



When did you start playing music?

When I was 11 years old I started playing Harmonica. My parents split up when I was 12. I lived part time downtown with my mom and in the suburbs with my Dad. When I was living with my Mom i worked at a candy factory called Bissinger's and I saved up money for my first guitar. Then I got myself a harmonica holder, and a top hat, and Bob Dylan's Nashville Skyline Rag. I drew a very life like picture of myself as Bob Dylan on the cover of Nashville Skyline tipping my top hat with my harmonica holder and my new guitar and learned every song on that album by ear and then I was transformed.

And so it begins. What other influences did you have early on?

I had an amazing amount of influences in my family because I had two older sisters....

Old enough to be slightly more hip to better music?

Yeah, really fucking hip. My dad was a total conservative square listening to like Englebert Humperdinck and Herb Alpert, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin. My sister Melanie was a hippy, so she had a lot of the San Francisco stuff like the Grateful Dead, Country Joe And The Fish, Jefferson Airplane Etc Etc. but because of us living in St. Louis she was heavily into R&B, Like The O'Jays, The Four Tops, The Supremes, Marvin Gaye. Little Stevie Wonder. So all that stuff was flowing around there and my brother being like 14 was into the popular music of that time. The new Rolling Stones, the new Beatles. Whatever stuff was popping up. When I was old enough to kinda figure it out I started getting into the singer songwriter thing like Neil Young, Bob Dylan and whoever else was playing guitar and singing at the time, with some instrumentation. I think a lot of that stuff shows up in the work I do with Sean Wheeler. A lot of people think, why the departure from punk rock into this more roots oriented stuff. Punk rock was the departure for me. Coming to California I felt dorky doing what I was doing.

When did you move out here?

When I was 13 I Moved to San Diego with my mother. My Mom, before the divorce, was trying to get my father to learn some parenting skills. She ended up sleeping with the instructor and divorcing him, leaving him for the instructor. He got a job out in California. They asked all the kids if they wanted to go. They were all sort of rooted in St. Louis. I was like fuck it, let's go. There's nothing for me here, i'm going to go out to California and be a musician. I knew that when I was 12. Coming to California and getting into the rock, the Led Zeppelin, the Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Beck, all the electric guitar hero stuff. In my last year of High School, I joined the Jazz band and started getting into playing Jazz. I was mentored by a Jazz teacher right after high school. Then I moved up to Los Angeles to go to the Guitar Institute Of Technology and joined the Juicy Bananas.

What was your first job in LA?

Well, I moved to LA. I was at the Guitar Institute Of Technology and I had a job at Grauman's Chinese Theatre as a popcorn boy. I wore the bow tie.

Was that fun?

Yeah. I was working as a popcorn boy until one night a car ran off the road. I was standing behind the popcorn counter and I saw this car run off the road right on the sidewalk. People taking pictures of the stars were flipped over the top, dragged under the bottom. Smashed into the side of the window. This car just sped off. Across the street there was this punk rock club called the 7 Seas. They sent us popcorn boys, us ushers out there to sort of like help with crowd control. One of the punks punched an usher in the face, so I volunteered to take him to the hospital. The next day I had an early shift, I'd spent the whole night in the hospital with this kid and it turned out his nose wasn't broken or anything. The system there was that they had two theaters so you'd have to run from one theatre to the other, the big theatre with the footprints and everything. The manager was looking for me so I went into the manager's office, he wasn't there, I was really tired. I screamed out in the office, This job is jive ass, and I was called back into the office later by none other than Mr Mann. You know how it's called Mann's Chinese Theatre, Mr Mann was upstairs in the upstairs office and he had heard me scream out in the office and fired me.

Yikes.

Yeah so that was my first job experience being in L.A.

How did you hook up with the Juicy Bananas?

I'd go to the 7-11 and play Donkey Kong. I was living down in the Miracle Mile area. I noticed the guy behind the counter, the cashier had some drum sticks and I was like wow you're a drummer, you're musician? He's like yeah, you're a musician? and I say yeah. What kind of music do you play and I said well, what kind of music do you play and he says I play funk and I said I play funk too. He says we're playing a gig tomorrow, do you want to sit in, do you want to come play with our band. I was like yeah. He says come down to this address we're gonna rehearse and then we're gonna play this gig. So I get down there, I get lost in Inglewood. I finally find the garage where they're rehearsing and they're just breaking down their equipment. They say yeah well you missed the rehearsal but just come and improvise, come and play the gig. I hop in the car with them and we get to the gig and I see the Watts Towers there. It was the Watts Towers festival. I got up on stage in front of something like 5,000 black people and they were screaming get the fuck off the stage honkey. I was scared. I was terrified but I played anyway. By the time we were done people were patting me on the back and the band asked me to join them.

Laughs, you won them over. That's awesome.

Yeah it was pretty funny.

Thrown right into the deep end.

Yeah and then you know I did Repo Man of course, and Alex wanted me to do music originally for the film.

How did you meet Alex Cox?

Alex was a post-graduate student at UCLA and he was also dating my step sister, Abbe Wool. I had done music for her student film Rita Steel: Private Heart and Alex liked the music that I did. He originally wanted me to just do music for the film but then we really got to know one another when he was writing the script for Repo Man. I was working down in Venice as a sandwich boy. I'd come home and tell Alex stories. I think that he eventually sort of incorporated a lot of that, my enthusiasm for working these little tiny jobs into his character Kevin in Repo Man. I believe that the character was probably written for me. At one point I was working as a production assistant on the set and they had struck a deal to have Chris Penn to play the part of Kevin in the film. They had hired me that day to play Kevin, told me that I had the role, and then they fired me for Chris Penn. Then I had to go down and get his doctor's note because he was a minor and it was a very sad day for me. The next day I came down and watched Chris Penn doing his first scene in the film. He was like a cartoon, he was really over acting. Later on that day I had to deliver the dailies. Michael Nesmith from the Monkees was the executive producer and I overheard him saying to Alex, this guy is terrible, what are we gonna do? He said well I had originally thought of Zander for the part. Michael Nesmith said, give him a shot.

Laughs. I Love that it was Michael Nesmith that made that call.

I believe that Alex Cox and Michael are probably the catalyst for my entire career.

It definitely like switched your direction. It was one of those path changers.

Yeah, little did they know that I overheard the conversation but they didn't tell me for another maybe week and a half and I was so pissed off that I went home, no it was before the dailies. I went home and I shaved my head into a faux hawk, to let them know I WAS Kevin, I was this kinda wanna be punk. At that time the Faux hawk wasn't a thing, nobody had really ever done it before you know. It was just like the most ridiculous thing I could think of. Shave your head into a mohawk like Travis Bickle but don't take the hair all the way down on the sides. Later on they told me I had the role. I showed up and there was a trailer with my name on the side and a star. Soon after that I'd find myself hanging out in my trailer with Emilio Estevez and Rob Lowe and Tom Cruise and Charlie Sheen. Laughs. That was interesting. I thought I'd hit the big time, I was a big time actor now. Which really didn't turn out to be the case.

But iconic in your own way, that movie is for sure. Do you still get people bugging you about Repo Man?

Oh yeah, what was it like hanging out with Emilio Estevez?

Laughs.

What do you mean? It's like hanging out with you a little bit. It was like two human beings hanging out having a conversation. What do you mean what was it like? What was it like hanging out with Emilio Estevez? God. In retrospect it was bizarre. He had all those Point Dume kids coming out who would eventually be these A-list celebrities. Back then they were just these pimply faced kids. I don't think Charlie Sheen had really done anything. I think Tom Cruise was about to do Risky Business. What was it like to hang out with Emilio Estevez? Not very interesting, he was very dry. Pretty cool meeting his dad. I was a big fan of Apocalypse Now and that Terrence Malik film that he did, Badlands. Really great film.

Did you ask him about Marlon Brando? Do you ever find yourself asking people dorky questions?

Nah, You know what I don't. I just was always myself. I treated people as I would want to be treated myself. Because of my openness and my kind of cavalier attitude I got myself into some situations where I met some pretty important people. But I didn't get any information. I think that if I would've been asking Elvis Costello on a daily basis like, how did you write this song, we wouldn't have been talking and jamming on the guitar. I also secretly hoped that if I treated people how I wanted to be treated that I would get a gig out of it.

You got some.

Not enough.

You got some more gigs with Alex Cox, you did like 3 or 4 of his films right?

Repo Man, I did music on Sid & Nancy. I was like a ghost musician on Sid & Nancy. Straight To Hell. Walker, that was where I eventually hooked up with Joe Strummer. The Winner.

How did you hook up with the Circle Jerks?

I met the Circle Jerks on the set of Repo Man. Of course through the Circle Jerks I met Thelonious Monster and The Red Hot Chili Peppers and Fishbone and everybody. Shortly after Repo Man, probably like a year later, I was still playing in funk bands down in Compton. I had quit the Juicy Bananas and joined a band called Feel which was even more ghetto they had vocoder and synthesizers. I was living in the Palmer building, which was an office building up in between Cosmo and Ivar on Hollywood Boulevard. I had gone from living in my car to renting an office for \$100 a month.

That's a trade up.

Yeah, no bathroom, no kitchen, no telephone, no bed. It was supposed to be a place of business during the day, so I would take showers down at the health spa half a mile down the road by the Chinese theatre. One day I was walking down Hollywood Boulevard and counting pennies for burritos, the photographer from Repo Man, this guy Wally Cronin and Jennifer Balgobin were driving down Hollywood Boulevard and they pulled over to the side of the street and they said hey the Circle Jerks are looking for a bass player. I'm like what the fuck are you talking to me for I'm a guitar player. They're like, you look like you could really use a job. They gave me the number, I called Greg Hetson he said learn three songs. Because of my Jazz training, I'd learned all three records in like a night. I came into the audition with my fretless jazz bass because I was coming from my like aspiring jazz thing too. They had me get up on stage and play the three songs they had told me to learn, by myself. So I was up there playing bass, onstage while they were watching and on the third song they came up and joined me. They asked me, why do I want to be in punk rock? I said well, honestly, for the money. So i've been playing in this funk band down in Compton and I don't think that black music is ever gonna make any money so I want to be in punk rock. They thought that was probably about the most ridiculous thing they had ever heard.

Laughs.

Boy was I off base.

Some money.

Yeah, whatever. It was more money than I had.

Yeah exactly. That's funny.

Nobody ever really considered me a punk. In a week's time we were ready to go on my first national tour. We were playing in like San Jose...

This is like 86?

'85. We were playing someplace like San Jose or something it was my first gig. In rehearsals everybody was standing around and playing their instruments, the first song kicks off and everybody starts jumping in the air and moving around the stage. I was like what the hell is going on, I guess I better start jumping in the air and moving around the stage and all this stuff. After the first song ends, everybody starts clapping and i'm at the front of the stage and everybody is reaching out their hand to shake my hand and going yay Kevin the nerd is in the fucking Circle Jerks. 1-2-3-4 and the second song is already going while i'm shaking hands with the audience. Also, they had me wear a tuxedo for my first three gigs. Because I was shaking hands instead of playing music, they devised a play where they put a piece of duct tape down on the stage by my speaker cabinet and I would have to stand by the duct tape for the rest of the tour. 3 months.

How many records did you guys do at that time 2 or 3?

The Circle Jerks did Wonderful. Six and Gig, which was a live show done down at Iguanas in Tijuana. Later, Oddities Abnormalities And Other Curiosities. That was when we got signed to Mercury, had our major label debut.

How was the major label experience?

Well it was great.

At that time they would have still been spending money on things too.

Oh yeah, they were spending money and we were getting personal advances. At the time we made Oddities I was also in Low & Sweet Orchestra on Interscope Records and also The Magnificent Bastards with Scott Weiland. So I was raking in the dough.

I feel like we should double back to Joe Strummer. He seems important. How did you meet Joe Strummer?

Oh yeah, Joe Strummer. Old Joe. Joe and I met in the studio, he was kind of leaving as I was getting there. When we were doing the score for Sid & Nance he was contributing music. He was rather dismissive and snarling the first time he met me. Similar thing with the Circle Jerks when they met me on the set of Repo Man, they were kind of dismissive and snarly. I was like hey, I'm Kevin the nerd, hey guys don't you want to know me, i'm in the movie.

Laughs

So at any rate, I met Joe. I later came to Almeria Spain to play the part of Karl in Straight To Hell. That evening when I arrived to the hotel there was Joe and Miguel Sandoval sitting in the lobby of the hotel. Joe was totally bright and smiling and like welcoming and a completely different person. I always carry my guitar to the set of every movie I ever played in. I wanted to absorb whatever local influences in like Spain or Nicaragua or wherever I was. So I sat down with Joe and Miguel and we were talking about my character Karl the weiner man or weiner boy. We decided it would be really cool if there was a weiner song to sell my weiners. The very night I arrived at the Almaria hotel, we sat down and we wrote the weiner song together. Yeah that was a co-write between myself and Joe Strummer and Miguel Sandoval. Miguel also sang the great song in Sid & Nancy when he was playing a roadie for the Sex Pistols, I want a job, i want

a job, i want a good job, I want a job, one that satisfies my artistic needs. He was definitely a songwriter, a jingle writer. Like I said, I brought my guitar to the set. I was playing guitar everyday with like Shane McGowan, Elvis Costello was also on the set so i'd be playing songs with Elvis Costello. I actually had a kind of epiphany in Spain, this is what brought me to my love of latin music. I was sitting at this wrap party and there was this family called the Torres family and the grandfather was singing and the son was playing guitar and the son's wife was dancing with their daughter. Everybody and their brother and their cousin was a bad ass guitar player over in Spain. I'm sitting there with The Pogues, Elvis Costello and Joe Strummer and I'm looking around and going god damn, this is the real shit here. Yeah these guys are all talented but this is the real shit. it's so immersed in their culture it's not something they're doing for money or fame or anything else. I literally freaked out and all I wanted to do was Spanish and Latin music. I think Joe could see that spark and that curiosity in me and if there's one thing that I could say was the overriding trait that I noticed in Joe Strummer was that he was very curious. About history, about social Stuff, about music not just about punk rock he liked all kinds of stuff all around the world. I had this feeling that Joe was watching me. When we went and did Walker there was Joe again, I had brought my guitar again and was trying to come up with music to potentially contribute to the Walker soundtrack. That was when I started really kind of jamming around with Joe a little bit. I got a phone call from Joe when we got back from doing the film saying he'd been asked by Alex to do the soundtrack, I want you to come up to San Francisco, I'm recording at Russian Hill and bring your Spanish guitar. Not only did I bring my Spanish guitar but I brought my Guitarron and my Vihuela and my Charango and my classical guitar and my Requinto guitar. Anything I could get my hands on I brought up there. It was that curiosity for music and that enthusiasm for playing music that I think sparked Joe's interest in me. He would say, what are you doing playing bass for the Circle Jerks, you're such a great guitar player, you don't need to be doing that. I was like oh, thank you. So I became not only a session musician, but the musical director of all stringed instruments and often the player on the album. He was very musically generous, giving me a lot of creative freedom. Joe was one of the best lyricists that I ever worked with, we both had our place in our creative collaborations. He would put together these skeleton recordings on his 4 track cassette player of like a little Dr Beat drum machine and maybe a Casio keyboard, acoustic guitar and a vocal. That was what I was supposed to interpret into an arrangement. He would give me the freedom to orchestrate that. It was a really cool arrangement.

That was a good gig.

Yeah, plus Joe was such a personable guy. Bob says I would've still been playing with Joe Strummer had I kissed his ass. Maybe that worked for Bob, but that didn't work for me. I treated Joe as if he was just anybody. Sitting around. He treated me as a peer as well.

Did you guys have a falling out or more just drifted?

It wasn't a falling out.

How about the studio album you did together, Earthquake Weather?

I think in retrospect that Earthquake Weather was a vehicle for getting Joe off of Epic Records, which The Clash were signed to. He was obligated to make a record and all they wanted was a Clash reunion. We got something like \$500,000 dollars to make Earthquake Weather. It was nuts. We made this giant fucking art record. If you listen to it, I call it Joe's beat period because Joe was into all these fantastical kind of stream of consciousness travelogues. He really didn't bark out his words like he did in The Clash. He was very mumbly. Joe I think was very, very sorry about his decision to break up The Clash. I think he had a lot of regret about it. He was

somewhat lost. Everybody calls that period of his life the wilderness years but the truth of the matter is that Joe was extremely productive during those times. When we would go on stage, he still had the enthusiasm and the energy of a fucking welter-weight prize fighter. He was amazing. Walking around he didn't have that energy. He had more of a humble, regretful energy. Still in all, he was quite personable and fun to talk to. I learned more about just being a good dude from Joe than I did musically. He gave me a lot of rein there as well. Which I feel somewhat regretful about. I was just kind of a kid. I was probably like 26. You know what I mean. You could call that a kid but other people would say that's a man. In retrospect I was still just a fucking goofy kid. Here he is giving me all of this musical leeway. I brought in Lonnie Marshall from jamming with him at Smokey Hoes. I became a fan of the Clash from listening to Sandinista. I was like oh my god. They developed like The Beatles developed and this is like their White Album. It starts out really simple and derivative of their influences and then they start to expand. So with Earthquake Weather I was like, I want to expand on the Sandinista thing and do more variation and world music and harken back to the Clash a little bit but really kind of move forward and away from that, but build a bridge from that. A lot of those decisions were my decisions on that album. A lot of the decisions on Walker were my decisions. Joe was very, very hands off in the creative department other than composing the piece and giving me the demo tape. As a result, that's the sound of the record. Plus I was showing off, playing multiple guitar tracks and ripping leads. But I've always been a show off.

Laughs

Even in Thelonious Monster my nickname was showboat.

How did you first meet those guys, from The Circle Jerks and Keith Morris?

I think Keith brought them over. The first time I met Bob Forrest, he came over with Anthony & Flea & Pete Weiss to where the Circle Jerks were rehearsing. Somewhere around Highland and Selma. Dix Denney was in Paris. Maybe Keith had told those guys that I was also a really good guitar player, so they asked me to fill in for Dix for a show. I think the first show was at the Anti-Club. They were like we want you to play the songs but we also want you to do what you want in-between. So I would rip leads in-between the songs and play covers. I think I came with a wig on and a bone through my hair and some animal pelts or something, some kind of cave man outfit for my first show. I'm such a dork .

When did you join them in like '90 or '89 ish?

No, I think it was probably before that. I think I might have played my first shows with them around the time of The Circle Jerks.

The late 80s timeline for them gets a little messy.

It was still when Jon Huck was in the band. I think KK was in the band. Bill Stobaugh.

I think those guys left in like 87.

It had to be pretty fucking early on. I was in them off and on, when I joined up with Joe Strummer that was the first time Bob really got pissed at me. How could you leave Thelonious Monster to play Joe Strummer? I'm like fuck you, what would you do? You would do the same thing if you were a guitar player.

Oh yeah.

The real clencher was when the Chili Peppers asked me to go to Australia with them.

That was after John left right?

Yeah, like 2 or 3 days after John had his meltdown in Japan I got a call from Flea. They asked me to play 10 shows in Australia. Bob was livid. He was livid. In fact he came to the house as I was getting into the town car. He was chasing me around the fucking town car. He was saying you're not getting into that car unless you give me \$500 dollars. So I gave him the 500 bucks and got into the car and when I got back from Australia I had been taken off the record deal with Capitol Records for Beautiful Mess. Those guys were like fuck Zander. You're gonna join the Chili Peppers, how dare you. John Frusciante did. Then Josh Klinghoffer from The Bicycle Thief. What? C'mon. Thelonious Monster is the Chili Peppers' garden. When guitar players grow to maturity, they pick the fruits from the garden. I thought well yeah it makes sense. Either me or Dix.

I think they tried Dix too.

Yeah, I know they tried Dix. Yeah. For the record I learned the material in Australia. I was fully, fully prepared to play the shows. They had made a decision, I don't know where it came from. I don't know if it was a band decision or a management decision, not to soldier on so quickly without John.

Did you rehearse at all with them down there or did they just like fly you down there and go oh sorry, nevermind?

Oh yeah I rehearsed for a week with them. I was completely prepared to play these concerts with them. I have my own personal thoughts on the matter that maybe my image didn't fit in with the band, or they didn't think that my personality was Chili Pepper enough. It had nothing to do with my playing though, for the record.

Laughs

Oh you know, It's never been cleared up. I don't really know the true story but I know from my perspective I was more than capable of playing with the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

How much did the band break up when Bob got his solo deal?

I think pretty much..

That's where the timeline for me gets messy. I know Rob Graves left for New York. I think the Al Cooper stuff was in like 1990.

I didn't do a hell of a lot of touring with Thelonious Monster you know. We played a lot of shows. A lot of my shows were with Martyn and Dix of course. I might've played some shows with Rob Graves, I don't remember, it was foggy back in those days. Back to your question, I think they were pretty much all the way broken up. Bob would call me up to do sessions on his solo record. Me and Bob always went around and did our little solo acoustic shows. And of course that record was shit. I guess he sucked it up and called the band. We went down to Memphis and recorded Beautiful Mess. We all lived in this house next to Ardent studios. It was a beautiful mess. We were all fucked up doing those tracks. I brought a million guitars as I always did back in those days.

But you left before the record came out right?

I did not leave, I was fired.

What about the Too Free Stooges?

God. What a band that was. Have you ever heard the Too Free Stooges?

Not much, I've heard Acid For The Children, you guys did that with Thelonious at Dick's birthday, and some videos from the Coconut Teaser on Youtube.

Yeah, I think Dick Rude has all the video tapes. There were many, many videos of Too Free Stooges. Dave Bo, he was a friend of Manny Chevrolet would come often with like a beta max or some sort of VHS camcorder. There were lots of cassette tapes. I know that Dick has all that stuff somewhere sitting in storage. Dick Rude is, of course, a friend from the whole Alex Cox acting troupe. He was even in Rita Steel: Private Heart, he was in that student film that my sister made. I'd known Dick since he was a teenager. He was very difficult to be friends with for many people, he really was rude, but I understood his sense of humor. I love assholes, obviously.

Laughs

I may be kinda an asshole myself, I'm not taking myself out of the equation here. So Dickey said that he aspired to write some music. That band for me, even more so than Thelonious Monster, was a super party band. We wrote these ridiculously surreal tunes. Too Free Stooges was a psychedelic Las Vegas punk rock act with Manny Chevrolet, who was a wonderful dancer and comedian, Dick Rude, who was the writer, he wrote the lyrics for the Too Free Stooges. We had psychedelic sort of transitions from one song into the next. Glitzy instrumental intros while the guys would run out on stage. We played lots of covers like Spinning Wheel, Jesus Christ Superstar, Goodbye Yellow Brick Road. I was always the guy who was trying to bring covers into the band. I had a crack team of these great musicians so I could do all this stuff. The band was hilarious, the comedy was hilarious. The music was incredibly serious and surreal. It was power trio playing to it's finest. We had these beautiful girls who would dress up as nurses and bring us drinks and tell us off and everything. For the most part the band would stay perfectly still. It was designed to be a vibrant cartoon in front of a charcoal background. Everybody was wearing black turtlenecks and black blazers and slacks. We turned Pete Weiss into this MC character. Pete would get the audience to clap and stand on the side of the stage with his arms crossed with sunglasses on, perfect for him. Plus it was a party, we had our friends around partying with us. Martyn got into the band. It was a mess, a total mess, but hilarious.

How about the Sweet And Low Orchestra?

The name Sweet And Low Orchestra, I chose that name because I had the thought that if Cumberland Packing, which is Sweet And Low, ever got wind of the fact that we had named our band after the artificial sweetener and tried to sue us and get us to drop our name, that that would be the mark of success. Sweet And Low was originally an idea I had, I was doing this power trio with Josh Freese and Tom Barta on the bass. I had done this record with this guy Robi Rosa who was an original member of Menudo and he was striking out on a solo career. I was brought in to play some guitar on his album for Sony International, an all Spanish speaking album, because of my Spanish/Latin thing. Sweet And Low played like 2 gigs. I thought because Robi Rosa was an original member of Menudo, he was very handsome, he knew how to dance, he knew how to sing. But what I failed to figure into my formula was that he was probably told what to sing and how to dance, it was all choreographed. I don't know what happened, I think we were playing at Raji's or something, Robi turned his back to the audience the whole time, he didn't have his lyrics together, wasn't singing. At one point he put his hand on my guitar and stopped my playing. I was like this is out of control, this is just ridiculous this is not working, this is not what i'm supposed to be doing. What am I gonna do? I had hired Dermot Mulroney who was like an independent film actor and his brother Keiran Mulroney to play Cello and Violin on Acid For The Children. I saw all three of these guys at the screening and I thought oh wow

these two guys are brothers and play Cello and Violin. James Fearnley from the Pogues is one of the greatest Accordion players I have ever seen. I had seen Mike Martt play a solo gig around that same period of time and he was playing this song called Take A Long Look which I thought was just one of the most beautiful, poignant songs that I'd had ever heard. I still had Tommy Barta from Sweet And Low. I had a gig at the Alligator Lounge, so I asked all these guys to come over and play. I had a couple songs that I taught them. It went really well. Mike was great. It was never really supposed to be one singer, but his songs were so good. He brought a lot of really great songs to the table in the band. We got this drummer, a friend of Tom Barta, this guy Willie Hughes and we had a 7 piece band. We started going out and playing club shows. I had this idea to do a demo and take the band out to New York City to do the New Music Seminar there. I thought, we'll get discovered. We'd been building a kind of following and because of Dermot's pedigree in the independent film world, there were all these actors and models. Brad Pitt was coming to our residency every week. We kind of built up this A-list celebrity audience. People were like we want to see what's going on with this band. A lot of people were coming to see Brad Pitt. We all wore suits, the band was comprised of all these really interesting looking guys playing this really interesting music. We went to the New Music Seminar and of course nothing happened. I think I was on the road with the Circle Jerks I met someone I had given a demo tape to at one of the New York shows playing up in San Francisco at Slims. Troy Hansborough I think was his name. He had passed the demo tape to Don Muller, who was the founder along with Marc Geiger of Artist Direct, and they loved it. Next thing I know i'm going into Atlantic Records and meeting with this A&R guy who loved it. Now I have this huge, powerful agent and am being courted by major labels. Jimmy Iovine and Ted Fields got the demo tape and called us into Interscope Records and were like we love you guys we want to sign you to six records. It was like \$350,000 dollars a piece for the first two records and then \$500,000 dollars for the next two records and then a million dollars for five and six. Now I'd hit the big time with a band that i had just started because I wanted to play beautiful ballads and instrumentals and stuff like that. I thought, if I follow my heart, and do what has integrity for me, it's honest, and people are picking up on that. In the interim between making our first record and writing for the second, Dermot had got this movie called My Best Friend's Wedding with Julia Roberts and he was launched, on the precipice of A-list stardom, so he quit the band. James Fearnley's wife got pregnant with their first daughter so he quit the band. I was like, what am I supposed to do? I gotta get out on the road and promote my record. So I got a bunch of subs in there and went out and promoted the record. I got Don to book us a 3 month tour. We got the bus, everything. 3/4 of the way through the tour in Detroit I got a call from the guy who was running the company, Tom Whalley he said because I had had celebrities in the band everybody was like where's Dermot Mulroney? Tom Whalley calls me up and asks me who are you and what are you doing? I said we are the Low And Sweet Orchestra and we're out here promoting our record. He says well not anymore, what do you want to do. I said, well I want to hire 3 new guys and come back and write for our 2nd record. He says okay, so they put us on a stipend, I hired 3 new guys and started writing demos, just churning out music. But at the same time, Tom Whalley and all these Edgar Bronfman Jr.s were doing this crazy business thing where it's not music people running the company anymore. Now it's like water and liquor and all this other stuff.

Selling everything to Seagrams...

So they created this umbrella, Universal Music, all these people got fired, all these bands got dropped. That was the beginning of the end. Mike and I butted heads. He wanted to turn the band more into like a Tom Petty, Sheryl Crow type of outfit. We went in and did some demos with the Tuesday Night Music Club. David Baerwald and all these guys who wrote music for

Sheryl Crow. Kind of doing what Mike thought we were supposed to do. We bring this stuff to the label and the label's like, we miss all this stuff with the violins and the cellos and the accordions and all of the beautiful orchestrations. You guys are fired, you guys are dropped. But we were in good company, we were dropped with about 5,000 other bands. That was when I was sent out into the abyss of what am I gonna do next? I didn't know for many many years so I decided to start doing heroin again. The Circle Jerks reunited but I just didn't know what to do with myself. I felt like a guy who worked at a car factory that got shut down. This is the only thing I know how to do. I kinda waited for the dust to settle, but the dust never settled.

So how did you come to be playing with The Weirdos?

I was brought in by Dix. John and I forged a friendship and actually started writing together. There's a hidden project in my career called Contraption. John and I have written probably 25 songs. They're gothic and sonic, it's probably one of the best unknown projects that I've ever done. I got into The Weirdos and started playing Bass. I don't know, shortly after the Condor album came out, their first full length LP. I was playing Bass with The Circle Jerks and they wanted The Weirdos to come out on tour with them, but under the condition that I don't play Bass with The Weirdos. So I had to quit The Weirdos in order to bring The Weirdos out on the road. I played multiple shows with them in the '80s. I've been the only Bass player in The Weirdos since like 1988 aside from that Circle Jerks tour. Then The Weirdos disbanded and got back together in the 2000s.

I think I saw you guys in 2005 or 2006.

Yeah but then The Weirdos disbanded again. Recently, I was thinking to myself, man you know I love what i'm doing but I kinda miss playing Bass in a rock band a little bit. A week later my phone rang and it was John Denney calling to say we booked a gig at Punk Rock Bowling so we got back together for that gig and we've been playing ever since. We just did like a 2 & 1/2 week tour. The problem with The Weirdos is that they were a West Coast phenomenon and unless you're a music aficionado on the East Coast or in Europe, you don't know about The Weirdos.

They didn't put out an album until like 10 years after they were done.

The Weirdos are of the legendary status. A legend is somebody that does something great and then dies. Janis Joplin is a legend. Bob Marley is a legend. Joe Strummer is a legend. You don't necessarily have to die, you don't necessarily have to do something great and die but you have to have a career of doing something great and then going into obscurity. There has been talk about doing a new Weirdos record. The catalog is so rich with great tunes, I don't know if I want to really tarnish that.

It's kind of a losing proposition.

I think The Weirdos are a legendary band that met their potential very early on. Songs like Neutron Bomb and Solitary Confinement...Life Of Crime, all that stuff. So why not just go out their and be a legendary band and play that great material. I have similar thoughts about The Circle Jerks as well. Unless of course Rick Rubin was going to produce a Circle Jerks album and we would replicate Wild In The Streets with that whole dirgy sound. Before I was in the band. Which is basically what Off! does, they've taken that template of Black Flag and early Circle Jerks.

Laughs. They sort of hit it hard and get out of there.

The Circle Jerks were writing a new record with Dimitri Coats at the helm. He was slotted into the production side of things by Keith, because that was the only way Keith would come to the table. That's what Off! was born of. I've come to a place of acceptance about it because I'm happy with what I'm doing. I'm supportive of what Keith is doing and Keith is supportive of what I am doing. That's what Keith should be doing and this is what I should be doing. Truth be known, if The Circle Jerks were to get back together. I would play bass with The Circle Jerks for the same reason I started playing Bass with The Circle Jerks. For The Money.

Laughs.

How punk rock is that?

That's exactly what punk rock is. Fashion. Money.

People are so disappointed to hear my take on punk rock.

For me, Punk rock is more like The Weirdos. A bunch of art minded folks, experimenting, seeing where their muse goes. Yeah a scene developed in L.A. and New York and London or wherever, but it's not the hardcore stuff. I mean, that's probably what most people think of as punk rock at this point, but that's not what it was originally about at all

No I don't think so either, it was more of a kind of art rock type thing.

Who's to say you can't make a record? Who's to say you can't play guitar, if you can't play guitar. Just fucking do it. The whole DIY thing.

The Weirdos music is so much more elaborate. It's really, a very musical band. Where as I think of The Circle Jerks as more of a sound blast with funny socio-political commentary. Everybody's always made fun of me for not being a punk and my take on punk rock is like whatever, it's work. I work in the punk/hardcore industry but that doesn't necessarily mean that I dress like a punk or live as a punk. Now that everyone's so wildly popular it's like, what was it like back in the day? Quite frankly, I don't know. I didn't think much of it in the first place. I was in this community of people, that were doing this thing. I never had the thought that it would go very far so I just had my nose in my work. Subsequently now everybody wants to hear stories about this band and that band that played with The Circle Jerks and I really don't know. We've played with all these bands that are lauded and on the plaques as being the greats of punk rock. Like the Descendants. Bad Brains actually, that struck a note with me. D.O.A. I thought were really great. Like a lot of those Canadian bands, No Means No and SNFU and all that stuff. But a lot of these bands, I don't really see any difference.

That's what I felt like at that Weirdos show at The Observatory where there were like 8 hardcore bands opening. Laughs.

I'm not going to say I'm a musical snob. Bob would really hate this, I believe that it's my duty as a musician to make as beautiful and timeless music as I can make. You should be good at playing your instrument. You should be good at writing lyrics. You should be soulful, You should bow to the holy spirit of music and pay homage to this great thing, this great gift. Don't go out there without practicing your instrument and sing stupid words and do it half assed. What happens is that shit gets popular and the bar goes down on the music and the world gets worse as a result of that. If that's fucked up for me to say, than that's fucked up for me to say. I think that all bands that suck should get too smart or too scared to continue to do it. Too smart as in there ain't no fucking brass ring to grab onto brother. Get the fuck out and get a day job or go back to school. Too scared, what i mean by that is you should be fucking scared because

there's no future in it. It's really difficult, grueling work. If you're not built for it, you're not built for it. So that we can have some sort of musical renaissance by people that have no choice in the matter. You want to call them idiots on a life basis. A lot of the people who are doing great art are not privileged people that have any kind of sense at all. They would rather make the sacrifices and do what they love and do it well than quit. That's my message to all the people that are out there making shitty music. Go back to work, you're not going to have a family and all the things that society tells you that you should have. If you continue doing this, you're fucked. You'll have no choice in the matter like me. You're not going to be a homeowner, you're not going to have a small business or a couple of kids that are going to grow up and hate you. If you want to pursue the American dream, music is not the American dream. Music is the dreamer's dream. You want to be a dreamer, you have to live the dream, and the dream is fucked up.

So you've been back with Thelonious Monster pretty much since the Spaceland shows in 2004.. Those shows were good because almost everyone who played in that band played on one of those nights.

I felt bad about those shows because I was strung out and pretty much everybody else in the band was sober. I felt embarrassed.

I'm sure Bob was telling people you were high at the time. Probably over the P.A.

Yeah, Zander what the fuck are you doing? I would say i'm a better musician sober but I never had a problem playing Thelonious Monster songs loaded to the fucking gills. It's not that great a jump for me. But with Bob, I try to think of it as a sign of endearment from him.

Oh for sure it's his way of being like, I love you Zander. Just ribbing you constantly. You're just like, yeah whatever Bob.

Well what am I gonna do, that's just his personality. I have this way of accepting and forgiving people for who they are. It makes no sense for me to hold on to any grudges. I think of it as well, how great is it that you have this friend that you've known forever, who teases you. How great with Pete Weiss that you have this cantankerous salty, critical friend who's still around. I even think the same thing with Keith Morris. I've had a lot of problems with Keith on the road, there were years when we didn't talk. How great is it that you have this crazy little man that you sometimes see walking around the neighborhood with his hat on and his crazy dreadlocks that you were there when he started rubbing raspberry Kool-Aid into his hair and up on his bench with red powder would fill the van. This little grandstanding man who gets on the microphone and talks about politics and everybody's got to get along because when you go out there they don't like you. I have this acceptance for people and all their hypocrisy and all their flaws because those are the people that are in my life. Those are all the people that all the great opportunities for me have been born and all the fucking shit that i have gone through has been born of as well. It's my life. I owe my life to all the people i've associated with.

They all become extended family as well.

It really does man. It's that connection, whether it be tense or filled with deceit or whatever it is, it's still a connection, it's fucking important. It's the only thing that matters, love and connection. I've put it to the test, I've become disconnected. I've strayed from the pack and said I don't want to be associated with these fucking people because they fucked me over or I have resentment against them. All that is a waste of time. I'm free because i've come to a place of acceptance where I'm happy for my friends or i'm truly sad for my friends, because I have compassion. I'm not sure it goes the other way. That's not really of any importance to me. It's funny. Dix Denney

and me have had this crazy friendship. I could probably pack into a week the amount of words he's said to me over the last 30 years. Never the less, you've got to love that guy. That guy can play guitar better than most people, laying down on a couch than most people can play with all their might. I have a true admiration for Dix and I fucking love playing in a band with Dix.

Let's go into your current work, how did you meet Sean Wheeler?

Sean was touring opening for the Circle Jerks with Throw Rag. I was strung out at the time and somebody told me you see that guy, he's 9 years sober. I'm like what? Bullshit. He looks like a fucking junkie to me. They were like no, this guy's sober. This guy can be crazy and flamboyant, he's a great front man, he's clean and sober? That didn't get me clean but Sean continued to play with Throw Rag and I continued to swirl down the toilet. Every once in awhile he'd send me these texts from the road like I love you man. I was like what do you mean you love me, you don't even know me. After I got sober I realized that he was reaching out, letting me know that there's somebody on the other side. One day he came over said I'm writing songs for this Sun Trash record, can you help me out with some music for these songs? We sat down that afternoon and wrote this song called Thirteen Days. It was super easy. He came over the next day and we wrote a song called Comin' As I'm Goin'. I was like wow, this is really going quickly and it's smooth. He came back maybe a week later and we wrote So Low She Rose. The songs just kept on coming. Originally when we went out and were demoing these songs there were other musicians involved. One of the other musicians was playing these leads that I composed for these recordings, he got up and went to the bathroom and it was just me and Sean in the room and I said, let's just keep going. I was playing the guitar and I started playing the melody and the chords at the same time and he gave me this look like hmmm. After that Sean was like, why don't we just do this as a duo? I was like yeah, let's just go out and do this as a duo. We can split the money half and half and it'll be a lot easier to travel.

It's a lot more feasible to do everything that way.

Yeah, It was weird because I had sat down with this guy, this really intelligent guy I met at the Tropical and he'd taken a liking to me. We were talking about the economy and he said you know what, there's some really tough times coming up, a lot of people are going to lose their homes, but you are going to thrive during this time. I'm like, what makes you think that? He says well, because you're in pursuit of truth and beauty and what you do is so direct and honest. People are going to need that, there's gonna be a market for you during this time. The whole thing made sense from this conversation i had with this dude. Truth and beauty, honest and directness. Economy. Of that the template was born for what we do. Which is exposing some vulnerability and showing some road weariness along the way and giving people some hope and revealing that it's tough but you can still follow your heart. I don't know if I'm putting that right. Sean is a real soul man and he's kind of a shaman as well. His whole stage act, seems as if he's conjuring spirits up there. I don't know what the hell's going on with that guy, but I know that my role is as the musician and straight man. I do stuff that he can't do and he does stuff that I can't do. We're completely different species of man that are up there and have befriended each other. Maybe like a baby hippo finds solace with a deer or something after a Tsunami and the little hippo lost it's mother, you know what I mean?

Laughs

There's something about that that's appealing to people, to see these two men bonding and connected to one another, connecting to the music we play, connecting to the audience. I've realized through this work i've done with Sean that it's about this directness, this honesty, love and it's about connection. It really is. People are searching for it, there's such a disconnect.

Everywhere you look it's convoluted. People have to sift through all these lies. There's none of that in what we do. It's just straight up, authentic. This is who I am. You like it or you don't like it. I really like it, it's really the way i've tried to live my life the whole time. Now it feels like the man said, I'm thriving in that. Working a lot. Making music that has nothing to do with anything really other than doing what you feel. That kind of authenticity brings me back to the beginning, when I was a little kid and hearing these songwriters doing these simple songs. They were writing these simple songs that were direct, you could hear the lyrics, you could hear the music, and that's all it was. The song spoke on it's own. I thought to myself, when I was a little kid, I could do that.

It took you a long way but you got back to that.

It took me a very long way. A very complicated, very difficult way.

How did those Sean & Zander 7 inches come about?

Just from playing over there at Muddy Roots. We were the first single that they released. Punk Rock Saved my Life was a song about these guys approaching me and wanting to talk about this thing that I don't care about. At a certain point to get people to let me go, because I feel like they take me hostage, they'd be talking about back in the day and I'd be like oh B.I.T.D. They'd go what? B.I.T.D., back in the day. That line in the bridge was the line the whole song was built of. I also hear people in like AA Meetings that say if it wasn't for punk rock i'd be dead. People say punk rock saved my life. I'm like what the fuck are you talking about, Punk rock almost killed me several times over. I thought OOH, people say punk rock saved their life but i'd have to say it almost killed me.

It's a good song.

It's also bringing to light for once and for all my attitude towards the whole thing.

We should talk about some of the particular songs..

Of course there's the Song About Songs...

You know I love that one.

Little known to anybody, but that was a song I wrote very quickly running out the door. When I started thinking about this economy thing, I started playing my guitar and my Bouzouki and backing up these singer-songwriters. I did that with a few different people before I did it with Sean. I wrote this song for this particular guy who was writing these songs about kinda what a bad ass he was. I said you know what, that shit ain't sexy. Romance is sexy. So I wrote this heartfelt, romantic lyric and this music. I presented it to him. He didn't know what the hell to do with it. So I said fuck it, I'll keep it. So I presented it to Sean and said I want you to sing it. And he goes no, you've got to sing this song. I said but I don't sing, he said well now you do. So I sing the song at every one of our shows and I actually found my voice through singing this particular song. I realized it's the same goddamn thing, don't try to sing like anybody else, just open your mouth and sing in your range. Sing with the timber that you've got, sing the notes that you can sing and that's your voice. Every time I open my mouth now, it's me. I can mimic a lot of people, their voices, their speaking voices, their singing voices. I found my voice by singing that particular song.

Why wasn't Walk Thee Invisible on the album Walk Thee Invisible?

Well, that was sort of the idea. Sean's not a big fan of Led Zeppelin, but I am. On Houses Of The Holy or Song Remains The Same, one of those albums were titled after a song that didn't

appear on the album. We were doing the album with Gus Seyffert, who was producing it, he didn't think Walk Thru Invisible had a place on the album. I thought why don't we use that as the title, it's a great name.

I thought maybe it got bumped because it's kinda the same space as Spiritual, a lot of vocal harmonizing, that kind of thing.

With Spiritual, we had always planned on doing that. It had a place in our producer's heart because he had taken lessons from Charlie Haden. Josh Haden wrote that song, it's the only cover we do. So that resonated with Gus, so it made the album.

Speaking of albums, let's talk about the new album, Other Desert Cities.

You know what, that came from a rally of texts that Sean and I were sending back and forth to one another with name ideas. We had toyed around with all kinds of names. Some of them were funny, some of them stupid. I know that Sean is a big fan of the desert and I think one of the names that I tossed out in this particular text was Other Desert Cities. I know that's gonna resonate with Sean. So Other Desert Cities. You know, most of the writing we do is on the road, as we are touring. A good amount of these songs were written on the road. I wanted to play these songs for a good long while before we recorded so it was like second nature to us. Stranger In A Strange Land is a song we played live quite a bit and Last Station. A Little More You was written in Berlin. We had a little time off and we'd gone to this crazy studio out in East Berlin that used to be a communication center for the Russian occupied army or something. It was something like 3 or 4 in the morning and I was writing that song, it was so stark and wonderful. Nothing's Something is my attempt at a Bill Withers tune.

That's for sure an old soul song. Laughs.

Yeah, it's an old soul song. Sean's vocal is very soulful on that. He likes Sam Cooke but I also hear a little Black Crowes in there. So it's also our attempt at being poppy and commercial at the same time. Sometimes We Try, I think that was written in Olympia. That's supposed to be an old soul tune. A kind of gospel. Mixed with a kind of Celtic influence from the Low And Sweet Orchestra days. It was written on the Bouzouki and has that kind of timeless Celtic feel as an undercurrent for the soul. Last Station was just crazy. That song I originally wrote as an instrumental but we found little pockets where Sean could sing in it. It was kinda supposed to be a little epic, there was a tag on the end of it that was going to go into another song but we decided to leave it bare.

How about Angels Did Sing?

Angels Did Sing is basically a song that's written from the perspective of someone who is bedside with the terminally ill. That being said, written about my father. The curiosity of what's going on when your spirit kind of visits the other side. It's a really serious and kind of dark song.

You guys did a video for Calexico & Mexicali a little while back.

This last year we were invited to play this place called Mexicali Rose. We've played there quite a few times and Mexicali Rose is this venue that serves as an art gallery/ performance space. It's also a radio station and this guy Marco Vera also does documentary films and teaches local kids how to make documentary films. It serves as a sort of multimedia cultural center. I was so impressed with Mexicali and all the forward thinking people I met down there. Music is dead in America but if you go down to Mexico. Music, Film, Literature, all of that stuff is dying. But if you go down into Mexico or some of these border towns, there are these forward thinking hipster kids that are still passionate about this stuff. I was so impressed with the people down there that

immediately when I came back from my first trip to Mexicali, I wrote this music, and the chorus. Shortly after started writing the verses. Basically as a promotion for Mexicali Rose the venue. Again, harkening back to my love of Latin music, but taking it even further into a sort of border, Mexican Pop Cumbia, Rock En Espanol type of thing. Which is something i've never really experimented with, I've always been more into the folkloric stuff. That also was coming from a beat that I heard. Somebody was having a party in this dilapidated neighborhood where we were playing, where the Mexicali Rose is called Pueblo Nuevo. It looks like Beirut down there, they never cleaned it up from this earthquake that happened. There's human trafficking and drug cartels, the whole thing. I heard this beat coming from these loudspeakers way down in the neighborhood. I kind of took that beat. It's cool, it's that crazy beat you hear coming out of the radio in every Mexican household, this Mexican Cumbia thing.

I'll Be There?

I was sending Sean all of this stuff, he'd gotten this little musical idea that i'd given him. Totally random, I had no idea that he'd latched onto that and written some lyrics. So that was just really kinda wow okay. Nice message you know.

Catch Me If I Fall?

Uplifting. Catch Me If I Fall was a song that almost didn't make it to the record, We we tried several different versions of this song and none of them were working. I have a feeling that Gus didn't want this song on the record because it sounded too much like the first record. I was like no man, in fact here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna make it sound even more like the first record by having it be just me playing on guitar and Sean singing and then we made an addition with some piano and some bass. That song is the bridge from Walk Thru Invisible into Other Desert Cities. I think it's a great song. It's a little square in comparison to the other stuff, because it's just a really basic song.

It's a good song. If it's a good song it doesn't matter if it's square.

Los Angeles is a song that Sean actually wrote on his own. It had all the soul and everything that he does and I put a little Latin flair to it.

It sounds like the city.

It's like a kind of Mexican low rider Rhumba, you know what I mean.

It's kind of a melting pot like the city is.

We had tried the song, just the two of us and I was doing that kind of bassline and Rhumba beat to it and none of the white audience would get it. They would always want to hear those songs that are four on the floor. Fucking whitey can't fucking dance man. The song is so soulful, the lyrics are so mournful and soulful. It's also paying homage to Los Angeles, the old Los Angeles that we knew.

I think of it as sort of a sequel to 2nd And Hill.

Yeah. I think of it as almost like the Stand By Me of the album.

It's a good place to leave it.

It's very sentimental. This album has a lot more variation with the Latin feel and the Soul feel in some of these. Even Last Station to a certain extent sounds like an Arabic song. It's much more world than the first album, our simple springboard into the world. Perhaps what the future has to hold for us.

Laughs.

There's a long winded explanation of our new album, Other Desert Cities. Which is available on iTunes and we're selling it off of Facebook ourselves as well, and at the shows. The truth be known, this album has been done for a year now...

Oh really?

Yeah, in our feeble attempt to get a record deal we have failed.

You need PR people really that's it.

We need PR people man. I also told Sean, man we gotta have new stuff. So we have these two, what I think are great records in the can, maybe on the third record we'll hit it and somebody will come back and distribute this stuff. It'll be catalog stuff but none the less, these are great records, something to be proud of. I'm very proud of these records.

I haven't seen any negative feedback anywhere. It's like anybody who has heard these records are into it.

They're proud and they're simple and they show development. Which is very very foreign in this climate. Bands are not able to develop in this environment, if bands hit it on their first record they are asked to do the exact same thing. That's why I always think to myself, well Zander you haven't hit your potential. I think that maybe it's not about hitting my potential at this point, maybe it's just about striving for my potential. I'm kind of glad, through the whole gauntlet that i've been through, that i'm still able to grow and experiment and hone my writing skills. I don't necessarily think I'm going to hit my potential in this lifetime.

That's probably a good attitude.

Just keep striving for it. I got a little scared when Bob said, you'll never write a better song than Song About Songs. I was like, well I sure am going to try.

You have to prove him wrong.

Yeah, it really put a lot of stigma on me. Bob has that way about him, he likes to give me a hard time. When we were driving up to Big Sur, I put this record on for him and he shut up, the entire time. He was like wow. He really gravitated towards Sometimes We Try because it has that souring chorus. You know how Bob is, he says I'm going to take these songs away from you and I'm gonna sing them better.

You and Sean have some touring coming up right?

Yeah, me and Sean are touring with Mark Lanegan. We fly up to Washington and Oregon and play a couple shows, than fly down to San Francisco and fly back. We sell a lot of merch with him.

You're doing Europe with him too right?

Yeah, we're doing Europe with Mark. We're gonna fly in and meet him and then hop in the bus and hunker down in a bunk.

All these great people keep taking you guys out, like him and X, that have audiences, that's what I like.

The thing with the duo is that we're no threat to any band. Nobody is doing what we're doing. Set up is minutes, break down is even less. As far as accommodations or whatever, it's like having two guys, what's the big deal?

Two guys, a couple backpacks and a couple guitar cases essentially.

Yeah. Sometimes we travel like hobos. Getting on trains and Ferries. When we toured Alaska, we took a ferry from Juno to Skagway. The shit that we get to do on the road. When we were in Brazil, we did a car tour. We did something like 24 dates, places no rockstar will ever step foot in.

Got some good coffee I bet.

Oh man, the coffee, the fucking food. Everything was amazing down there. On days off we would stay in somebody's house down the coast and swim in all these brackish rivers with dolphins. Pilapas and drinking coconut juice. Dude, you can't fucking beat it. As far as I'm concerned in my quest for the richness of life, I have never experienced travel like I have when me and Sean go out. You want to go into the swamps? Let's go into the swamps when we're down in New Orleans. Let's go see some gators. So if Sean wants to do his thing or I want to do mine, we do. It's just 2 guys working it out. When we were in Hawaii, I wanted to go snorkeling in the ocean, and I wanted to jump off cliffs into the water. Sean doesn't have any interest in that so I go do that and maybe Sean goes to the mall. We played this Farmageddon Fest, just outside of Yellowstone Park and we camped. Made coffee over an open fire and checked out Buffalo and the geysers. It's like we're on vacation. Not like a band where it's just grueling, get to the venue, unload all the heavy equipment..

Sit around for 6 hours...

Maybe eat some crappy food. If I want to go off and have some good food I can do that. Especially with Mark Lanegan, sometimes he's famine and sometimes he's feast, but he's a food lover. He'll even research restaurants where there's something he wants to try and we'll go off and have diner with Mark Lanegan. Sit there and try to have a conversation with him.

Laughs. The last thing I had, Schloss Angeles. Are you ever going to do a solo album or has it merged enough into Sean & Zander for you at this point?

No, I still have aspirations to do that. I played a solo gig the other night, I played an hour and a half of my own material. It's so terrifying, I still have to get over the preciousness of just going out there and playing it, singing my own words on my own. But an odd thing happened at the end of the gig, there were all these hot girls there that came up to me and were like you were really amazing and made me cry. They were really flirtatious with me. Are you kidding me, it taken me this long to some hot chick come up and give me a compliment. That's never happened before. All the bands I've ever done were like fucking dude bands.

Laughs.

So I was like hmmm maybe I'm on to something. I feel like I've kind of hit a kind of stride. I believe my career has been filled with like blooms and frosts. The first bloom was in the '80s with Repo Man and the Circle Jerks and Joe Strummer. That was a major bloom, but that's what's supposed to happen to you in your 20s. And then in my 30's Low And Sweet Orchestra and the major label stuff that I did.

Stuff gets real and when stuff gets real it's no picnic.

Yeah, it's no picnic, It was crazy back then, There are real monsters in the world. There are vampires, wolf man, Frankenstein, they're all out there. I sat back and waited for the dust to settle and when I realized the dust wasn't gonna settle I fucking got back on the road and was like just get back out on that dusty road and do your work and as a result, I feel like I'm on a

third bloom. But the frosts have been gnarly dude. That's the thing that I tell younger musicians, I usually give them bad advice first. Just go out there and have a good time and make sure you look good. Just make sure you look good.

Laughs.

I'll say nobody wants to see somebody that looks like them do something that they could do. The reality of the situation, if I were to really find somebody that was worth the time of day for me to tell this to, is like if you really want to be a musician, like a really long term musician you've got to be built like a fucking tank. You have to be able to sleep anywhere, at any time. You have to be able to eat anything, at any time. Be able to navigate grueling conditions and when you start getting older, there's frosts, great droughts. You need to be able to whether through these really harsh times to get to the next bloom. Because It ain't all smooth sailing for everybody, especially if you plan on being a career musician. My feeling on the matter is that I'm successful because I haven't had to work a day job in 30 years.

That's really the mark.

Granted I'm not wealthy. I don't have a trophy wife and a canary yellow Ferrari and a stucco monstrosity in the west valley. I'm rich in the fact that I get to do more work and I've maintained my integrity and I enjoy my life and the travel and the experience that I have and just playing music. I'd be doing it any way whether i'm getting paid for it or not. i'm looking forward to playing some music later on. I wouldn't even call it music, sometimes I just sit down with a guitar like when I was a kid. I just love getting my hands on it and hearing the tones that come out of it. Even though I know music theory and I know composition and all that, I throw all that out, I'm thinking of colors and shapes and emotions. I like the idea of coming from nothing and going no where. Just meandering around until something clicks. I still really enjoy that. You can play a set of music that you've written but you don't know what the possibilities are when you just lay your hands on the thing. That's one of the driving things for me, if you don't fucking love it. If you don't have the passion. If you put your guitar on a stand or hang it on the wall and the guitar doesn't say anything to you, Like hey come and get me, play me, then you have no business doing it. For me, I've got my guitars up on the wall, I look at them. They say, hey Zander it's been awhile since you've come and fooled around with me. I'm like yeah, that sounds great. That's just who I am and it makes me feel like I have business yet to do in this music world and if not for a living, then for myself. I feel an obligation to share it. It doesn't feel right to me to write these songs and put it in a shoebox under the bed. I've seen first hand what it can do to people. It can lift them out of whatever they're going through. You just told me that you had to put your cat down and you were listening to this record. To me that's part of the payment for what I do. If that music helped you in any way, that's part of the payment for me. I truly believe that Nate, what else is there. Kind of sucks for me, if it doesn't suck for you than it's helping the world one song at a time, one person at a time. I'm not taking anything away and in the end all I've done is given. For me that's a life worth living. If you're not going to give back, flip people off on the road and spread your negativity, it's just making things shittier. I'm tired of it. I get so overwhelmed and sick of it too. It's so easy to do that. Check it out, if I go fuck you Nate, what do you want to do? You go fuck you Zander. How easy is that, but if I say, hey Nate, I really love you man. You go what the fuck you talking about, what do you mean you love me, you don't fucking love me. The response is still negative, how fucking difficult is it to get to a place where you go no I really do.

I love you Zander.

I love you too man.

Laughs.

It's mind boggling and that's what the world's running on. Can't we try a little harder. I don't mean to get fruity about it but I want to spread sunshine. I want to bring light to whatever situation I encounter. Maybe smile and maybe have a laugh or whatever. The world is fucked so why not just be cool. You can quote me on that.

I will. Laughs. "The world is fucked so why not just be cool."

That's another thing that I really believe to be true. I have this crazy moral code.

I'm the same way. The first third of my life is kind of boy scouty stereo typical family shit and the second third are the dark times and now it's like I have my code from the first third, i have the negative experiences from the second and now it's my own fault if it's bad.

But that's what you need, it's the classic hero's journey. The classic fable of the guy that goes to conquer the world and everything in it and gets dashed against the rocks and the sirens call him and he has to fight the fucking cyclops and whatever crap he has to do. And by the time he's done with all that he just wants to go home.

Now I just want to cry all the time.

That's part of it. That's part of the journey that i've been through is the journey back to whats important and what's authentic. Being myself and doing things out of love and trying to connect to my heart and my friends, the people around me, what I'm doing, the world, nature. Whatever it is. I've been through really hard times and been disconnected and unhappy. That's what I had to go through, I don't have any regrets about it.

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