

INTRODUCTION



Gigs, concerts, shows - call them what you will - don't just happen. Or do they?

The wonderfully haphazard manner in which we trundled up and down the motorways and trunk roads of Britain in a rusting Ford Transit van, defying the laws of mechanics and occasionally the laws of the land, led us and perhaps our audience, to believe that, given good luck and a fair wind, we would magically appear at the venue of your choice, fit and ready to go.

Of course, all this was circa 1968; that occasional cancelled gig was soon forgiven, and the seeming inability to stand up straight after a seven-hour shift sandwiched between two stacks of Marshall cabinets was likely to be construed as - "Cor, that Ian Anderson must be 'on' something", usually accompanied by knowing winks and offers of an ever stronger alternative.

Now, from one long-terrified of what are popularly known as 'drugs', this sort of comment brought about savage outbursts akin to Christ overturning the money-lenders' tables, and the odd lecture to boot, but in those balmy days of post flower-power delirium, deaf ears and inane grins were all around me. So, I would get on with my wild leaping about, puffing and blowing, eventually to crawl back, hermit-like into the bowels of the Transit van and disappear unsteadily into the night once more.

It occurred to me, even then, that our audience were perhaps missing the greater part of what we were about and saw, from a crowded club floor, only the tip of the touring iceberg. It was only your enthusiasm that kept us going then, and now.

With one roadie-cum-driver to aid and abet, we did a great deal of the 'humping' ourselves, struggling manfully with 4x12 cabinets upstairs and down cellars, and setting up and wiring everything in a blind panic before the doors opened and we fled, ashamed to be seen not to have enough roadies, to the hole in the wall that was a dressing room.

Sound check, do I hear you cry? A quick "one-two" into the mikes and a finger to the tip of a jack-plug were all we needed, and all we had time for.

The P.A. system in those days consisted of a couple of Vex AC30's combined with a primitive 3-channel mixer and pre-amp powered by a 9-volt battery and the Shure microphones that I use to this day, and my reputation as a supreme flute-plater spread largely, I imagine, because of what I appeared to be playing rather than what was actually heard. The sight of this manic figure in long overcoat, thrashing about a 12x6 foot stage clutching harmonicas, hot-water bottle and a paper carrier -bag full of personal effects, bellowing silently into a dripping microphone must have inspired the likes of "Crazed flamingo on speed", from the new breed of musical press pundits who came to gaze.

By the end of '68 we had graduated to a two-man road crew and the luxury of foreign travel, and it began to dawn on us that we must invest our meagre returns on new equipment and a workable system for moving tree whole set-up around effectively:

Immediately before our first visit to the United States we took possession of what seemed like a truly professional set-up. For guitars we used two stacks of four Hi-Watt cabinets powered by 100-watt amps, a complete drum kit with all parts by the same manufacturer, and a P.A. by W.E.M. which, as was the fashion at the time, was made up of column cabinets with several mid-range guitar speakers, 100-watt power amps and the first of all true P.A. mixers, the W.E.M. Audiomaster.

Now, while this seemed a tremendous improvement at the time, our dreams were shattered when the plane carrying our new equipment to our opening show in New York went adrift and unloaded it in Boston by mistake, and we were forced to use the house P.A. at Filmore East, the leading rock venue of the day.