40.

Once you have your tent, blow up bed and sleeping bag – seriously, you're living like a king. It's one third the price of staying in a hostel and ten times more fun. You meet interesting people camping as well. Thoroughly recommended, unless you're a 'rockstar'.

If you're going to do the camping thing, bring a couple of extension cords from home. The camp fee includes access to power and, after buying a special adaptor; you can plug in a multi-board and run extension cables to your tents. Just be careful if it rains.



A nice game of tennis before a swim, whilst camping in France. Photo by SM.



I love camping in France. Simon Ward, Disasteradio, Sally and me. Photo by CH.

If you're a really cheap bastard, you have a big enough vehicle and there are four of you, you can pay for one site (two people), sneak the other two in and they can sleep in the car.

If you don't have a tent or can't stomach tenting, campgrounds are still a great idea as you can stay in a cheap cabin or onsite caravan for around 40-60 Euro per night. Cabins usually have cooking facilities meaning you can save money and cook. You may need to sneak extra people in if your group is larger than four people or so. If you really can't stomach tenting, don't sweat, with a little bit of digging around, between all the band members and their extended families, there will be a scattering of friends and family around Europe. You can plan days off to be in their cities, bludging off of them.

I strongly recommend getting a copy of the *ACSI* camping book to find campsites, but if not check: eurocampings.co.uk. If a campsite looks family-owned and it's off season you can usually negotiate a discount anyway. Throughout Europe you'll find awesome places run by cool people.



Another run-of-the-mill campground in Europe (Spain).



For example, I stumbled upon a rad campsite (campingplatz-zeven.de) in a small town called Zeven, just outside of Hamburg that was perfectly placed for any night off on the way from Western Europe up to Scandinavia (we did this route heaps and stayed there maybe 7-8 nights). We made friends with the dude there and looked forward to staying in a cute caravan each time. There are places like this *everywhere*. Again, like the US, you could also try *Better than the Van*, *Couchsurfing* and *Airbnb*.

BACKLINE

*All campgrounds have nude beaches right?
Photo by SM.*

Europe/UK is not as cheap as the USA for backline. Buying backline in the USA is easy as.

Because of immigration paranoia the first time I toured there, the band in question didn't bring anything with them except snare and cymbals. They'd made NZ\$900 at a show the night before leaving, so that was our budget to buy backline. First we went to a *Guitar Centre* (guitarcenter.com) in LA and bought the cheapest possible drum kit, US\$200 including hardware. We bought new drum heads and a bass guitar from the same shop - a *Squire*, or some *Fender* copy, for around US\$150. I looked on *Craigslist* (craigslist.com) and found a *Peavey* 80 watt bass combo for US\$80. We picked up two *Vox* 30 watt 'Pathfinders' from a second hand shop for something pretty cheap. Anyway, we ended up buying the full backline within budget (except for one guitar which the guitarist was investing in anyway). *Craigslist* rules, it's huge and very quick. It's just classified listings, not auctions, so once you've found what you want you just buy it. When we got to NYC, I sold the bass amp and bass guitar on *Craigslist* within 30 minutes, losing only US\$20 on each. Now this backline may sound like a band (of wankers) worst nightmare. But even when playing alongside hard rockers with their 8x10 bass cabinets and full *Marshall* stacks, our little bass combo and 30 watt guitar amps blew that shit outta the water, for a fraction of the price. The band sounded amazing despite the drum hardware being shit and having to tape or sandbag the cymbals to the floor so they didn't tip over.

Obviously being the internet, you can search *Craigslist* before you leave NZ and even commit to purchases. Probably the BEST thing about *Guitar Centre* is their full second hand, nationwide, selection is searchable online, so you can see exactly what each shop has in stock. I bought a bass amp in 2011 using this search facility and it worked great. Go to: <http://used.guitarcenter.com> and search by city/zip code.

In NYC, getting ready to fly to London, I looked on *Gumtree* (gumtree.co.uk), the UK equivalent to *Craigslist* and found a guitar amp that the guitarist really wanted. So we decided to leave the *Vox* amps with a friend in NYC. We couldn't find a cheap drum kit though and we were happy with the sound of ours, so we put the drums inside each other; a simple trick to transport a drumkit: remove the resonant skin from the kick drum, stick the floor tom inside and possibly a small rack tom, then put the kick drum resonant skin back on. Or just dump the resonant skins. Obviously this is impractical after every show, but for getting a kit on a flight, it's essential. We took the hi-hat stand too. We coulda got by with the original cymbal stand and ride stand, but I found some cheap, better ones on *Gumtree*. The bassist had a friend in London with a bass amp and bass we could borrow.

You don't need big amps! In small venues and house parties the small amps are plenty big enough. Then when playing big venues just crank it through the front of house and some through the monitors. Easy. Don't get hung up on something ear blisteringly loud (onstage). You'll be so glad you went with smaller gear when you have more space in the car and it doesn't overwhelm you every time you load and unload the car/van. Keeping backline small meant we could all fit into a station wagon for the UK, and a minivan for the USA. So many internationals touring these days use small amps like *Fender* 'Blues Juniors' or 'Champs'.

If you have money and would prefer to hire backline, do it, see if I care, there are lots of places to hire from. I know when *Batrider* tour Europe they don't take any backline; they pre-arrange everything with the bands they'll be playing with. Me, I'd rather know exactly what we're playing through every night. One thing is certain; never assume you'll borrow backline from other bands or that someone else will take care of it; you might end up in a situation like *So So Modern* when they turned up to a show once and there were no



"The Box" that carried our drum kit from The USA to The UK. Ash and Nik (Over the Atlantic).

amps at all. They had to DI their guitars and rely on the monitors to hear every piece of equipment. Not only does it sound shit, but you feel like *Milli Vanilli* with no gear. More often than not bands aren't interested in sharing/leading their backline like in NZ, so it always pays to have your own and make sure there are no nasty surprises on the night.

A good tip when travelling with tube amplifiers is to cushion them with clothing while in transit to protect the tubes. Fill in the cavity behind the speaker with clothes also, this will cut down on the volume of luggage and protect your amps.

EUROPE TIPS & TRICKS

MAP BOOK

Even if you have GPS, still get yourself a good map book (the *Philips Multiscale Europe* map book is good). GPS is fine for on the spot and plotting a simple route, but it's not as user friendly as a map book for plotting and re-plotting complicated routes. It's also easier to see toll roads at a glance on a map. But more importantly, a good map book should list all the different laws.

Every country has at least one road/vehicle rule quirk, some ridiculous, others sensible. In Europe it's not uncommon to pass through four or five countries in a day, so be aware of this. For example:

- In Belgium it's compulsory to carry a fire extinguisher in your car
- In Denmark dipped headlights must be used at ALL times
- In Spain you must carry a visibility vest for each passenger and if the driver needs glasses to drive they must carry a spare pair.

Now, if you're just dipping into Spain for a day or two it's probably not worth getting vests. I'm not sure how stringently these rules are followed anyway. I was pulled over in Belgium and had the car searched but I wasn't asked to produce a fire extinguisher.

A map book will tell you which countries require a 'vignette' on your windscreen (allowing you to use the motorways). Buy these at the border. Don't try and get away with not having a vignette - you do get checked often. I was pulled over once and my vignette was expired for only one day - boom, instant €200 fine, had to pay cash on-the-spot. SUCKED.

Also, the map book will tell you what the motorway speed limits should generally be. There is no speed limit on the German Autobahn, but other country's motorways can vary from 90-130kmph, without much signage telling you so. GPS units sometimes tell you speed limits too, not sure how much to

trust this though?

And of course, a map book is just handy to glance through; it's pretty easy to get disorientated.

FOOD AND WATER

The great thing about Europe is it's easy to eat healthily, unlike the constant bombardment of fast food in the USA. In Europe the supermarket is king, bread and cheese are the prince and princess. UK supermarkets will make you weep, they are fucking incredible! Affordable fruit, vegetables, pre-packaged healthy snacks, cheap-but-good home brands and the sandwiches and salads will keep you entertained. I miss UK sandwiches. When I was broke, an egg and cress sandwich was always high on my list. Unlike the USA, supermarkets are easy to find and you'll discover your favourites – *Marks and Spencer, Iceland, Morrisons, Sainsbury's* and my favourite: *ASDA* (owned by bloody *Wal-Mart*! I can't escape it!).

Meat from supermarket delis is crazily cheap. A poor chicken's life just has no value in the UK. 'Chicken and Chips' shops are everywhere on main street UK and you can pick up a nasty little combo for £2. You can usually pick up an entire cooked chicken in a supermarket for a few pounds. I felt gross a few times on tour buying a whole chicken, but it was sooo cheap.

Bottled water is cheap at supermarkets, though, read the labels carefully if you don't like carbonated water. For some reason in Europe they're obsessed with fizzy water and it's sometimes hard to find normal water. I don't get it. Sometimes the only difference is the colour on the label. Nothing worse when you're totally parched, you open a bottle and hear that fizz. NOOOO!

In Europe, you'll discover that breakfast as you know it is out the window and that meat, cheese and bread is the new cereal. Having said that though, when you're in France at a supermarché, check out the cereal aisle. The French can't make anything without sticking chocolate in it including muesli. It's amazing. I was obsessed with a particular *Carrefour* cereal and would always have two or three boxes in the car. I ate it like scroggin all day. LOVE and miss it dearly. Bring me back a box bitches.

In Europe you'll become the king of making sandwiches/rolls with all the required parts being super cheap. If you're kind of freaked out by the range of cheeses and are used to mellow kiwi-style cheeses, I recommend *Emmental* as a good starting point. For a nice meat (if you are so inclined) to add to your sammies, chorizo rules, is everywhere and is cheap. Supermarkets are everywhere, and even better are weird little supermarkets like LIDL and ALDI. They are German, but located nearly everywhere. They are super cheap because they're totally no frills and stock a weird array of random stuff. So the choices are limited but it's cheap! Who cares? ALDI is marginally flashier, but basically the same as LIDL.

BEFORE LEAVING

POUNDLAND (UK)

Like a \$2 *shop*, but way, way better. *Poundland* (poundland.co.uk) is ideal for things like towels (when your current one just smells too sketchy), cups, cutlery, snacks, toiletries... basically anything.

DONER KEBABS

Different to its kiwi counterpart in that the European edition comes in pita bread and is arranged more like an open sandwich than rolled up. It's fiddly to eat but cheap, filling and a better alternative to fast food. Kebabs are REALLY popular, especially in Germany and France; there are 16,000 kebab shops in Germany alone (compared with 1000 *McDonald's*). They usually cost around €3. I end up getting sick of them, but back home I miss them big-time.

It takes a little while to get used to mayonnaise being the hot chip sauce du jour, rather than ketchup. After being a mayo hater for most of my life, a couple of trips around Europe and I'm a convert. All hail the broodje doner.

FERRIES

Something that may make you nervous if you have a few trips between France and the UK is ferry costs. You're probably used to paying an arm and a leg on the *Interislander* in NZ, where a return trip for four people and a van costs around NZ\$700. Don't stress, it's nowhere near that amount to cross the channel. If you book in advance you can usually get a car and four people across for around £50-70 (one way), sometimes as little as £35. *Sea France* (seafrance.co.uk) and *P&O Ferries* (poferries.com) are the main providers for Dover-Calais. There are numerous other companies sailing between the UK and European continent from other ports, including overnight sailings.

CONFIRMING & PIMPING

So, after reading this book you'll manage to string together a decent little tour. If you're still in the dark, sorry, I failed – please use the forums at alowhum.com to ask questions and search for answers. The following is ideas for once the shows are booked and you're preparing to go away.

Something that shouldn't put you off is thinking you need to promote the shows as well. You're probably thinking "Hell! I find it difficult enough to promote a show in Dunedin, how am I going to promote a show in Ljubljana, Slovenia?!" Don't worry, you don't need too. There should be enough material on your One Page (pg. 22) for the booker to use. They will understand you are not equipped to promote yourself, and it would be in their best interest to take control of promotion anyway. This is why touring overseas on a low profile is sometimes less work than touring in New Zealand.

You need to touch base with all the venues or promoters of your booked shows. If you managed to book a festival appearance, odds are they'll ask for a contract to be signed – make sure you do this in a timely fashion. Don't worry about asking to get contracts signed for other show; unless you're travelling a great distance for one show, it's not worth it. Contracts just make shit messy. Instead, email a few weeks ahead to say you're looking forward to the show and ask a few things:

1. Ask them if they need a poster. Before a decent sized tour I recommend getting a good poster that can be used at any show on the tour. I'll then offer this to the promoters to use if they want to. It should be basic but eye-catching, with plenty of free space to include the individual show info. It should look good in both colour and black and white. Upload a high-resolution print version as well as a low-resolution web version for the promoter to download using *Yousendit* or *Rapidshare*.
2. Ask somebody local to set up a *Facebook* event.
3. This could be either the promoter, somebody the promoter knows or a local

fan. There is no point setting one up yourself – it's definitely something you want a local to take care of. Also register the shows with any gig listings you can 'like' *Songkick*, *Last.fm*, etc.

4. Ask about local media to potentially review the gig or do a pre-interview. This includes radio stations, newspapers, blogs, magazines, 'zines, etc. Do your own searching as well – search out specific city and music blogs on *Google Blogs* (google.com/blogsearch). *Another good place to find blogs is on Hype Machine* (<http://hypem.com/blogs>), *where you can search blogs by music genre*. *ShufflerFM* (<http://shuffler.fm>) *is another good way of finding relevant blogs*. *To find good university radio stations around the world, check out:* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_campus_radio_stations. *I recommend having a good read of this blog post about the best ways to approach college radio:* delicious-audio.com/articles/collegeradios. *It also includes a short highlight list of the better known US college stations, including the legendary KEXP in Seattle. Don't rule out the local music 'zine community too; the kids who make these are almost always rad and their involvement should be encouraged.*
5. Ask venue/promoter if there is a local independent record store.
6. Can a poster be dropped off there to promote the show? Think outside the box too. How about hostels or places where visitors are looking something to do? If you play a style of music embraced by certain groups – advertise to those people: trendy cafes, skate/surf shops, clothing retail, galleries, community spaces, youth centres, op-shops, etc.
7. Make sure your music is available online.
8. If you haven't already, it's time to think globally. Cue the rant...

GOING GLOBAL

According to the 'industry', illegal file sharing/torrenting of MP3s is killing the music industry. However, I've never seen it stronger. There are regular reports about how much money the industry is losing, how everybody is suffering. Sure, the money flowing into the 'big four' multi-national labels (*Sony*, *EMI*, *Universal* and *Warner*) is slowing down, and even large independent labels are suffering, but not everybody is suffering, it's just them and their old methods. The power has been placed back in the hands of the artists themselves. Years ago, if you claimed that one day a perfect distribution model would exist where music was available to anyone in the world, within seconds, at little or no cost, well, you would've been laughed at.

It's amusing that the big labels feel fine using the internet in every which way to pimp out their wares. They embrace the speed and scope of blogs and social networking and utilize *YouTube* to launch new artists. But as soon as those very same internet outlets allow something not 100% endorsed by the labels, they get *very pissy*. The internet is here to stay and they need to deal with it. You can't just

pick and choose which parts of the internet shall exist for your benefit.

Don't let the industry speak for you. Music sharing and the internet makes touring internationally possible for anyone. It takes away so many of the road blocks that made it hard for independent bands to get ahead.

I am not saying I don't think we should respect an artist's copyright and they shouldn't earn a living from their art, It's just, well, we're perched on an evolutionary precipice where open-minded adapters will thrive, and non-adaptors won't. Perhaps, like me, after booking a world tour you'll have a deep and profound respect for the internet, and a distrust of anyone who tries to disturb its natural order.

I don't particularly think that music should be free, far from it, however, I feel the perceived value of music has changed and that musicians/labels need to offer their fans more now than a plastic case and a lyric sheet. People still *want* to pay for music, and any art they digest, but the days of the \$30 CD are over. It's exciting to see how innovative musicians and artists engage with their fans and deal with this new world. *Neil Young* summed it up brilliantly in a recent interview: "I look at the radio as gone... piracy is the new radio. That's how music gets around."

It's obscurity you should be worried about, not piracy. I find it amusing when I see a NZ band release their first EP and try to sell a digital download for \$5 or something. What are they thinking? Do they realise that most of the 50 or so people who buy it only do so because they're friends or family? And if for some reason they end up getting popular and selling more than 50, it's likely that for every sale there are ten more people who *like* it, but not enough to get organised and pay for it. (I've lost count of the times I've been interested to download an EP or album then realise my credit card was in the car or something. I think "I'll do it later"; but I never do.) For the albums I've released online, pay-as-you-like, approximately 7% of customers pay, 93% get it for free. So, instead of 100 sales at \$5 each, you could have 1500 hear your album and still earn a few bucks. What's better in the greater scheme of things? Slightly more money, or more people listening to your music and coming along to your shows?

Of course, the inverse is also true. Having your music freely available online may reduce your opportunities to license music to labels in other territories, missing the chance to get a passionate, personal push by a local label - so dependent on your bands profile you need to place significant thought into how you approach your international presence. As you prepare to tour the world, seriously think about outlets for your music. Think globally, embrace the internet. Don't listen to the industry's opinion on what you should be doing with your music. But don't listen to me either, formulate your own opinion. There's no hard and fast rules about how you should release your music, do whatever you want.

WRAP UP

Touring around the world is an amazing experience, even when it's shit; when you play a show to nobody, you're broke, you're hungry and tired it's still 100% more exciting than sitting at home watching TV.

DO NOT start booking shows without doing the groundwork I discussed at the start. Let the information sink in, continue building your profile within NZ and start piecing together the material for your *One Page*. Start saving. Start talking to your band about tour goals. Come up with a concrete plan. You'll end up burning bridges and look like a douchebag if you keep changing bookings, because you're disorganised and didn't do the groundwork. This will be a TON of work, it will be difficult, you won't get famous, you're not gonna make money, it's gonna be hard - but holy-shit it will be worth it in the end.

OH YEAH, BEFORE I FORGET

Toilets. When you encounter toilets with 'shelves' in Europe, mostly Germany, it's customary to lay down a few sheets of toilet paper on the shelf, this creates a little 'poo boat'. Do your thing, flush, and that shelf should be skid-free.

Common, older toilets in the USA & Canada are a frighteningly bad design. The water comes up so high that splash-back is a harsh reality. There is a reason most houses keep a plunger handy, those things block all the time. If you need to go for an epic number two, scan the room for a plunger and go easy on the toilet paper.

If you are taking a ferry between UK and Europe, it's a good place to get your money changed. The rates are reasonable and ferries will change coins (banks don't).

If (fingers crossed) on the road you find you have quite a bit of extra cash in the band fund, buy travellers cheques. They are old-fashioned, but still a great way to carry excess 'cash' safely and conveniently.

Before that long shitty flight, pick up a double adaptor thingee to plug your own headphones into those weird airline armrest inputs. That way, you don't have to use the crappy little airline headphones for 20 hours. Plus some airlines *charge extra money* for those crappy headphones. Apparently with some of those armrest things, the top input works as a stereo input for a standard headphone jack, but this may not be the case every time.

Check your vehicle's oil and water all the time and if you're doing epic drives, get it serviced every 10,000-20,000km.

In the USA many people actually use their car bumper for... bumping other cars. It's common courtesy when parallel parking on a flat street to leave your handbrake off because occasionally others need to bump their way out of a tight park. It will be pretty obvious when you should do this; it's usually densely populated parts of large cities and heaps of cars are crammed right up against each other.

Be aware of the system of measurement in the country you are in. For example speed limits in the USA and UK are posted as mph, not km like Europe/NZ. Remember to adjust your GPS settings to match. Don't freak out when you see the price of petrol in the US, it is *per gallon* (approx four litres). So while it appears about twice the price of NZ petrol, it's actually half the price.

Make sure somebody on the tour has an actual credit card, not just a Visa debit card, or make sure you carry plenty of cash on you. There are some places that just won't accept anything other than a proper credit card. And as discussed, be aware that sometimes using a non-UK registered credit card in the UK can cause problems.

Apparently it's a good idea to loosen instrument strings before flights because the pressure can sometimes cause the strings to break the headstocks off. Guitarists should also spend time making a decent pedal-board.

It can be really confusing figuring out how foreign washing machines work and sometimes they take *forever* to wash clothes, like two hours! It's a cheaper and way more convenient to carry around washing detergent if you can.

Hourly street parking in Amsterdam is outrageous but there are 'park & rides' on the outskirts of the city for around €8 per day, including a free tram ride or bike rental to get into the city. Sure beats paying €50 for 24 hours in the city (amsterdam.info/parking/park-ride).

If you have a GPS unit attached to your windscreen, remove it AND the holder every time you leave the car. An empty cradle is like a beacon to would-be thieves. The only time I had a car broken into overseas was when I'd forgotten to remove the GPS cradle.

It's likely you won't get a car with a mini-jack input for the stereo. Buy a cheap *iPod* FM transmitter.

I'm terrible at this, but leave gifts. I always take little gifts with me but forget to

give them to people. You get help from so many amazing people so it's nice to offer a little thank you gift. Even just a simple card saying "thank you!"

If there's even a *slight* possibility of snow, bone up on snow driving techniques before you leave. *Google* it. In a nut shell: drive slowly in a low gear, allow lots of room, break very lightly (if at all) and take special care on bridges and narrow parts of the road. Take it easy, stop if you don't feel confident and don't get flustered by the more experienced snow-drivers hooning about.

Have a sweet iPod playlist lined up for pre or post performance. When you're the only band on the bill, they'll either play something random on the PA before you play, or nothing. Bring a mini jack to RCA cable with you.

If you need to send stuff home from Europe (or move merch/gear around) postage is cheapest in Germany (*Deutsche Post*).

When you see 24HR written on a supermarket or service station, don't get confused when you go there after a show at two am and they are closed. This does not always mean they are open 24 hours, it usually means they are open till midnight. Europe tends to list times in the 24-hour format.

Spanish supermarkets are sooo cheap, so if you're down there fill up before you head north, especially if you want booze. For example, you can pick up a bottle of wine for 62 cents, half a dozen beers for €1.40 and €1.10 for two litres of sangria.

Toilets in Europe are sometimes unisex, and often toilet-paperless, so it might be a good idea to have a roll or two floating around in the car for backup.

IKEA is all over Europe & North America and it has good, cheap restaurants. Also, they are self-serve, cafeteria-style so you can scam them a little. Buy one coffee/soda cup and everybody in the group can get refills. If you are a slave to sugar, buy an ice cream cone and then, like half the kids in the place, keep going back to the machine for top-ups.

In Europe it's all about bread. I recommend picking up a chopping board, sharp knife, cheese slicer and wine/beer bottle opener. *IKEA* is a handy place to do this.

If you are going to Scandinavia, be aware that the bridges between Denmark and Sweden are super expensive, like around NZ\$60-80 each per crossing. The cheapest way to get to Norway is drive through Denmark to Hirtshalls and catch the ferry to Kristiansand (approx €50 for four people and car). Scandinavia is super, super, super, super expensive so make sure you have good guarantees and free accom. Stock up on cheap groceries in Germany before you head north or

eat relatively cheaply at *IKEA*. AMMMMMMAAZING place though. Holy crap, Norway is easily the most beautiful country I have ever been to.

For long haul flights, take some fresh clothing, deodorant and toothbrush in your carry-on. It makes landing at the other end, much easier if you freshen up halfway there. At ANY point on the tour, when you're feeling scabby, you can perk yourself up a bunch by brushing your teeth. This simple exercise makes everything seem better.

Find out if your bank has overseas partner-banks and what your overseas bank fees might entail. For example, if you're with *Westpac* in NZ you can make ATM withdrawals *without fees* at *Paribas* (France), *Deutsche Bank* (Germany) and more.

If you're cheap, and a punk, one of the ultimate scams is to cruise into large hotels the morning after you *didn't* stay there and scam their breakfast buffets.

It gets pretty boring listening to music day after day in the car. Mix it up with comedy, audio books or podcasts. For comedy I thoroughly recommend: *Louis CK*, *Aziz Ansari*, *Brian Posehn*, *Patton Oswalt*, *Maria Bamford*, *Sarah Silverman*, *David Cross*, *Todd Barry*, *Neil Hamburger*, *Mitch Hedberg*, *Derek & Clive*, *Eddie Murphy*, *Chris Rock*, *Bill Hicks*, *Woody Allen*, *Rodney Dangerfield* and the *Ricky Gervais & Stephen Merchant* podcasts.

France and Spain pretty much shut down for two hours in the middle of the day so if you need to get petrol fill up in the morning. The self-serve, credit card pumps are still open, but sometimes they don't accept foreign cards. You might find yourself waiting a few hours for the office to open; most credit cards should work on their machine.

Sounds obvious, but when calculating how long it will take you to get to your next show estimate possible delays *really* conservatively, especially around any city the size of Auckland or larger. Don't put a lot of trust in the ETA your GPS unit calculates. Avoid being on the road between 8-10am and 4-6:30pm in any major city if you can help it. Rush hour sucks (not just the movie).

I prefer to avoid *McDonalds*, but in France it's worth a visit for the novelty of a combo featuring the *Big Mac Au Pain Complet* (a *Big Mac* with brown bread), potato wedges and a beer! Also, the spicy veggie burger in Germany is half decent.

DoDIY.org is an excellent index of DIY venues in the US, and it also has an OK set of listings for other countries as well.

Some rad Bostonites put together a 'zine about playing shows and more in

Boston. It's pretty comprehensive and you can download a PDF *Google* it: The DIY Touring Band's Guide to Playing Shows, Eating Good and Having Fun in Boston

Southern Compass is a guide to touring Australia and New Zealand. It has a whole bunch of industry contacts, venues, etc. It's a few years old, but after a brief skim over the NZ section most of it's still relevant despite a few errors. Download at: <http://www.omdc.on.ca/Asset4266.aspx> (if that link dies, I'll post another link on the forums). For another guide to Australia, go to *nzmusic.org.nz* and navigate to "Artist Resources" then "Industry Information" and you'll find "Guide to touring Australia", compiled by David Bengie for *NZMIC* several years ago. Within the same collection of documents you'll find Sam Walsh's short guide to booking your first tour in New Zealand: "*Organising a Tour: A Beginner's Guide*".

If you're interested in touring China, good people to know are *Tenzenmen* (tenzenmen.com). At one point they had an Australia-China band exchange programme happening. Even though that has been put on hold for a while, they are still assisting bands that want to tour China. If you go to the *Sino Australian Music Exchange* (s-a-m-e.tumblr.com) you'll see a link for a "Tour Prospectus". This is a REALLY great guide to touring China. *Tenzenmen* also run a great blog called *Alternative China* (alternativechina.tumblr.com) documenting (in English) some of the great music popping up in China.

Tenzenmen also have an amazing forum on DIY touring Australasia and Asia (Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Japan, China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and The Philippines). Some countries are covered more than others.

A great guide to touring South East Asia is at: 7x0x7.blogspot.co.nz/p/southeast-asia-tour-guide.html.

For Korea, try: koreagigguide.com.

A great little guide to Tokyo, Japan - not just venues, but anything interesting, is at: hellodamage.com/top/ - then click on "Tokyo Tour Guide"

If doing a solo or duo tour of UK/Europe, why not try Car Pooling? www.carpooling.co.uk

QUICK REFERENCE

INTERNET RESOURCES/RESEARCH

Myspace (myspace.com)
Bandcamp (bandcamp.com)
Facebook (facebook.com)
Soundcloud (soundcloud.com)
Last.fm (last.fm)
Youtube (youtube.com)
Vimeo (vimeo.com)
Google (google.com) (Drive, Maps, Docs, Alerts, Translate, Analytics)
Campaign Monitor (campaignmonitor.com)
Mail Chimp (mailchimp.com)
Kickstarter (kickstarter.com)
Twitter (twitter.com)
You Send It (yousendit.com)
Rapidshare (rapidshare.com)
Dropbox (dropbox.com)
Couchsurfing (couchsurfing.com)
Wikipedia (wikipedia.org)
 Academic Terms (wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_term)
 Squatting (wikipedia.org/wiki/Squatting)
 European Cities (wikipedia.org/wiki/Largest_cities_of_the_European_Union_by_population_within_city_limits)
 College Radio (wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_campus_radio_stations)
Ebay (ebay.co.uk)
Paypal (paypal.com)
Dumpster Diving (trashwiki.org/en/World)

INTERNET PROMOTION/MUSIC RESOURCES

Tumblr (tumblr.com)
Blogspot (blogspot.com)
Google Blogs (google.com/blogsearch)
Hype Machine (hypem.com)
ShufflerFM (shuffler.fm)
Bottom of the Hill (bottomofthehill.com)
US College Radio Feature (delicious-audio.com/articles/collegeradios)
Southern Compass - NZ and Aus Touring (omdc.on.ca/Asset4266.aspx)
Organising a NZ Tour - Beginners Guide (nzmusic.org.nz/resources/music-commission/organising-a-tour-a-beginners-guide/attachment/108)
Guide to Touring Australia (nzmusic.org.nz/resources/music-commission/guide-to-touring-australia/attachment/1)
Alternative China (alternativechina.tumblr.com)
Sino Australian Music Exchange (s-a-m-e.tumblr.com)
Tenzenmen (tenzenmen.com)
South East Asia Tour Guide (7x0x7.blogspot.co.nz/p/southeast-asia-tour-guide.html)
Korea Gig Guide (koreagigguide.com)
Tokyo Guide (hellodamage.com/top/tokyo-tour-guide)
Boston DIY Guide (blog.thephoenix.com/BLOGS/blogs/onthedownload/DIY-BAND-GUIDE-BOSTON.pdf)

TRAVEL

Amtrak (amtrak.com)
Greyhound Buses (greyhound.com)
Kayak (kayak.com)
National Car Rentals (nationalcar.com)
Transport for London (tfl.gov.uk)
Eurorail (eurail.com)
The Man in Seaty Sixty-One (seat61.com)
Expedia (expedia.com)
Peugeot (eurolease.co.nz)
Renault (renaulteurodrive.co.nz)
Citroen (eurolease.com.au/citroen)
Tiger Tours (tigertours.co.uk)
Down Under Insurance (duinsure.co.nz)
eCar Insurance (ecarinsurance.co.uk)
State Insurance (state.co.nz)
World Nomads (worldnomads.co.nz)
Mappy (mappy.com)
Parking Amsterdam (amsterdam.info/parking/park-ride)
Drive Alive (drive-alive.co.uk/fuel_prices_europe.html)
Seafrance (seafrance.co.uk)
P&O Ferries (poferries.com)
Bob Slayer (bobslayer.com/minibus)
Doozer (myspace.com/betsyvanhire)
No Name (myspace.com/van_hire)
Road Dog (roaddogtouring.co.uk)
Elephant Riders (elephantriders.co.uk)
Blacklight Tours (blacklighttours.co.uk)
Bare Necessities (facebook.com/pages/Bare-Necessities-Tours)
Ooosh Tours (oooshtours.co.uk)
Enterprise (enterprise.com)
Go Van Rentals (govanrentals.com)
Bandago (bandago.com)
Band Van (myspace.com/bandvanla)
Green Vans (rentgreenvans.com)
Dollar Rent A Car (dollar.com)
Economy Car Rentals (economycarrentals.com)
Alamo (alamo.com)
Payless (paylesscar.com)
U-Save (usave.com)
Triangle Rental Cars (trianglerentacar.com)
Auto Driveaway (autodriveawaydc.com)
Standbyrelocs.com (standbyrelocs.com)
Escape (escapecampervans.com)
The AA (aa.co.nz)
Gas Buddy (gasbuddy.com)
Amsterdam Park and Ride (amsterdam.info/parking/park-ride)
Car Pooling (carpooling.co.uk)

RETAIL/ONLINE SHOPPING

RadioShack (radioshack.com)
Trader Joes (traderjoes.com)
Papa John's (papajohns.com)
Guitar Centre (guitarcenter.com)
Guitar Centre - Second Hand (used.guitarcenter.com)
Ebay (ebay.co.uk)
Guitar Centre (guitarcenter.com)
Craigslist (craigslist.com)
Gumtree (gumtree.co.uk)
Poundland (poundland.co.uk)
IKEA (ikea.com)

EATING

Eat Well Guide (eatwellguide.org)
Road Food (roadfood.com)
Fast Food Nutrition Guide (theculpritandthecure.com)

TOUR ASSISTANCE

Tamizdat (tamizdat.org/visa)
Canada Immigration (cic.gc.ca)
Home Office (homeoffice.gov.uk)
NZ Embassy student visa (newzealand.usembassy.gov/swt_faq.html#q2)

INDUSTRY

Pitchfork (pitchfork.com)
Sonic Bids (sonicbids.com)
CDBaby (cdbaby.com)

SHOWCASE EVENTS

CMJ Music Marathon (cmj.com/marathon)
SXSW (sxsw.com)
Great Escape (greatescape.com)
Big Sound (bigsound.org.au)
Sound City (liverpoolsoundcity.co.uk)

DIRECTORYS

Midwest Venues and Bands (members.cox.net/mwvenues)
DODIY (dodiy.org)
Indie on the Move (indieonthemove.com)
Walmart No Overnight Parking (walmartatlas.com/no-park-walmarts)
FreeCampgrounds.com (freecampgrounds.com)
Get A Gig (getagig.info)
Efestivals (efestivals.co.uk)
Virtual Festivals (virtualfestivals.com)
We Love Festivals (welovefestivals.com)
Music Festival Junkies (musicfestivaljunkies.com)
Book Your Own Fuckin' Life (byofl.org)
Venues and Bands UK (venuesandbands.co.uk)
UK Club Nights (gringorecords.com/UKbooking.html)

FestivalNet (festivalnet.com)
UK Festival Guides (ukfestivalguides.com)
UK Indie Touring (ukindietouring.com)
How Does it Feel to be Loved (howdoesitfeel.co.uk)
Venue List (musicvenue.com)
Road Ass (roadass.com)
Live Unsigned (liveunsigned.com)
Bacteria (bacteria.nl)
Squat Radar (radar.squat.net)
Kick Zine (kickzine.org/book-yr-own-show-booking-contacts-in-europe).
Alert Antifascista (no-pasaran.org)
Todd P (toddpnyc.com)
All-Ages Movement Project (allagesmovementproject.org)
DIYPunks (diypunks.com)

ACCOMMODATION

ACSI Camping Card (campingcard.co.uk)
KOA (koa.com)
Better than the Van (betterthanthevan.com)
Airbnb (airbnb.com)
Couchsurfing (couchsurfing.com)
Zeven Camping Platz (campingplatz-zeven.de)

STUFF TO DO

Drive-in movie (drive-in.org)
Celebrities Homes (hollywoodusa.co.uk/celebrity-homes.htm)
Twin Peaks (intwinpeaks.com)
Movie Locations Guide (movielocationsguide.com)

MERCH

GZ Media (gzcd.cz)
Pirates Press (piratespress.com)
The Record Industry (recordindustry.com)
Vinyl Plants List (elpasorecordsonline.com/pressing_plants)
Rainbo (rainborecords.com)
United (urpressing.com)
RTI (recordtech.com)
Duophonic (duophonic.de)
Peter King Lathe Cut Records (peterkinglathecutrecords.co.nz)
Stumptown (stumptownprinters.com)
Groovehouse (groovehouse.com)

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- ALH001 A LOW HUM, Series 1, Issue 1
- ALH002 A LOW HUM, Series 1, Issue 2
- ALH003 A LOW HUM, Series 1, Issue 3
- ALH004 A LOW HUM, Series 1, Issue 4
- ALH005 A LOW HUM, Series 1, Issue 5
- ALH006 A LOW HUM, Series 1, Issue 6
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- ALH008 A LOW HUM, Series 1, Issue 8 (unreleased)
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- ALH023 A LOW HUM, Series 3, Issue 3
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- ALH025 A LOW HUM, Series 3, Issue 5
- ALH026 A LOW HUM, Series 3, Issue 6
- ALH027 A LOW HUM, Series 3, Issue 7
- ALH028 A LOW HUM, Series 3, Issue 8
- ALH029 A LOW HUM, Series 3, Issue 9
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- ALH032 Best of A Low Hum Zine (Craftwerk Edition)
- ALH033 Camp A Low Hum 2008 Guide Book
- ALH034 Camp A Low Hum 2009 Guide Book
- ALH035 Camp A Low Hum 2010 Guide Book
- ALH036 Camp A Low Hum 2011 Guide Book
- ALH037 The Process in which I plan, book and manage tours overseas (Draft Zine)
- ALH038 Camp A Low Hum 2012 Guide Book
- ALH039 D.I.Y Touring the World

www.alowhum.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Blink — aka Ian Jorgensen — is the creator and facilitator of the long-running New Zealand underground music entity A Low Hum. In the past decade he has published 28 magazines, released 42 CDs, 3 DVDs, a plethora of digital, vinyl and cassette releases, toured over 60 bands around New Zealand and hosted the annual, world-renowned music festival Camp A Low Hum.

In keeping with his strong D.I.Y. focus, Blink shared his knowledge and experiences of the NZ music scene in the 2006 publication of “Local Knowledge”. Now, he shares even more insight, gained during two years of touring bands through 22 countries around the world.

When not energising New Zealand’s underground music scene and encouraging bands to take on the world, Blink enjoys watching romantic comedies and playing with puppies.



Photo by Karen Lee



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