

Thomas Truax's Tour Diary...

Thomas Truax is from New York.

He makes his own instruments and writes songs about a made-up place called Wowtown.

Sandman loves him.

Pictures: Chris Saunders

Old Ladies, Spooky Dolls ...and a Hornicator

Assorted nights from a 30+ date tour of the UK that will eventually wind up in 4 sets at Glastonbury if we make it that long:

5 May: Brighton, Komedia: Hot Wax and Jet Lag. Train to Brighton is one of those Southern Line specials, fast and smooth but not much room for baggage. This is a recurring problem for me travelling by train. The trains vary greatly each with their own strengths and weaknesses. I'm still waiting to find the one again where the coffee is free. While jumping off a table during 'Full Moon Over Wowtown' a candle decides to jump off too, unfortunately splattering wax on a young woman's dress. Like that wax probably adhered itself quickly to those fibers, the mishap adheres itself to my brain and I feel a distinct lack of grace instead of rock and roll abandon (I can't help but think she's probably here to see Herman Dune rather than me). It's the first show of the tour and things don't always go smoothly live. This is the first of several mishaps while leaping about on this tour but the possibility that something might go wrong is part of the beauty and risk of live entertainment.

6 May: Nottingham Rescue Rooms: Birdy Hour. A much better performance, loosened up considerably after a good sleep and a lengthy sound check/warm up due to headliners Jeff Lewis and

Dufus not arriving in time for their sound checks. A local musician I met before named Jason gives me some CDs of his own stuff and we have a nice intelligent discussion. After the show a bunch of us are hanging outside by the front picnic tables. One young man, obviously on one pill too many, has perched up on the table like a strange bird gnashing his teeth, chirping and apparently ready to take to the air with his worried looking friends trying to keep him from making the leap while simultaneously desperately dialing emergency numbers on their mobile phones. People have gone into crazy mode all around, Jason approaches me and starts speaking in tongues, which I think



is a joke, but he continues very seriously even as I try to speak back in jibberish. We are having a heated conversation, my friends grab me and we throw all the gear in a cab and off to bed. The UK always seems most crazy when you've been away for a while, before you get back in step with it.

10 May: Harrogate Blues Bar: Everybody Knows You In A Small Town. I walk into this place in Harrogate where I've never been before and strangers are greeting me with familiarity: 'Hi Thomas, how was your trip?' They know me from the posters for the show, but it feels very warm. Trip was nice, GNER

White Rose train, great storage space and plenty of leg room. Coffee not free though. A rowdy bunch for a monday. Back at the promoter's house to sleep. He lives above another pub he owns near Mother Shipton's cave where she used to turn teddy bears and people into stone, or something like that. The pub is called World's End which is something to do with the repeated collapsing of a nearby bridge and if it should happen again would be the World's end. Not tonight though, fortunately I wake up still flesh and bone and the world still seems to be going

11 May: Hull Adelphi: It's Paul Jackson's Birthday he the legendary owner/promoter of this classic 20-year strong venue. It's a fun night, even his mother is there, and along w/ Jeff Lewis and Dufus we're proud to be part of it. Next day take Sister Spinster to the wonderful Street Life museum. We are agog at the amazing antique displays; a mini coin-operated Spiritualist Cabinet, the earliest of cars, trains and streetcars, mechanical inventions and wheels, wheels, wheels! Sister Spinster was almost as excited as when she'd first caught a glimpse of the London Eye.

14 May: Cambridge Portland Arms: Accident 2 While running around the tightly populated venue during 'The Fish' in which I invite members of the audience to sing along into the Hornicator which I

carry on my shoulder, I feel something hit the hornicator and when I turn around a young man has his hand over his cheek and looks very startled. Are you alright?' I ask and he nods yes so I proceed, completely forgetting about it until several days later when I receive an email from the victim stating he will 'treasure the small scratch it left until it eventually fades Away. If this was the US he'd probably be trying to sue me now!

: Coventry Tin Angel: Old ladies and What a great little venue, packed with a young appreciative crowd. You could have heard a pin drop through most of the set. Then some little old ladies come hobbling in and start laughing and stumbling about and creating a ruckus. They are in hysterics over the Hornicator and when I say 'I want some of whatever it is YOU'RE on!' they say 'Oh no you don't young man!'. I run outside across the street with the Hornicator and into a kebab shop where the staff appear very alarmed as if I had a machine gun. Later the Tin Angel crowd tells me how incredibly dangerous it was for me to do that. 'If you only knew what goes on in ebab shop!' they say but I can't get them to elaborate.

: Leeds, The Vine. All the other bands including Fonda 500 and Scaramanga 6 are awesome, what a bill! Where are you tonight Leeds?? Thanks to Mark Roberts, it seems I sell more cd's than there are punters. God it's tough to stand on these tables when the ceiling's so low Coach back to Sheffield with some of the Sandman gang and discover crisps called Discos.

20 May: Sheffield, Grapes. Home away from home where the pub down the block makes the best chips I think I've ever had in the UK. Everyone's howling along to the Full Moon. Jacky Hall guests on Flute, it works great. Chris Saunders, who has me over again as his guest, does a photo shoot of me next day drinking water through the Hornicator. He usually drinks beer but it's a little early in the day and we have to keep doing it over and over so by the time Chris has THE SHOT I'm soaked. Good fun though.

22 May: Stockport, Bakers Vaults: Accident 3. People have warned me that this will be a slow one, a few old regulars drinking at the bar as always on Sundays. Great, I think, I need to recover from the



madness of Akoustik Anarkhy night in Manchester last night, which I won't even begin to describe. But surprise: the place is rammed. Support act Beat Science have talked me up and done an amazing job of promoting. Whilst leaping onto a bench on my way to a table during 'Full Moon' the thing flies out from under me, ricochets into the table and hits a young man in a Mohawk and a little old lady who were both sitting there peacefully and are now stunned and hopefully no more than slightly injured. I sit crumpled against the wall and slowly, as in after a car wreck, access whether anything's broken (guitar or bone) and whether the victims are alright. Seemingly so, we all kick back into action. But the really interesting stuff often tends to happen later, after the show, back at the

home of whoever's been kind enough to put me up for the night. In this case it's Arnie from Beat Science, who is kindly struggling desperately to make my sleeping quarters comfortable. There is a young child in the arrangement. She's not around tonight, but her sound activated monkey (which keeps going off into some kind of mad noisy disco dance and driving Arnie mental) is, and in the adjoining area to where I'm to sleep there is a crib with a doll in it. Arnie picks the doll up, commences to wrap it in a blanket then places it back in the crib face down, but that doesn't seem to solve the situation. I insist that it won't bother me but he says 'It's horrifying!' Then in trying to cover it's head, it's butt peeks out of the blanket and I start laughing and tell Arnie he's just making it worse and it's starting to get pedophilic now. So he throws the spooky doll in a closet and slams the door. I tell him that's getting really scary 'cause now the doll will want out. I think I may have gotten a better sleep than poor Arnie this night.

26th May, London Whoopee Club: Tricks of Trade. Am supposed to meet Beau Johnson and Tom, David Cronenberg's wife for drinks at the 12 Bar but get a last minute invitation to do a Hornicator number or two as a special guest at a Whoopee burlesque event. Run past the 12 bar and ask my friends if they care to join me. Now if this had been me playing a song at any regular venue they probably would have sent me on my way and been none too happy about me taking a job instead of socializing with them, but tell your friends you're playing a burlesque show and they down their drinks and come along without a moments hesitation!

