

Tim's Road Guide

Hitting the Road (and Staying On It)

Soon after the Blam Blam Blam reunion bassist Tim Mahon left these shores for England. He left behind a wealth of experience in touring New Zealand with the Whizz Kids, Blams and Export Lamb, not to mention those he has helped out, like the Gurlz and Miltown Stowaways.

In an effort to help others avoid the mistakes he made, Mahon helped *RIU* prepare a basic practical touring guide. He has concentrated particularly on alternative ways of touring, such as art galleries.

The Homework

You should never even consider touring without first doing your homework. The first step is a press kit. Your press kit should contain information on who is in the band, when it was formed, etc, press clippings and details on record(s). If you can do it properly, it's a good idea to write up something that a lazy reporter can put straight in the paper — such a story must have an "angel", however, a simple history of the band won't do.

You should have enough kits to send to everyone you're liaising with for gigs — pub managers, radio stations (especially student stations), newspapers, etc. Photos are a good idea and someone like Pressprint in Auckland will run off a hundred prints for \$50 or so.

The big thing is to get your presentation done a month before you go away at the latest. That



Jacqui Brooks and Mark Bell, following the accident that finished the Blams tour.

means when you're on the phone booking gigs you can post immediately the material to help your case to get guarantees, accommodation, etc. That's all negotiable. Bromides

Bromides are the originals of the ads you put in newspapers and it's good to have a tour bromide because papers can mess things up horribly. I remember the Plague being called the Plague once in New Plymouth — maybe we should have played with the Dentists.

Records

Having a record is a big help for touring. It is possible without but having one gives you extra support from radio, reviews, etc. If you haven't got one it might be a good idea to send out some demo tapes.

Posters

We've found screening posters is the cheapest way. The charge for getting a screen made isn't much and from then on it's paper (which you can sometimes get cheap), ink and labour.

Budgeting

You must budget a tour properly before you go. Items should include petrol, PA, lights, spare sticks and strings, food ...

The Post Office

If you're booking a tour you're going to make a few toll calls. Make them all price required so you can keep track of everything from the start. You need to be at

a phone number where people can reach you and where you can make all your toll calls from the one phone.

Postage can cost a lot. Within each island, surface mail is just as quick as air. Len Lye says post early.

Friends

A tradesman is a band's best friend. If you've got a mate who's a printer or a mechanic you'll need them and, if they're into music, they'll help you. If it costs you a bottle of Scotch or whatever, it's worth it.

Your friends on tour are other musicians, they should help you out. That's the only way it can work, when musicians get together and help each other out.

The Arts Council

The Arts Council has a touring grant of \$750. You won't get it if you're just doing pubs, only if you play alternative venues as well. So if you're going to do it yourself, it's worth working a little harder and getting the alternative venues happening. You can also get support from the local arts council — all councils have a certain amount per year to give out to performing artists.

Brendan Smythe at the QEII Arts Council in Wellington is very helpful, particularly if you have something that's new and good and is going to amuse people, like a big roadshow.

Art Galleries

One of the beauties of places like these is you don't need a PA — you need monitors. I believe that the best thing for bands to do is get away from the big PAs and lighting rigs. Unless, of course, you do get to that stage where you have released records and people expect it of you. Some galleries aren't sympathetic but those listed in this issue will generally be pleased to have you play.

The Van

If you feel you're going to do okay on tour and you want to be hassle-free, hire a van.

If you own one, go over it with a fine-tooth comb before you go away. Make sure all tyres are brand new, the brakes aren't going to crap out and so on. Always carry a comprehensive toolkit, clutch and brake fluid, lots of oil, bits of hose, bits of string, gaffa ...

One Commer did 350,000 miles on 14 tours of the country before I put a new motor in it and that was only a 1700cc van. A Thames Trader is another good van, as is the little Toyota Liteace (the Hiace isn't as good). The Morris Commercial is really good, slow and steady. Bedford Jumbos aren't built to carry PA systems. They're not built for the weight unless you make expensive modifications.

Join the AA — you'll be glad of their help when you break down miles from anywhere.

Packing

Tight packing is a must. Road cases are essential if you want your equipment to stay in good condition, otherwise lots of blankets and sleeping bags wrapped round the bits. Cases aren't cheap to buy but you can find suitable boxes and things at the dump — I have. Old suitcases can be useful

and they're easy to pack.

Driving

When you're driving long hauls you have to have several drivers. And each driver must have a co-driver, whether the other person can drive or not. When the Blams' accident happened everyone but me in the van was asleep. Usually David Rudolph, who didn't even have his licence, used to stay up with me but not this time.

Don't drink. Don't smoke dope.

Staying

Sleeping on people's floors is cheaper than staying in motels and it's usually more fun. When the Blams were touring with Split Enz we went up to Neil's room at the Abel Tasman in Wellington and told him about this place we were sleeping at on The Terrace that had a huge fishtank full of sea-horses and things and he wanted to come and doss down with us.

Staying in motels is boring. So if you've got mates and they don't mind, stay with them. Buy them a bottle of Scotch and you've got good accommodation. You meet people — and I think that's one of the best things about touring. But of course there's not much privacy so if you want that, get a motel.

Motels

There are good, cheap motels in most centres — ask other bands. But don't throw TV sets through the window or anything. Tidy up after yourselves. Musicians who are animals fuck it up for everyone else. You might arrive there and look strange and be stared at but if you act reasonably they'll cheerfully have you back.

PA

A big PA will cost you up to \$500 a week but you don't really need that much. A bass bin and one a side is fine. It's best to take your PA with you because you get to know it and how it works.

Soundmen — once you get your mikes you look after them. Hold on to them, never let them out of your sight because they're worth as much as \$300 each and they're easy to steal. Never leave any gear lying round, lock it up in the van. It's often a good idea to immobilise the van. Vans are easy to steal and you don't want to kiss all your gear goodbye.

Money

Don't let people fuck you round over money. If you've got a written contract and they renege on it, go and see a lawyer, the law's on your side. Don't threaten to beat people up, although I must confess I have done that ...

Petrol coupons are a really smart idea. Carrying a lot of money on the road is dangerous because you'll find yourself saying: "Hey, let's stop for a Devonshire tea!" We were famous for that, we used to stop for Devonshire teas every 10 miles. But it's better to stop in at a pub and buy a dozen Steinlagers and get a couple of loaves and some camembert from a deli and stop by a river somewhere. That's good if you've got the time because it breaks up the trip.

When you get money you must bank it regularly. The amount of money that's been stolen from tills, hotel rooms, everywhere ...

Take your own door person on tour, someone you can trust. It's unlikely that you'll get cheated but if you have your own person there you can't moan.

Door Prices

I think it's time people charged at least \$5 on the door. You can't survive on the road unless you do.

Guarantees

Not many places give guarantees now, it gets worse every year. But that shouldn't matter because you're either going to do it and you're good or you're not.

Support Bands

Support bands have to realise that going on the road costs a lot. A reasonable fee is \$60-70 a night — any lower's a bit silly.

Extra Bucks

Selling T-shirts and tapes or records at the door can be a nice money spinner. Avant Garage made nearly \$1000 selling tapes.

Multiple Tours

When touring two or more bands it makes a lot of sense for the guitarists to sort out which amp suits everyone and for the drummers to use the same kit and bring along their own cymbals and bass pedal. For the bass, obviously the most powerful stack is the one to take.

Organisation

Put one person in charge as tour manager and if he treats it like he's taking a lot of old age pensioners on a coach trip it should be a really good tour. Everyone should have a sheet telling them what time to get up and so on.

Serious Drinking

If you're going to get pissed every night you'll come home from the tour with a shocking cold and feel awful. It's not worth it.

The Party

If you've got a long drive, the next morning, don't go to the party. Or, if you do, make sure two people bed down so they're fit and well for the drive.

Safety

If there are girls in the band, stay with them all the time. Don't go wandering around alone in strange places, stick with each other.

Booking Agencies

Booking agencies are the lazy way, at least early on. They'll charge 10 per cent for very little and charge extra for doing all those things like press kits — which is fair enough, they have to make their money.

You may have to use them later on when you get too busy, however, and if you go to them and say: "Look, we haven't got the time to book the North Island leg of this tour, could you do it?" they'll be good to you because they know eventually you're going to get so busy that you can't do it yourself. Don't let them be your enemies — that's stupid.

But you must do it yourself at first or you'll just get stuck in the job of support band for the rest of your time.

Remember

Short of vehicles crapping out, gear blowing up, earthquakes, war damage or floods, a tour should not lose money if you've done your homework and keep your overheads down.

CONTACTS

This is some information you might find useful. I've left out some of the more obvious ones — you can look them up yourself.

Art Galleries and Other Alternative Venues:
Sergeant Art Gallery Wanganui
Paul Rayner, PO Box 637, ph 58-195.
Masterton Art Gallery
Neil Rowe, ph Masterton 81-210.
Waikato Art Museum
Keith McMillar, ph Hamilton 392-118.
Christchurch Arts Centre
Martin McPherson, ph 63-324.
Eltham Town Hall
Cynthia Douds, ph Kapuka 540.
Snailclamps Palmerston North
The Skeptics, ph 86-629.
Suter Art Gallery Nelson
Rotorua Art Gallery
John Perry, c/- District Council
Govett-Brewster Gallery
New Plymouth
Dick Bett, PO Box 647.

Academic Institutions:

Aside from universities (very good, especially at Orientation time, when a band can make lots of money touring for a month or more) there are teachers' colleges and technical institutes. All the students' associations will have an Activities Officer or Entertainment Officer.

Some Pubs:

Oriental Dunedin
Warren Cates, 157 Frederick St, ph 778-468.
Richmond Oamaru
Don Scott, Hilderthorpe 899.
Terminus Timaru
Reg McGarry, King St, ph 89-716.
Woodbourne Blenheim, ph 28-007.
Bellblock New Plymouth, ph 70-558.
Golden Central Alexandra
Union St, ph 84-048.
Rutherford Nelson, ph 82-299.
Rutland Wanganui
52 Victoria Ave, ph 54-587.
Ngamotu New Plymouth
ph 511-626.
Waikiwi Invercargill, ph 59-080.

Other Pubs:

Hillcrest, Metropole, Hamilton
Hotel (Hamilton); Gluepot, Windsor, Globe, Milford Marina, Mon Desir, Esplanade (Auckland); Terminus, Taita, Cricketers Arms, Clyde Quays (Wellington); Gladstone, Star and Garter, Hillsborough (Christchurch); Empire (Dunedin); Golden Eagle (Grey-mouth); Albert (Palmerston North); Cabana (Napier); Greerton (Tauranga); River Bar (Gisborne); Onerahi (Northland).

Other Venues:

Auckland's Mainstreet, Wellington's Sheaf and Christchurch's Zanzibar all, to varying degrees, cater for touring bands.

Press Contacts:

Auckland Star, Wendy Nissen;
Christchurch Star, Rob White;
Christchurch Press, David Swift;
Marlborough Express, Box 242, Blenheim, Paul Ellis; Otago Daily Times, Nicola Robinson; Timaru Herald, Andrew Fyfe.

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Painted. \$1750 pr
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Flare \$1100 pr
- 2 pair ALTEC 811 B Horns + RCF Drivers
+ 5 Piezo's (cabs) \$900 pr
- 2 pair RCF 'Long Throw' Horns + RCF
Drivers (cabs) \$600 pr
- 2 pair ALTEC 811 B Horns + ALTEC
902-8 Drivers \$900 pr
- 1 pair 'Long Throw' Fibreglass Flares
+ RCF Drivers (cabs) \$700 pr
- 1 EMINAR Flare + Driver \$180
- 1 pair JBL Roy bins. 2 x JBL MI 12". New \$1600 pr
- 4 CERWIN VEGA SM-15 Wedges. 15"
+ Horn \$490 ea
- 1 pair CELESTION 15" Horn Loaded \$780 pr

MIXERS

- 1 TEAC TASCAM Mixer. Series 3.
8 Channel \$1850
- 1 JANDS 14 Channel Mixer \$2200
- 1 JANDS 20 Channel Mixer \$3900
- 1 TAPCO 24 Channel Mixer. Flight Case \$5500
- 1 Le GRON Series 1V. 16 Channel Mixer.
Flight Case \$2250
- 3 JANSEN PA-135 Mixer/Amplifier.
8 Channel \$1050 ea
- 1 YAMAHA ECM-100 Mixer/Amplifier.
6 Channel \$885

AMPLIFIERS

- 1 PERREAUX PMF 8000 Amplifier \$1850
- 2 PERREAUX PMF 4000 B Amplifier \$1350
- 1 PERREAUX EXR 2200 Amplifier \$1050
- 1 PERREAUX EXR 2100 Amplifier \$680
- 4 PERREAUX PMF 2000 B Amplifier \$860

EFFECTS

- 1 AUDIO CONTROL C101 Graphic.
10 Band Stereo/Analyser \$820
- 1 YAMAHA Analogue Delay E1010 \$540
- 1 JANDS JX5 4 way Electronic
Crossover \$790
- 1 JBL 5234 Electronic Crossover.
2 way/4 way \$550
- 1 CERWIN VEGA Type. 2 way Electronic
Crossover \$220
- 2 DBX Compressors. Model 163 \$290 ea
- 1 ROLAND RE-301 Chorus Echo \$520

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