



Weston

This interview was conducted on the phone by Frank FOE with Smilin Jim, guitarist/vocalist of Weston, on the problems he's had with the US Government shut-down due to the impasse on the budget, the blizzard of 1996 and him trying to get through all the red tape to get into Europe to tour with his band mates. The interview was done on the eve of him leaving... Afro transcribed the interview.

☺ Hello?

FOE Hi, is Jim there?



☺ Um, yeah this is Jim.

FOE Jim, it's Frank.

☺ Hey bud, what's goin' on?

FOE Not much man. How ya doing?

☺ Oh, not bad chief.

FOE Is everything set?

☺ Uh, well I got the Passport.

FOE Excellent!

☺ Yeah. I'm hanging on the tix (plane tickets to Europe) now. They're supposed to be coming in the mail Fed Express... I've been sitting here looking out the freakin window... Cuz my mailman was funny (when he delivered the passport)... He just slipped a note in my mail that said "sorry we missed you" and he didn't even try to deliver the mail, so I went out there with my car and I caught him. I said "Look. Don't I have to sign for something?" I'm like "I was home" I walked outside when he was delivering my mail. He totally dissed me man. But I got him! I needed to. I don't have the tix yet they should be here today. My travel agent guaranteed me that. He next day Fed Ex'd them.

FOE So I thought originally you were going down to Philly to get your passport and stuff?

☺ Oh, no. The lady said she'd next day mail it to me. I was like Oh Ok. She was nice about it. She was cool...But he (the mailman) was playing funny games with me. I couldn't believe that, cuz it says US Customs right on the package. It looks important. You'd think he'd make the effort.

FOE And he just put a little fuckin note in your mailbox saying he attempted to deliver but you weren't around?

☺ Just a little note that said sorry we missed you, and he never tried to get me. And I was home!

FOE Shit. He didn't ring the doorbell or nothing?



☺ Nothing. NOTHING!

FOE Cocksucker! (laughs) It's a good thing you had your eye out.

☺ That's right. Hey, I've been looking out the window all day waiting for these guys.

FOE Can you still look out the window now and talk to me?

☺ Oh! I'm lookin man!

FOE So is it ok to finish this interview now?

☺ Oh yeah, I'm right by the window.

FOE Cool. I don't want to make you miss the shit.

☺ Aw dude, I'd be fuming! I'm having a tough go with this whole thing.

FOE I can imagine. ☺ It's unbelievable.

FOE Let's go back to the beginning so we have some kind of organization on this thing. When did you originally apply and what did

you have to apply for?

☺ Me, Dave, and Chuck all went together (for the passports). And this was in like...late November (tour started the first week in January). What I took was a registration of birth. But I guess it wasn't good enough. You needed something with a raised seal on it. So they said "This isn't the right thing, you have to get your real one from Harrisburg." So then I sent for that.

FOE Where did the three of you have to go to get this stuff?

☺ The Northampton County Courthouse in Easton. So they gave me this 800 number to call out in Harrisburg and they said they would have it to me in like 3 days. So I do that. When I get it we're away in NY in the studio so it's sitting here at home. I physically have to take it back down to the courthouse because they make you take an oath, then you have to sign. So nobody could do it for me and it's just sitting at my house while we're gone. Then I get home, I go down, and I do it. And it's sent off and it's fine, and it's being worked on. But in the mean time Dave's telling me he had a problem so his is being worked on, and his gets done before the US Government shut down. Mine misses it... it must have missed it by very little because when I called the Philly passport office they said I was 3rd on the list. So it must have just missed, because the guy was able to give me all my information. He's like "Your issue date is December 18", he gave me my passport number for our work visas. It was right in front of him so I must have just missed it.

FOE So the government shut down and you had 3 in front of you but they shut down, so you couldn't get it?

☺ They shut down on me.

FOE And that guy couldn't send it out even though it was finished?

☺ No, he would not send it out. He said he was going above what he should be doing by giving me the information off of it.

FOE Well what the hell was he doing there in the first place?

☺ He was there for emergency calls only. I called the emergency line.

FOE Ok, I see what your saying. Because you could get it if somebody died or something like that, whatever they call an "emergency".

☺ That's right. If it was life or death. I tried to plead my case being that my employment was an emergency, but they didn't buy into that. They weren't buying that. They weren't buying it for anybody.

FOE Geez! And what does it take? It just takes them putting a fucking stamp on it.

☺ That's all it took! Yesterday (Wednesday, January 10th) was the first day they were open. The temporary layoff was over, but then they were closed Monday (January 8th) and Tuesday (January 9th) because of the blizzard. This was the first day they were open, BANG the lady got it out in the mail to me. So that's all it took.

FOE So that's the first they were open since December 18?

☺ Or before that. All these headaches could have been avoided if somebody would have just mailed it. You know. If it had to go through the background check or whatever they do. If all that had to be done I can understand, there's a lot more legwork involved. But we're talking just putting it in the mail, it was all finished and ready to go!

FOE So when did Dave get his?

☺ Dave got his....I know he was getting to the point where it was getting scary for him...but he got his probably a week or so before they left (the rest of weston left for Europe December 31st 1995). So he was cutting it close but in enough time where it didn't cause any headaches. Right up till the end we thought I had a chance of getting mine. Especially after that phone call, knowing it was done and stuff, but nothing turned out.

FOE But the government just never opened up?

☹ Exactly. I was thinking at the least, if they didn't balance the budget, they'd have one of those emergency openings. I thought that might come through, but that didn't work out either. I mean I was on the phone with congressmen, you name it. Dave Stein (a lawyer) was trying to get it so I could be emancipated to go into Germany. So I could be in that country but in order to leave that country my passport would get sent over to there, but that wasn't happening. No one could help. I was so helpless. There was nothing I could do, it was crazy. Yesterday was like, they're open. I know they're open. So I'm calling the place and it's impossible to get through. You know billions of people are calling. I finally get through and you have to sit through like 5 minutes of recordings "if you want this press "1" and I finally get to where I need to go and you hear this computer voice come on and say something like "your call is now being transferred hold on the line." So I'm holding on the line. Once it connects for the transfer that line's busy. Like they had no "On Hold." It was hard... So then I'd have to hang up, try to get through again, go through the recorded messages, wait to be transferred and hope to god it wasn't busy. It was terrible. But then I got through and the only bright spot in this whole thing was the lady was really cool.

FOE Well sure. She hadn't had to work in a month. (laughs) They've been on vacation for a fucking month.

☹ Yeah and they get all that back pay.

FOE Nice check for doing nothing. Gotta love that.

☹ Got to. So this is it man.

FOE Where are you picking everything up?

☹ Amsterdam. I'm flying straight into Amsterdam. Saturday morning I'll meet up with those guys (weston).

FOE So you missed dates in Germany?

☹ Yeah, I missed 5 German dates, the tour started Jan. 5th. But I know we swing back to Germany towards the end. We kinda do a big circle. So since we're going to leave from Germany we'll play there again.

FOE Are all the dates with Ten Foot Pole and Voodoo Glow Skulls?

☹ All the dates are with Ten Foot Pole, but my understanding is that Voodoo Glow Skulls are playing about half of it. I know on February 14 we're playing with Gwar in Spain. Barcelona. Yeah, everybody that sees the itinerary says "Oh, you're playing with Gwar?" Yeah Man! Gwar on Valentines Day. It'll be sick.... I just talked to Sandy (Weston's manager) from over there and they seemed excited for me to get over there which is good.

FOE Well, the band didn't even get a chance to practice as a 3-piece.

☹ No. I don't think so.

FOE So I'm sure that it's kinda awkward.

☹ Yeah. It's like SMACK! They just had to do it.

FOE So they do know you're going to be there in Amsterdam?

☹ Oh yeah. They're gonna pick me up. They'll be there with the bus or whatever. That'll be great. I'm so friggin excited. Especially with how crappy it was for me to get to it with all this stuff and I'm so ready now to just do it. I've got my stuff packed and I'm totally ready to go right now. But we're supposed to get this huge snow (the night he is supposed to fly out of NYC the weather forecast called for another foot of snow). We're supposed to get another storm. So Sandy called today to say "Call us before you leave" almost anticipating a canceled flight or a delayed flight.

FOE So when exactly are you leaving?

☹ 9:15 Friday night. I think the snow is supposed to start Thursday and snow all day Friday.

FOE The continuing saga of "Smilin' Jim goes to Europe". ❄ ❄

☹ If this flight doesn't happen I don't know what I'm gonna do, because I have to fly into a big city that has an airport in Europe. I'm sure the 16th in Copenhagen would be do-able, but it just stinks that it has to keep backing up.

FOE At the worst you're still going to have a whole month right? When are you guys coming back?

☹ That's correct. Well, the last playing date is the 19th of February. So we get back on the 21st I think.

FOE And how long until your next disc is released?

☹ April 1. I guess we're doing some record release thing at Lehigh [University] on March 24th. We'll have advance copies of it. Which should be really cool. I guess we're going to tour the US again in May.

FOE Is that going to be by yourselves?

☹ Right now that's up in the air. There's definitely been talk of us going with somebody bigger, but nothing's been put in concrete or anything. I'm psyched to do it either way cuz our last tour by ourselves was great. I really miss those guys I can't wait to go over there. I always get real tentative before I go on tour. But now I'm like, ready to go! I'll be like Johnny Fire!

FOE I can see you breaking your leg on the first day...

☹ Can you imagine that, like I get off the plane and slip and break my fucking arm or something.

FOE Just be fucking careful!

☹ That would totally fit with my luck. I can't believe you just said that, I'm totally knocking on my wood table!

FOE This is gonna be one of those things that you'll be laughing about for the rest of your lives...

☹ Yeah we are..

FOE You seem to be handling it very well.

☹ I've been just sitting here writing songs. I can't just sit here and be pissed. That's futile. (Smilin' Jim made it to Europe by the way... let's hope he makes it back...)

