



You Am I's last album, *Sound As Ever*, appeared to be every rock journal's wet dream. They raved and raved about it. But sometimes, no matter how much journals rave about you, it doesn't mean Joe Der-Brain public is gonna buy your album. This was the case with You Am I. They did not shift vast quantities of units. But a band called Soundgarden did happen to see them play at *The Big Day Out* in Australia last year, and they did very much like them. So, the Soundgarden band decided to ask the You Am I to go on a wee tour of the United States with them. This scored You Am I major exposure points in the said United States.

You Am I drummer Russell Hopkins talked to me at the stately Warner Bros. offices, (while the other members, Tim and Andy, slept off their Jagermeister hangovers in their hotel rooms) mainly about the Soundgarden tour... oh, and the bus.

1) THE BUS

"We got to ride on an Eagle coach, which is every band member's dream," Russell states matter-of-factly.

Slept on the bus too did you?

"I slept the best I'd ever slept on that bus. We felt really spoilt," he declares.

Lovely. Now that we have the travel and nocturnal factors cleared up, what about the actual tour?

"It was fantastic. When you go out on the road and are first on the bill [of three bands], you expect to be treated... not that well. But Soundgarden, from the word go, looked after us, let us use one of their tour buses [yes, yes] and made sure we were comfortable. I mean, the fact we didn't even have a record out in America when we went over there — it's just unheard of to get a deal like that."

After You Am I completed the 'Soundgarden' stage of America, they went on to 'conquer' it themselves... travelling in a smaller vehicle that you could not lie down in.

"It was sort of good in a way, to get back to all being crammed in a small, little tour bus, and driving to the hole-in-the-wall type venue," Russell reflects (after all the excitement of the 'big bus'). "It was a bit more us really, than that sort of big rock thing."

2) THE SOUNDGARDENS

"Even Soundgarden themselves — you can tell that sometimes they just really didn't like the fact they were playing the arenas. Like in Charlotte, North Carolina, all these people held up lighters to 'Black Hole Sun' and that kinda thing."

Ooh. How sick.

"Yes. I think sometimes they would really rather be back playing in the clubs."

Well, it's either one or the other I guess.

"They're such incredibly down to earth guys and they're on this rock 'n' roll tour thing. All the sorta groupies and hangers-on are still on that circuit, and when a band like Soundgarden comes along, they really wanna to party out with them and hang out with them. Soundgarden just aren't interested. They just go off to the bus and play with their video game machines. Generally, after the gig we'd go and sit in their room with them and have a few drinks. It was pretty low key."

3) YOU AM I PLAY TO A LOT OF PEOPLE

"It was quite strange because we were told by some people that it was gonna be pretty hard, and that we'd get stuff thrown at us, and people would be just yelling 'Soundgarden'

through our set, but that didn't happen at all. We got really good responses everywhere, especially places like Texas and Canada, where the album's out and they were playing the video on TV. It was just bizarre, the first gig we played in San Diego, we were just shitting ourselves. We were in the big, sold out auditorium. There was eight thousand people there just waiting for something to happen, and it was either gonna be good or bad, but it turned out good. There was people jumping up and down, and crowd surfing, and it was like... [sounding rather pleased] shit!"

4) YOU AM I VISIT NEW YORK AND CUT AN ALBUM

"Well, we stayed in New York for about a month, which is where we did the album. Lee [Rinaldo] just gave us the keys to Sonic Youth's practice room, and we went down there and worked out about twenty songs and then went int' the studio in Soho and basically recorded it in six days. It was every boys rock 'n' roll dream [laughs]. We had an apartment in New York which we were all crammed into, and it was cool to get up and go down to St. Marks and Chinatown and stuff — it was a real experience in itself."

5) UM —THE HOODOO GURUS

"We played a few gigs at CBGB, and we played another gig there with the Hoodoo Gurus."

Oh, are they still going?

"Yeah, it was really funny because there was almost all Australians in the audience, but there was also a really high percent of black American people there. We met a couple of them down on Queen Street who were recording dub music — these real stoned, dread-locked dudes — and they were like: 'The only Australian band we've ever liked is the Hoodoo Gurus.'"

6) YOU AM I VISIT LA

"So much of it so much like the movie *The Player*. They are just living cliches. Going out to lunch with, say, our booking agency or something, in the business area of Hollywood. Every second there's a mobile phone ringing and men answering them with sunglasses on kinda thing. The funniest thing was, I was in this post office and the guy in front of me was talking to the counter assistant, and the assistant was going on about how his first script had been accepted. The guy in front of me goes: 'Who's looking at it?' The counter guy goes: 'Weelll, lets just say Scorsese and DeNiro are very interested.' [We laugh.]

"Americans can become such a cliché of themselves. There's so much satirical things about Americans, but a lot of it's so true!"

7) YOU AM I'S NEW ALBUM THAT IS TITLED HI-FI WAY

And what have you to say about the album, if I may ask?

"Lighter in feeling, but more rockin', more up-tempo."

The guitar sounds are different aren't they?

"Tim's experimented with a few different guitars and amps. We managed to get a nice Telecaster and a Rickenbacker, to add different textures and stuff. I used an antique snare drum that was made in 1927, which sounded fantastic, and a mellotron and Hammond."

Hi Fi Way will be out in early March and You Am I are supposed to be returning here in June or July. Now that's something to get excited about... really.

SHIRLEY CHARLES

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