

KLINE'S ISLAND

These are excerpts from Cannonball's journal of his band Kline's Island. Smokin' and Bolus are his bandmates. This takes them through their first gig ever, up to the last show on their tour with fellow Lehigh Valley band OX. I wish I had the room to print the whole journal. It is amazing! Contact Cannonball and Kline's Island at: PO Box 1365 Betelehem, PA 18018-0365

6/3/94 Allentown PA - "Ya know I quit my job / I cut my hair"

That's what I did, just like that line from a Beastie Boys song. This is my second day of unemployment, and I feel like I'm becoming human again. No new ground is broken when following specifications, patterns and schematics. At least I've saved some money... The weird thing (about going on tour) is that Kline's Island has been together for about five months and will be hitting the road with only a skimpy five song demo tape that we plan on selling for three bucks a piece. We'll be touring in a little red Toyota. No one will have any idea what our band is like until we play their town, which will hopefully add a certain degree of nervous energy to each of our performances. Greg Chumpire of the somewhat more widely know OX just called all the people in the different cities that have booked his band and asked them if they could simply add Kline's Island to each bill. All the show organizers agreed, which is fuckin' great. Should be somethin'? It was that simple.

6/19/94 Allentown PA - Sixty or so people showed up (at the band's debut gig at Antiques-n-Things). After the set, no one approached any member of our band. We just hung out in our own little huddle not knowing what to say to each other -- our Three Man Island, as we call it.

6/22/94 Craufton MD - It's showtime! Right now Ox is raving-on and Kline's Island will play after them... People keep looking at me sitting here with this notebook in my lap and I'm getting distracted. Shit like this shouldn't bother me, but it does. If I saw someone doing this at a show, maybe I'd think that person pretentious. I can be a closeminded moody bastard at times, I fuckin' hate it.

6/23/94 Bethlehem PA - It's the morning after and time to reflect upon Kline's Island's first show out-of-town that went down yesterday. We followed Greg's stationwagon out of town, down highway, past Philadelphia and Wilmington DE. Went through that tunnel past Baltimore. It's dirty white-tiled flourescent look and ozone smell made me think that it was the Holland Tunnel, and for a second I expected to be greeted by the ususal crowd of buildings in Manhattan as we emerged into sunlight. Instead, I ended up swallowing about thirty more miles of smooth highway which led our two-car convoy to our destination of Craufton, MD. New houses were everywhere. Big, wide structures that all looked the same. Maybe this was a town of New Houses. Either there was some kind of huge cookie-cutter like device to make these things, or possibly each is assembled from kit-form. Maybe this model was advertised as a recent informercial at 1:00AM on the local TV channels: "Please specify the shingle or brick-model at the time of calling." It's a short commute, and thus the perfect location, for all the white-collar Baltimore and DC people afraid of the realities of city living. We drove slowly down a cul-de-sac to Jen's New House. Her number was the first of six Greg called from Maximumrocknroll's "Book Your Own Fucking Life" - a fantastic resource that offers a state-by-state listing of punk rock venues to play and a phone number to get into contact with the person who organizes the shows. She gave us a cheery welcome and I was happy to sidestep punkrock

angst for at least an hour or two that afternoon. We went back outside. I grabbed the bass-drum from Greg's station wagon because I thought it would be a good time to load the equipment into the basement while we still had some energy. I walked into her house while holding the bass-drum against my stomach like I was ready for march in a parade. "Where are you going with that?" asked a tall, thin, gray haired man that had suddenly appeared in my path. "Uh, downstairs," I mumbled. I've been through shit like this before. I figured the show would start after her parents had gone. "You're taking that back out to your car," he said. "I am?" "Yes you are, because there's no concert going on in this house. Jen!" "What dad?" "What's going on here?" I looked out at the other members of Kline's Island and Ox just kinda frozen in their tracks, each holding various peices of drum hardware. I began to worry. Maybe we just blew it. We put the equipment back in Greg's station wagon. "You guys can go downstairs to the rec-room if you want. We're still waiting for the other bands," Jen said, undeterred by what was happening around her. We weren't supposed to play Jen's New House after all. We found out that, when two more bands arrive we are to go to New House #2. Our venue would be a New House basement, which was fine, we rock anywhere. I couldn't stop thinking of the movie Edward Scissorhands. Angelhair (One of the two bands we were waiting for - from Colorado) trundled downstairs. They looked like every other post-Fugazi band of skinny white boys contending with one another for the Stupidest Thrift Store T-shirt Award - just like us! I knew I had everyone beat since I was wearing a t-shirt that celebrated some high-school's class of 1911 reunion. Across the back of the shirt was emblazoned this clever rallying-cry, in big yellow letters: "One for all, all for one, Pennsylvania '11". Later when we would go south, some kid would compliment my dress, thinking the shirt signified that I was the member of some straight-edge faction from "up in Amish country". Angelhair went outside to their van and Kline's Island and Ox drove to a nearby copy center to make more Kline's Island zines. When we returned to Jen's New House, Angelhair's van was gone. As we stood in her kitchen, Jen said Angelhair had gotten sick of waiting. I couldn't blame them because we found out that our host in New House #2 was passed out drunk, and not answering the phone. It was 3:30pm. There was no where to play. Warren's Groove, a local band, walked into the kitchen. Poor Jen had about 30 guys standing around her kitchen with apparantly no show for them to play. Things didn't look so good. Then Greg Chumpire looked over at me and said: "I read my horoscope today. It said Do Not Equate Delay with Defeat." Soon Jen walked over to Greg with good news. She found us a place to play - someone's parents were out of town. Another basement show. We all shuffled out of the kitchen to our respective vehicles and drove on to what would be New House #3. Ox played first to a receptive but lethargic crowd. I guess no one knew that Kline's Island was playing, because everyone booked upstairs before we plunged into our half hour set. I sang to about 5 people. "Thanks for sticking around," I said between songs while some kid ascended the basement stairs. We were losing recruits by the minute. Still, I thought it was a good set. Smokin' sounded tight as usual, with no hint of fatigue in his drumming, even after the full set with Ox. The dog walked up to me and Bolus during "Near Bethlehem". He walked in small circles in front of the stage space like he wanted to get a moshpit going. Time shrinks when you're performing. Maybe Einstein would've had something to say about this, but our half hour set compressed to about five minutes "Stage time". On a really great night, a set is only a few seconds of blur and whirl. Warren's Groove were quick to get their equipment on the stage space after us. All of a sudden there were about 80 people back in the basement. Saw a lot of people drinking Milwaukee's Best beer. What else can you do but write honest songs and try to play them whenever possible? I think we'll be ok as long as we can keep getting that energy rush from playing live.

6/24/94 Bethlehem PA - Tomorrow we do Greg Chumpire's radio show on WLVR at 12:00PM, and then play Antiques and Things around 8PM. Tonight Kline's Island will be checking out the movie "Crooklyn" at the Franklin - a one time XXX movie house.

6/28/94 Allentown PA - Last night we guested on yet another WLVR radio show, actually the first one. (During the musical part of the show) Heard Black Train Jack, a NYC band I played with when I was in a band called Junction from State College. Chuck, Frank, Jer, and some woman requesting a ska band I've never heard of were the only callers, maybe the only listeners. We played some songs off the Kline's Island demo tape. Schmidt (the dj) did his best to conduct an off the cuff interview. He actually dimmed the studio lights, and the absence of fluorescence under tungsten takeover actually made me feel more relaxed, no shit. With less illumination, the studio had shrunk considerably. In two days, we leave for tour.

6/30/94 Roanoke VA - Creaky old punkers from the Lehigh Valley may think that Wally's Place, the old punk club, has been long gone and flattened into a repaved parking lot. Actually Wally's Place is right here in Roanoke! That's right the same old dance hall look with lots of floor space for dancing, dark musty, with bar and heavy duty PA. Spooky, this place makes me think of ghosts like Mr. Yuk, Russian Meatsquats, and Forthright - all those awesome, old Lehigh Valley bands that no one will hear live ever again. Also inside, even the brick walls have murals painted on them, a unique art show to admire when the performing bands get boring. Kline's Island played to about 30 people tonight. The crowd was interested, not especially energetic. I really didn't know what to do with all the space up there on a real stage a few feet above all that space on the huge dance floor. We tried our best to fill it with our music, but kept getting that feeling like you're singing from the top of a mountain at the moon and stars: just too much distance and way too impersonal.

6/31/94 Columbia SC - Last night, following the show in Roanoke, we did find a cool place to stay. One of the kids who was putting on the show said we could stay with him since his parents were on vacation. Our host made us this pot of crunchy rice. With enough soy sauce, mustard and salts, it tasted better than you might've guessed. He asked Bolus: "Y'all Vegans?" "No." "Y'all vegetarians?" "No" Bolus said. "Guess it didn't hit your town yet", our host said. This morning, we woke up and got an early start toward Columbia. Stopped at Waffle House #3598,275 and ate a plateful of those gross homefries. Undercooked and over greased. We left, and I thought about how uneventful the morning had been so far. Smooth sailing. We drove down the highway, and I drifted off back to sleep. Fuck, this was no dream. I groggily focused in on a sign that blew by us: DRUG CHECKPOINT AHEAD. . . . About two seconds later, our Toyota drove into a barrage of about twenty state troopers. Two of them escorted a stumbling drunk guy from his car. One guided the drunk with his arm around his shoulders, the two of them looking like old friends. The other carried a grocery bag of empty Budweiser cans to a patrol car. Soon our stupidity came shining down upon us - this exit lead to nowhere! A trap to get the guilty off the busy highway and into the frying pan. The locals knew this, the cops knew this, but not the out of state traveller. A trooper approached our car, and said to Bolus in a cocksure manner: "What ch'y'all gittin' off HERE for?" "Gas" Bolus said. Both the trooper and I glanced at the car's fuel guage at the same time, the needle pointed to the quarter tank mark. The trooper smiled and nodded his head. "OK" he said, "Y'all can get out of the car now." We did. During our interrogation we related to the troopers our story: that we were travelling musicians on tour and scheduled to play in Columbia SC. All the

troopers left us (after more questions about where they were from and where they were going), told us not to move, and walked back to a patrol car to huddle. They came back and told Bolus that he had a choice: they could either call over the drug-sniffing dog, or allow the team of troopers to search through the packed Toyota. I began to think of what kind of reception our Yankee asses would warrant in some mean holding cell in rural South Carolina. "I guess you could search through our stuff, we don't have anything to hide" said Bolus. All the troopers pounced on the Toyota. Actually they tried their best not to make a mess, they tried to put things back the way they found them. And then, we waited. One trooper found a bagfull of FOE's "Get the Hell Out" Lehigh Valley Compilation CDs. He took the bag from the backseat and held it up gleefully so that the other troopers could see it. "This y'all's music?" he asked. "Yeah," we mumbled from behind the car. "Well All-RIGHT" he yelled. He reminded me of Enis from the Dukes of Hazzard TV show. They didn't find anything. Finally, without preamble, we were allowed to leave. Bolus asked for last minute directions from a trooper, a good move to appear unfazed by what just went down. We drove to Kaffee Klatsch, which sits on the border of a mean-looking part of town. (Later:) Kline's Island rocked to three people, not including Ox and Los Mordidas. I asked Greg where we would be staying tonight, and he said "We'll have to work on that." OK. The touring life is my kinda life, I wish I could be on a perpetual tour. Getting back to Allentown will suck ass juice. Bolus walked up to me following Los Mordidas performance with a bowed head and this dead-serious expression on his face: "this tour was worth it just to see this. (Los Mordidas)".

7/5/94 Biloxi Mississippi - It was the best show, it was the worst show, it was everything in between. It was our last show on tour and there was plenty of real blood and people ended up at the hospital...by the time we had passed through the storm that hit us in Mobile, Biloxi appeared an hour later. The streets were dry and the sky was clear. Like that kid said in the movie Biloxi Blues, Biloxi was, in fact, Africa Hot. We went through part of the city and took a few back roads and ended up in a trailer court. We drove by a few of these homes -on-cinderblocks to where there were two little girls running around in front of a small home where we heard a band playing. We parked our car among others. No one else was around, so we followed the music to the back door of this old, beat up trailer. Greg and I cautiously climbed the steps that led into the trailer. The first thing that hit us was the heat. The air inside was so hot and full of the moisture from sweat-soaked bodies that you could actually feel its mass. My t-shirt was suddenly sticky from perspiration. About 30 people were crammed shoulder to bare shoulder, swaying with the music, from the band playing -- Shroom Union from Los Ang., CA. I looked up at the only lighting in the trailer which was a rack of fixtured fluorescent bulbs. I tried to calculate my clearance from this only obstacle for showtime... Kline's Island took the stage, all I remember turning my head at crazy angles, jumping around and trying to spit or propel the words into peoples' mouths. . . Ox played "Vodka" (Robosphere tune) as an encore and I sang it. I rolled around on the floor and got down, bounced off the audience, rammed into the walls, etc. Then during the last yelp of "Vodka" all the lights went out. Cool I thought, we blew out fuses on the last accent of our song. But then I heard glass crushing underneath something else and heard someone say: "When the lights go back on, someone's gonna be covered in blood." Someone opened a door to the Little House and sunlight illuminated the shiny, blood covered body of Smokin'. We didn't wait for an explanation... and soon at the hospital the doc told us that Smokin' had a sliver of glass under his scalp and that it would be best to leave it there to prevent infection. With antibiotics, and time, it would work its way closer to the skin where it would be easier to remove...