

Transcript of Podcast 091 : Travelling for Music

{INTRO:

ALISTAIR: That Heavenly T-shirt has travelled me regularly. It even made it to Yemen in 1997. I'm only mentioning that because it's the only country that I've been to that the Barefoot Backpacker hasn't yet. So I had to get it in.

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{intro music - jaunty, bouncy}

{Intro standard announcement:

Hello. Thank you for tuning in. You're listening to Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure, a podcast looking at unfamiliar places across the world, and aspects of travelling you may never have thought of. I'm your host, The Barefoot Backpacker, a middle-aged Enby with a passion for offbeat travel, history, culture, and the why's behind travel itself. So join me as we venture ... beyond the brochure.}

{Music fades. Podcast begins}

Hello :)

I've now had a couple of full weeks in the Calder Valley, and I've already reached a few observations. The most obvious is there are a lot of hills and they are all steep as. I'm going to be ripped by this time next year. Or dead. Either way.

I've not started back up with my jogging yet, for this very reason. There's a roughly 5km loop I can do from the apartment, and there is a flat section, if you look closely enough. There's also a longer, roughly 7km loop, I could do where I have the choice of a long, slow, climb, or a medium, steep, incline. Even in Glasgow the only slope of any note was the one on the Parkrun course and the rest of the routes I took were more-or-less flat. This is the first time I've lived anywhere with a hill since Sheffield.

At the weekend I wandered over to the nearest town of any significance and size. I'd never been to Halifax before, and had relatively low expectations, but it was actually quite nice. I mean, I'm not saying it's going to be an important place on anyone's itinerary of Yorkshire, but it's similar in size to Mansfield, near my house in Kirkby-in-Ashfield, and considerably more aesthetic. More beer options too.

I'm only 10 miles from Bradford, but I always forget Bradford exists. It's like the fifth or sixth biggest city in the UK, and yet.

Normally my intros to my podcast episodes are overviews on what I've been doing recently, but honestly, apart from a few stagers around my new neighbourhood, I've not been doing a lot of any note. One thing about living in the countryside is you tend to spend more time in the apartment doing your own thing, rather than out and about being social, not that I was ever that social anyway, which is one of the things I realised when I was pondering the move here, to be honest.

That said, I am going to be busy over the next few weekends; the upcoming weekend is, of course, Manchester Pride, and I figured I'd actually even march in it. I had a number of choices of groups to hang out with (two identities, my workplace, a Queer bookshop, and at least one Queer cafe), and I'll be honest I still haven't decided, but I'm likely to march with the Enbies, because it seems they're the smallest group and therefore my presence will be more important. It won't be the most interesting thing I've done - walk a couple of miles in a couple of hours and have to keep stopping because of congestion. Someone said recently online that Straight Pride would be simply a commuter traffic jam, and to be honest, that tracks.

The weekend after I'll be meeting one of my online kink communities in a pub in Leeds. Again. It'll even be the same pub. Because the person who organises the Northern Tickle Munch lives in Leeds and they like the convenience. Since I now live in the Calder Valley, though, so do I, as it's a simple half hour on the train from Sowerby Bridge and I don't even need to book my train tickets in advance to make them cheaper. It is weird to think that the one community I connected most with when I moved to Salford is the one community that's not based in the area. But such is the way.

I'll be doing things in September, but they'll be mentioned in a future episode.

But let's go back to Halifax for a quick moment. When I was there on Sunday, I was in a craft beer bar and overheard a table talk about concerts. The ex-'boy band' McFly were performing live that evening and that table had about 5 late-30-somethings who were going to it. And as I waited for the bus I noted several people around wearing McFly-branded sparkling t-shirts. I was surprised they were still going, to be honest; until recently they were the last band I'd seen live in a stadium, back in 2004 - they were the support act for Busted. The Piece Hall is a much different (and much smaller!) environment to Birmingham's NEC, but there we are.

And that leads me nicely on to the subject of this fortnight's podcast episode, all about travelling for music.

{section separation jingle}

When I first had the idea for this pod, I wasn't sure how far I could go with it. After all, I'm notoriously unmotivated by music, albeit I'm still better with music than I am with visual media like cinema and TV - I have at least heard of musicians. However the more I thought about it, the more I felt I could bring in.

The first concert I ever went to didn't involve much travelling; it was literally 'get driven there by my uncle, catch the last train back', albeit I went with my friend Alistair and he only just caught the last train back, having returned to the venue partway back so he could buy some merch. It was in an underground club in Liverpool called Planet X in the late spring of 1992, and we saw a band called Heavenly, supported by a band called Jules Verne. To give you some idea how low-key this was, we spent the interval between the two acts, at the bar, chatting with Jules Verne's drummer. She was kinda cute, in that 'indie chick that two 16-17 year old weird nerd/indie kids kinda vibed towards but would be too weirded out to do much more than smile awkwardly at'. Heavenly, the headline act, for it was their tour, were a twee-pop indie band, the lead singer of which had an alternative career. Now, obviously, low-key indie bands would work out with their music career, and so the idea of having unrelated jobs wouldn't be unusual. But Amelia Fletcher was no part-time librarian, brewer, or customer call centre operative. Just over ten years after performing live in a very crowded and humongously loud cavern in central Liverpool, she became a director of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission - yep, the lady belting out lines like 'if I so little deserve you, then why have you not gone' is one of the UK's leading economists. She still makes music; last heard of in the indie band Swansea Sound, formed during Covid, and sound quite similar.

Here's Alistair himself talking about his early concerts, and recalls some details from the Heavenly gig I did not.

{ALISTAIR: As my taste developed, I got more interested in pop and rock, going through the inevitable heavy metal phase. Yeah, I had their jacket. I had the patches. I didn't really have the hair. Then I settled on indie because I fancied someone in a Sunday's t-shirt. Great band. Check them out. My musical journey was shaped by the swapping of mixtapes with the barefoot backpacker themselves. Everything from Helloween all the way through to SpaceMen3 and bits of Mahler 5, I think. I inflicted upon them. In return, I got Warren Zevon and Sugar Sugar and some amazing other tunes. Yeah, I still own some cassettes in their handwriting and started to go to gigs in Liverpool and to my own steam, or more specifically, Merseyrail's electricity. My first pop gig then was James at the Royal Court in the company of a couple of school friends. This was at the peak of the Sit Down area. I think Gold's mother had just been released. It was immense. I mean, it was truly wonderful. My ears were ringing throughout the school day after. Then I got the bug to go and see bands.

When I say I got into indie, I mean, I got into the most indie possible - if it wasn't on an independent label. I was not that interested in it. I was of course a fervent acolyte of John Peel and a regular visitor at Probe Records, which was the alternative record store in Liverpool, occasionally staffed by Pete Burns. I became a devotee of the incredible, peerless, Sarah Records. It was a gorgeous punky Bristol label that specialised in what was known in the music press, slightly unkindly as Twee. I had steered in toward my favourite bands on the label, Field Mice and Heavenly. When the latter announced that they were playing in the New Planet X, not the Old Planet X, there was another one, but this was the New Planet X, kind of stood alone in some white building in the midst of 1980s Liverpool despair. But I was sure that we had to go and see them.

I can't remember the support right now, but Heavenly were on top form. Amelia was reveling in the crowd. And she even broke the set up to have a name that tuned competition. Of course, performed on kazoo, the Prince of Instruments. As she remarked herself, all Scouse tunes at the time could be named in two. And this

one was no exception. {he hums two notes} Yeah, There She Goes by The La's. I've still got the early version of the Early Learning Centre Kazoo she used somewhere in my collection. Also, thanks to Ian and the generous loan of a fiver, I got the T-shirt. White, far too small for my physique now, with the band name and a bunch of yellow butterflies on it. And we travelled back on the train, spoils in hand. I still owe Ian a pint for that T-shirt.

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I mean, I'm not going to turn down a free beer, even if 1992 prices mean nothing these days. Note though we've met a few times since and this has never come up in conversation, so, hmmm ...

Incidentally, despite everything else I'm about to say about my history of travelling for music, and the musicians I've seen, that first concert was, without question, the loudest I've ever been to and the only one where my ears were still ringing the next day. I guess that's what happens when you're in an enclosed space, close to the speakers, watching a band who know what guitars and drums are for.

The first concert I actually travelled for could not have been more different. It was also only the second concert I ever went to. While Heavenly were a low-key indie band I saw in an underground club with maybe 50 other people, my second concert was at Wembley Stadium in London to watch Bon Jovi in 1995. Supported by Van Halen. Definitely not indie bands. [They had, I think, a three night stint there; an official video of one of those nights has been shown on satellite TV in the UK as recently as 2019, so it's possible you could see me briefly in the crowd. I don't know; I've not checked.] Research suggests I was there on Friday 23 June 1995.

It has to be said it wasn't my choice, I was invited there by someone who may or may not at the time have been my girlfriend; it's a little unclear. Evidently even in those days I had very nebulous relationships. And yes we're still friends; she declined to appear on this pod though, saying, and I quote, "I would send you a voice note bit it may rain" and "I think I'll give it a miss ... we have washing out for the first time in about 3 weeks", which, given we're in the middle of a heatwave at the time of our conversation, is slightly dubious.

In a letter to a penpal, and I have no memory of this, I wrote that she'd asked me to go down with her two days before the concert, and that I bought the tickets the next day. Gawd you'd be hard-pushed to do that nowadays, for a concert this big anyway.

Anyway, The thing is, this meant I was there watching a band I didn't really know as well as most of the audience. This is an interesting point, and one we'll come onto later, but when you have a big artist performing at big stadia, that means the audience is going to be a sizeable majority and sheer number of avid fans who know every word. My knowledge of Bon Jovi at the time was limited to their radio hits, one album ('Keep The Faith', which contains my favourite Bon Jovi song, 'Dry County'), and one random song that it appears even most of the Bon Jovi fans weren't aware of ('Good Guys Don't Always Wear White'). This'd be a bit like turning up to Taylor Swift's Eras Tour knowing her big hits, the album 'Midnights' (and really liking 'Mastermind'), and, I don't know, 'Eyes Open', or something. Weirdly, on the night I went, they did both Dry County and Good Guys Don't Always Wear White. Guess I got lucky. Tbf they also played a lot of radio hits - while I didn't know all the lyrics to every song I pretty much knew every song.

We were in the standing area, in the crowd. The cheap seats, except without the seating. We weren't that far back actually, so pretty good place to watch from. The atmosphere was in-cred-ible; noise, passion, stage effects (including some huge inflatables - it was the mid-90s!); even at the time I figured it would be by far and away the biggest concert I'd ever see. I don't know how many people were there, but it was the old Wembley Stadium and it was a sell-out; the associated video claims it was filmed in front of 72,000 people so I guess it still is.

I was living in Birmingham at the time, and my not-gf-but-also-not-ex-gf lived in the Black Country, just outside Dudley. Still does, I believe, though I don't know exactly. I'm not sure I'd get a sensible answer if I asked. Anyway, the reason for mentioning Birmingham is because we went down by coach, by National Express. Cheap, but it did mean we had an early-morning coach back from Victoria, 8.30am, which meant we had to overnight there. Which was a problem since at the time, Victoria Coach Station didn't open overnight. So we had to spend the night in, if memory serves, the colonnades of a nearby shopping centre trying to look vaguely unsuspecting. We did end up hanging around with two other concert attendees who'd also got early morning coaches, so we weren't alone, although late-teen-me was asocial even then!

It did mean we weren't rushed to get out the stadium, which is just as well as it took about an hour, what with all

the pedestrians and the traffic outside. The concert finished at 10.30pm and we got a bus, possibly a laid-on concert bus, to somewhere in central London and, if I recall correctly, had a burger just on arrival just after midnight, because London is a bit like that.

We broke up about two days later for Reasons Unrelated To The Concert, and didn't speak for another four years, but that's by the by.

Speaking of travelling to concerts with partners, in my last episode I mentioned about travelling to Paris with my then-gf-and-properly-so Laure to see a concert by a French singer called Etienne Daho. In fact, we saw three concerts in Paris together over the course of our relationship, all of French singers, who she'd introduced to me in our penpal days when we kept sending each other mixtapes - literal mixtapes, on cassette. I still have them in a box back in my real house in Kirkby-in-Ashfield. Some things are beyond personal relationships.

The Etienne Daho one was the first of the three, also on a Friday as it happens (28 November 1997). As an aside, much of the detail both here and for the other Paris concerts were taken from letters I wrote to Penpals (specifically Kylie in Australia) at the time, so I'm grateful to Past Me for both writing things down at length, and not deleting any files in the intervening time.

For the record, Etienne Daho is a male pop star who started in the early 80s and is still going. During the era I know his music from though, the best way to describe him would be, uhm, he's got quite a deep voice, some of his songs he speaks rather than sings, and it's quite synthpop-y; kind of like the Pet Shop Boys, I'd say, Kinda. Who were Laure's favourite band, by the way.

So. At the time, Laure was living in a Hall of Residence at a university in Poitiers, halfway down France and an hour and half away from Paris by TGV, so she met me in Paris and we went back down there afterwards. This was a bit of an unusual trip too since joining me from England was my then-flatmate Phil, who'd heard all my French music by being in the room at the time, and himself was quite keen on seeing Etienne Daho in concert. There's a huge amount of backstory here that we don't have time to go into on this programme, suffice to say my life was one huge sitcom even back then.

So, me and Phil took the Eurostar, and I made a note that they came round to do a passport check *in the tunnel itself*, rather than at the start or the end of the journey. I don't often think these days of getting Eurostar, but back in those days it was competitively priced. And anyway Phil dislikes planes. We met Laure in Paris and wandered around the streets, but mainly the music shops, for most of the rest of the day, picking up things unavailable in the UK (in my case, this was an album in German ... go figure!), before we hit a couple of cafés that evening.

I don't remember where Phil stayed; certainly when we went down to Poitiers he got himself a cheap budget room and I ... did not. That may have been the case in Paris too; for much of my time in the area I was staying with Laure at a house her father ... was responsible for, at least, it was some family property on his side anyway, in Lesigny, which is somewhere near Orly Airport. Presumably we overnighted in Paris on the night of the concert but I don't seem to have made a note of that.

The concert was at a venue called "L'Olympia", an old music hall from the 1890s but which, I noted at the time, had been recently refurbished. I'm not sure how many it held at the time, nor how full it was, but what Wikipedia tells me that right now, after another refurb in 2019, it holds about 2,800 people for concerts, with just under 2,000 seats.

We had seats quite high up in the venue, and as it's an old music hall you can imagine the auditorium being a bit steep, so we were very much looking down on the stage rather. It did mean we got a decent view though. He was on stage for about 2¼ hours in total, including a couple of encores, which when I wrote to Kylie I said "isn't bad at all these days", though I have no memory of any other reference points to back that up with. What I will say about the concert though is he was promoting his then current album, 'Eden', which I have to say was an album I never really got into, for some reason, so I was more going for his older stuff, which fortunately was slightly more than half the playlist.

The other things about the concert I recall was his support act was some English bloke with a guitar, who was vaguely appreciated in the same way you'd applaud an act in a pub. I know he was English because he said he was, and he sang and spoke to the audience entirely in English, which I found, well, slightly odd. I also recall Phil having trouble with the security doormen who found something unexpected in his bag but we weren't with

him at the time so we couldn't help him out - we only found out much later when he reached where we were sitting, and he was less than happy. But then it didn't take much to get him grumpy.

For some reason, I always think my three concerts in Paris were at three different venues, but it turns out, when I researched and cross-referenced it for this pod, just over a year later I was back at L'Olympia; in my head they looked like very different venues inside, but I think that might be just because for my next trip we were standing in the front section and very close to the stage.

This was for the French female soloist Zazie, who, how do I describe Zazie? Wikipedia says 'pop-rock'. I'd say ... personality-wise she has Bjork-ish tendencies, and a lot of her songs are about sex, but in a playful and humorous way with heavy wordplay and innuendo, rather than direct sultriness. Look up the video for 'Un Point C'est Toi' and you'll get the gist (Edwardian-era I'd say, four women spy on two men swimming in a lake, the women fantasise about the men, The Ending Will Surprise You, or perhaps not).

Anyway.

At the time (the concert was January 1999), my main Internet community was an IRC channel dedicated to another Francophone singer, Mylène Farmer, about whom more later. IRC, or Internet Relay Chat, was basically an early form of Discord, but one step higher and less detailed; rather than having separate servers with channels, the IRC host was the server (there were many many servers) and anyone could set up a channel on it. You could join other channels if you wanted to, but in general you had a community on a particular channel and you tended to stay there.

I mention this because my trip to watch Zazie in concert also provided a convenient moment to meet up with a couple of channel regulars, including Cynthia from Canada, Martin from London, Gino from Netherlands, and Jerome and Stef who lived near Paris at the time. It's always nice to meet up with people you know and have chatted to for ages, but who you'd not until that point actually met in person. Obviously for someone like me, whose friendships pretty much throughout life have been 'virtual' in one form or another, this is quite A Thing. My notes say we all met up at a cafe called "Le Pere Tranquille"; in fact my notes say we went there a lot.

We may have met Martin in London (if I recall, he lived in Croydon), and again travelled over by Eurostar. It's just a lot simpler, you know? We certainly went back that way on the Monday after the concert - leaving Paris early afternoon and back home at 10pm. [The last couple of times I've been to Paris it's been by overnight Flixbus. Don't do that unless you *really* value your bank balance].

Me and Laure were in a nearby hotel called "Les Marmottes", on a recommendation from Cynthia who'd stayed there a couple of times before, including on her first time having a memorable encounter with a pigeon in the toilet, the details of which appear to have been lost to server lore. It was a fairly cheap hotel, especially for central Paris, but comfortable, with a double bed, toilet, shower, and TV. No lift. Basically 25 rooms above a small eatery. It was, if I recall, vaguely near Sentier metro stop, but I don't think either the hotel or the cafe exist any more.

My notes on the concert itself are a bit wishy-washy. I do note we got there 10 minutes before doors opened, and then it took another 10 minutes to get inside because of the pushing and shoving. I also wrote that we'd decided to stand, but that "for most concerts in France you buy a ticket for the venue, and where you go in that venue is up to you. You can choose to stand or sit wherever you like.". I don't go to concerts much, never have, but I'm going to assume that's not so much a French thing as a 'small venue' thing. Some merch was bought by my IRC-mates, not only for themselves, but also some things for others on the channel who couldn't make it.

I don't recall there being a support act, and my notes don't mention one. Zazie herself was on for just over 2 hours and was good live. She certainly had a good stage presence, and you could tell that she was enjoying herself!. She sang a fair few songs; just about 2 albums' worth (she's released 3!), and I don't think there was one bad spot in the whole time! And her on-stage demeanour merely served to confirm what I initially thought - she is quite, quite, bonkers. But it's nice to have someone perform and talk with the crowd from on-stage - so many artists you get the impression they're just doing it for the paycheque, whereas Zazie genuinely seemed to enjoy being with her fans. Banter, that's the word, banter.

As an aside, one of my favourite banterers was at a concert I went to in the early '00s, not mentioning it in this pod cos it was in Birmingham and so was I, but, I saw one of those 80s revival tours with loads of artists who were big in my childhood. One of them was Nik Kershaw, who said 'and now I'm going to do a song off my

new album', then paused for effect as you could hear the crowd intake a collective gasp of breath, before saying 'only joking, I know what you want', and launched into one of his biggest 80s hits.

The concert finished towards midnight, and we left for another cafe; there wasn't much open despite this being the centre of Paris. Anyway we even found somewhere to eat, and after long chats we got back to the hotel at 3am (and, I note, having to wake the night porter as we did so, which really wouldn't happen much nowadays!). Now, the Setlist website suggests this concert took place on 17th Jan, which was a Sunday. However my letter to Kylie, written at the time, said it was a Saturday night, and not only that but goes into detail on what we did the day after, which was specifically not a Monday because one of the gang (Gino) had to go back home that day as he was working on the Monday, *and* I've noted we left Paris on the Monday and we had one further night in cafes and the hotel before we left, including to an Australian bar/cafe for lunch, and a chocolate mousse in the evening at a place called "Bistro Romain" that was large enough to feed a family of four. Not everything you read or hear online is accurate or reliable.

Also on the Sunday, specifically noted as the day after the concert, I bought a few concert tickets to see Mylène Farmer (the singer to whom the IRC channel is dedicated) in September. Given how huge she was at the time, this is more evidence as to how much of a different world it was then.

It was a really good trip; I had reservations at times about whether I'd enjoy the concert in particular but once there I had a really good time. And of course it was good to see some of my Internet friends; although I'd met Martin and Gino before it was the first time I'd met the others, and I'm really glad I did. I did note though that I spent far too much money; it seems I've always had those financial angsts, even back then.

As I say, I met them all again later that year, for the Mylène Farmer concert, on September 25th 1999. This was at a much bigger venue - the Bercy Arena, which apparently holds just over 20,000 people for a concert, and which was recently used for some of the gymnastic events at the Paris Olympics.

Again I went with Laure and again we seem to have travelled there by train - in my letter to Kylie (and probably other penpals too) I did comment on having been busy and therefore had very little sleep the previous nights so an early start of 6.45am was not on my radar. Not quite sure what I'd been doing but I was close to buying a house at the time so it was probably admin, sadly.

We arrived in Paris just before 3pm local time, and went straight to our hotel to check in - the very same La Marmotte hotel as last time. Because when you find a place that's comfortable, why change? Or something. I can tell you it was £30/night which was cheap even by 1999 standards for central Paris.

Once settled, we headed out to the Ibis Hotel where everybody else was staying, including one of Laure's penpals (Roy) and his partner Thomas who, independently of our channel, were also going to the concert, so it was quite a meetup really. I'm not quite sure how many of us were there in total but it was definitely well into double figures. After chattering a bit, some of them went to the Friday concert because, you know what avid fans can be like, but the rest of us (12, according to my notes!), decided to wander around the streets of Paris looking for a place to eat. We found a fairly nice restaurant/café place in Cluny, just south of the Notre Dame area, so we spent a nice night just chatting and taking photos and the like. Later on that evening we went to another restaurant, and met up with those of us who had gone to the concert, so they were able to give their first impressions to us. We got back to the hotel that night at about 2am.

Saturday of course was the evening of the concert. We all met up at the Ibis Bercy Hotel again, and made our way along the road to the concert venue. I had come to the concert with two spare tickets, but fortunately two people from the Internet (one from Denmark and one from the USA) were willing to buy them. Again, such a different world when you can easily *have* spare tickets in the first place.

The concert itself was pretty neat. We were sat in a really good place actually - about 15 rows from the front of the seating arena, as far to one side as it was possible to sit, about 90° to the stage. Mylène herself came onstage a couple of minutes late, but she stayed onstage for about 2 hours, which wasn't bad. She sang not just her new songs but also a fair few of her old ones as well (given that she has now made 5 albums there's a lot of material there!); she even sang a couple of her really old obscure songs that I don't have :) !! The only disappointing thing is that singing was all she did; while it probably made no difference to me (as one who can't really understand French when spoken), I think it would have been nice if she'd actually spoken to the audience at some point during the concert. As it was, all she said was "hi" and "are you enjoying yourselves". Still, that is her style. Very different to Zazie, more professional but also more ... cold.

After the concert we all met up in the venue foyer and waited for everyone to wander in and tell us their thoughts of the concert. In general we all seemed to like it, although apparently it wasn't as good as her tour in 1996 - of course I didn't go to that so I couldn't say! We left the venue and went to this restaurant over in the east of Paris city centre, called "8½"; one of the people from the channel works there so managed to book us all in there. We had a pretty nice meal - all on the theme of Mylène of course! - and we stayed there until 4am, chatting and drinking. Actually some of them didn't leave until about 7am but by the time we left we were pretty tired, plus our hotel was about half an hour's walk from the restaurant and we really didn't fancy getting a taxi back.

The rest of my time on that trip was pretty chill - we tended to get up quite late (about 11:30) - and do nothing much other than wander around the city, the large Virgin Megastore music shop, the less large FNAC music shop, and more cafes and restaurants, where we met up again with some of the people I knew from the channel. On the Sunday we did specifically go out with Roy and Thomas because it felt right to do so, you know? At that point Laure and Roy had been writing for about two years.

We came home on the Tuesday afternoon, again another pretty uneventful journey, and we got back to the flat at about 8pm. In all it was a very nice trip, and I was glad to now have finally met a lot of the people I chat to on the net; it was just a shame that we couldn't spend longer all together but that was always going to be difficult; I guess we should be grateful as many of us even met up for as long as we did! And of course I'm very glad to have gone to the concert; I would certainly have regretted it if I hadn't!

I will say that our journey was just from the Birmingham area of the UK, and we stayed Friday till Tuesday. One of the other people from the channel who came was Cynthia, who'd also come to the Zazie concert. At the time, she was living in San Francisco. She flew over on the Friday night to arrive well in time for the Saturday concert. She then flew back to San Francisco on the Sunday. Yep, she travelled a third of the way round the world for an overnight trip to see a concert. That's proper dedication to the cause, that is.

Someone else who has been to Paris for a concert, albeit less passionately, is Claire, who blogs at Curious Claire.

{CLAIRE - I've only actually left the country to see a concert once in my life. And it wasn't even for a concert I was excited for. So my ex, when we were together, was like, Hey, do you want to go see Celine Dion? And I'm not against Celine Dion. I love women with powerful, strong voices. But I was like, Hmm, do I want to go and see her in concert? She won't be cheap. And before I could really answer, he was like, Oh, it's really expensive to see her in London. It's actually cheaper or the same price for us to go to France, have a holiday there, and just see her show in Paris. And I was like, well, yeah, sure. I'm not that fussed about seeing Celine Dion in concert, but I'm always up for a trip to Paris. So that's the only time I have actually gone to see an artist perform in another country.

And Celine is from French part of Canada. So she speaks French and the whole concert was in French. She played her songs in French. And I know one of her songs in French, you know, you'll know the Titanic one. And she has a French version of that. And it's really good. And I do love it, it is the only song I could probably sing along to in French. And obviously that was the encore. So went through the whole concert, not understanding anything that was happening. And then at the end, they started playing it was a yes, this is the one I've been waiting for. And then she sang it in English. And that's all I remember from that concert was the fact that the song I wanted to hear in French I heard in English. But I got a lovely trip to Paris out of it. So I am always happy to return to Paris.}

My favourite Celine Dion song is a French one, 'Pour Que Tu M'Aimes Encore', and oddly enough it reached top 10 in the UK. That sort of thing doesn't happen too often. There always felt like a mild rivalry between Mylène Farmer fans and Celine Dion fans, although I'm not quite sure why, they're pretty different acts - they're both female Canadian soloist francophones but apart from that it'd be like comparing Leonard Cohen with Bryan Adams. Maybe. Only one of the four has ever had a video effectively banned by French TV, which if you watched French TV, is an achievement. Apparently it was all symbolic, you know, being sexually assaulted by the devil in a church with enough blood to be able to bathe in it. Every Mylène Farmer video tells a story, it just sometimes that story goes beyond gothic horror.

Anyway.

Apart from the briefly-mentioned 80s revival tours, a few local acts in pubs, a couple of festivals, and one small-venue concert (it felt not much bigger than my first, at Planet X) in Nottingham, a short bus ride from Kirkby-in-Ashfield (to see Dar Williams, an American singer-songwriter-guitarist who again I only know from Laure's mixtapes - it's weird how one person you don't even speak to any more can affect a huge part of your lifestyle even many years later), I have only been to one concert since. And that was only in June just gone. And I travelled to it, and even overnighted, although with hindsight ... it would have been easier not to!

Now, recall how I bought the tickets to Bon Jovi two days before the concert. Recall how I casually bought several tickets to Mylene Farmer from a FNAC, admittedly several months before the concert but again, without any hassle, without any pressure or angst that I wouldn't get them, you know, it was a near-certainty that I'd have had no issues getting one, Or several, even.

Dear Listener, this was not the case this time. In fact, I had no control over any of this; it was entirely down to the gods rolling dice and the odds ever being in my favour. It was also not a concert I ever expected to go to - partly because of the hassle of getting tickets, but also because, well, at the time I pretty much only knew one song well, and a couple of others a bit by cultural osmosis. But, in all fairness, Blank Space is regarded as an absolute banger.

My flatmate is a huge Taylor Swift fan, and was incredibly excited when her Eras Tour was announced. By hook, crook, and a lot of friends, she managed to source tickets for one of her concerts (she was one of the estimated lucky 3% who tried), and not only that but it was one of the concerts in Liverpool, so, easy to get to. I was living in Glasgow at the time but we were just about to move; one of our last ventures in the city was going to a small independent fashion shop and getting some funky sparkly costumes to wear. Shimmery and polished up real nice, because it was going to be summer and we could look sexy. Hold that thought, people, hold that thought.

Laura sourced three tickets; the third went to her mother, who travelled over for the occasion. So while we didn't travel very far, she came in from the USA and landed about 8am on the Wednesday morning into Manchester - the concert was the Thursday evening (13 June). While that again seems like a long way to go for a concert, she is not Cynthia and she did stay for almost two weeks afterwards, including immediately following the concert the two of them going to North Wales for the weekend which is how I've ended up living in Yorkshire, as previously described.

The run-up to the concert was mostly spent listening to every single Taylor Swift song. And there are a lot of them; even more so when she dropped a whole new double-album in the middle of the tour. Laura was insistent that me and her mother knew the songs so we wouldn't be an embarrassment on the day and so she could justify two tickets having gone to people who were pretty much non-Swifties. This was something that I was low-key worried about - would I enjoy the experience having a relatively limited knowledge compared with most of the attendees? And the tickets weren't cheap, although at about £160 each they were also strangely less expensive than I'd been fearing. Anyway, it turns out my favourite Taylor Swift album is Speak Now because I seem to be nostalgic for the pop-punk era of the mid '00s. And I'm waaay too asexual for Reputation. Though we did not cover the Christmas album she did; we have limits.

Getting there on the day was quite easy. We got the train from Manchester (Oxford Road, I think because the train we wanted from Victoria had been cancelled), and arrived just before midday. We had a wander in the city centre before finding a pizza place that ... I think we were the first to eat there that day; indeed I'm not even sure they were exactly open when we walked in, but it was fine, we ate, and then we caught the train to the hotel that Laura's mother had booked, that turned out to be a couple of hundred metres from where I grew up. Aintree railway station is one I know pretty well, though they've refurbished it and changed where the entrance is from when I used to use it on a daily basis. The hotel itself was a knock-off Premier Inn, with more beds in it than power sockets, but it was fine as we were only there really to get changed.

Remember I said it was summer and we'd be looking sexy? It was about 13 degrees Celsius, overcast with showery patches. Out went the non-binary crop-top and in came the aromantic hoodie. I still wore the pastel-striped Lover-adjacent skirt (just with leggings underneath), the heart-motif choker, the daisy headband, and of course the sparkly cloak I'd bought in Glasgow, which had been leaving a trail of destruction ever since I'd bought it. It's got millions of small circular sparkly bits of card on it that kept falling off and it became a running joke in the Salford flat that I'd find another one when I wasn't expecting to. Anyway, still Queer, just a warmer flavour thereof.

We caught the train from Aintree to Sandhills, from where we could pick up a shuttle bus to the stadium. It's not actually that far a distance, but Laura's mother can't walk too far without discomfort. Sandhills station, and I've always thought this, especially when I used to change trains there in my first year at secondary school, it's a weird place since there is nothing much around apart from vaguely derelict blocks of industry. There's also not a sand hill to be seen. Even though it's very urban, it's quite a remote station. But hey, we were only using it for a quick stopover, right?

Walking from the drop-off point to the venue was quite something; lots of people all going the same way, wearing all manner of outfits and styles. A whole car park on the left turned into a merchandising hub. Residents of the houses looking on from their front steps (this is a part of the city full of brick terraced housing and very small front yards) possibly with some bewilderment. At least normally it's people all wearing the same colour football shirts. The concert was held at the Anfield Road Stadium, home to Liverpool football club, and somewhere I'd never actually been, given my family were supporters of their rivals, Everton.

Once we'd found the right gate, and swiped in (QR codes, none of this paper ticket nonsense!), we headed up the stadium. Our seats seemed to be quite near the top, and, conveniently, right on the end of the block. This meant to my right was the stadium wall, and no-one was behind us. I'm 6'3", the average Swiftie isn't; one of my fears was that I'd be blocking the view, especially if I'd've had to have been standing because everyone else in front of me was. As it happened, I was stood up pretty much the whole time, to the detriment of nobody.

The concert itself well. She had one support act - Paramore - who I remember from the punk-pop era of the mid-'00s and didn't know were still going, but oh my, they're bloody good live. So much energy, and passion. And the lead singer, Hayley Williams, has a fabulous voice live. What was interesting is that, at least as far as I could tell, the crowd around me knew pretty much all of Paramore's set too. That Paramore were opening seems an odd choice to support a pop/country/rock/folk singer until you recall what I said about the *Speak Now* album. At least I guess this means she acknowledged that album existed in a way other than the one solitary track on her setlist.

Taylor herself was on stage for, uhm, maybe about three and a quarter, three and a half hours, in total, but it definitely didn't feel like it. The purpose of the tour was to showcase pretty much her entire output (with the exception of her very first album; it's not in any way a bad album, just the very country-music vibe of a 16-year-old possibly is a little too 'distant' from her modern branding). (I'd say it was still better than her *Lover* album from 2019; other Swifties disagree).

I've not been to a lot of concerts but it's by far the best atmosphere I've ever encountered at one. I suspect that was in part because it's what you get when between 55 and 62 thousand people turn up in a stadium for a common purpose. And maybe Swifties sing louder than Bon Jovi fans, I don't know, but it did feel quite weird to go to a concert and hear the audience sing almost as loudly and as much as the actual performer, even when the performer has a state-of-the-art sound system behind them. Like, I knew almost every Mylene Farmer lyric for that concert but I felt that was unusual and that the majority of the crowd wouldn't; clearly, it is not. The sheer rage of probably 50,000 women singing, nay shouting, along to "The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived" is quite something (and it's not the easiest of songs to sing along to) is quite an experience to behold.

Note that (aside from some unique circumstances) the main setlist stayed the same for each concert, the same songs in the same order, so there's only a limited number of tracks to actually know. Except, towards the end of every concert she did this thing, generally called 'Surprise Songs, where she'd play acoustic (guitar and piano) slightly cut-back versions of songs from somewhere in her entire back catalogue. Could be really famous. Could be really obscure. Unlikely to be her Christmas songs. Often at least one had a relevance, either time or location - one of ours (as I predicted!) was 'I Can See You', because she'd filmed the video for it in Liverpool. Another was *Cornelia Street*, which, I mean, it's one of the only decent songs on *Lover*, to be honest, though it is a heck of a song, and was going to be the title of my previous podcast episode but I thought it would have been too weird. There is a *Cornelia Street* in London near Caledonian Road overground station, one in Motherwell, and one near Sunderland. I have been to none of them, and have no intention of doing so. Not everywhere is interesting *enough*.

Leaving the concert wasn't as smooth as perhaps it should have been, and raises questions about how much different parts of the organising committee talked to each other. We were leaving the stadium a little after 11.10pm, and the last train from Sandhills was about 11.50pm, so we thought we'd catch the bus back in order to make the last train. However, that bus, which, I may add, existed purely to transfer people from the stadium *to* the station, did not make a timely departure and instead lurked about prevaricating for no apparent

reason for about 20 minutes at the bus stops. We got to Sandhills a shade after Midnight, after the last train to anywhere had passed. Merseyrail had not laid on extra late night trains to cater for the crowd, and they surely knew there would be a crowd. Lots of people were vaguely irked, lots of waiting around for taxis was done, and lots of taxis had either disappeared from radar or had sudden large price increases. It was cold, it was vaguely damp, and it was late. And it was Sandhills station, which as noted earlier, isn't actually anywhere much. In the dark it looks even more empty and morose than usual. We were stuck there for maybe half an hour - indeed we were one of the last wee groups to leave, though by 12.30 things seemed to have settled down and we didn't get too bad a rate back to the hotel - not that it was far, only about 3 or 4 miles. It drove down roads I used to go with my uncle when I'd met him at his work and we'd go home; it was weird seeing those roads again, and it's what prompted my previous podcast episode in fact.

Buses weren't only laid on between Sandhills and the stadium though - many more buses were headed into the city centre. The opposite way from us. Except, and we only found this out on the night, Northern Rail had laid on extra late night trains from Liverpool to Manchester. We'd arranged a hotel not far from the stadium because we figured it would be better than lurking somewhere overnight, like I did on my Bon Jovi concert, in time for the first train back in the Friday morning, and yet it turns out it would actually have been easier just to have gone back home. And cheaper. And ... growl.

The day after the concert, I took the opportunity to explore where I grew up, hence my previous episode, and then headed into Liverpool city centre to meet up with someone I know from the Sounds Fake But Okay Podcast's Discord Server, which we're both Mods on. They live in Canada and had flown over a couple of days earlier, specifically for the concert too. Again, like Laura's mother and unlike Cynthia, they'd used the opportunity to travel around the UK a bit - they were headed up to Scotland after Liverpool. But in their case, they said they'd come to Liverpool for the concert because it turned out the ticket price, plus the airfare, plus casually traveling for two weeks, was still cheaper than just the price of the ticket for, and travel into, Taylor's Toronto tour gig. Which suggests Canada's getting seriously ripped off with ticket prices. Kind of the opposite of Claire's Celine Dion experience, but travel can be like that sometimes. Anyway, I'd never met them before, but they wanted to see a bit of Liverpool city centre, and a couple of traditional pubs. Naturally, I obliged. Because Liverpool has some very good pubs.

I also met with one of my friends from another online community (who I'd met before, but in, shall we say, very different circumstances), who lives in Liverpool and who Tay-gated the night of the concert; they couldn't get tickets so just lurked outside with quite a few other Swifties, and listened in the best they could. The thing about Anfield Road Stadium is it's in a very residential area, so it's quite easy to lurk close by - people living in the streets around probably got the bulk of a free concert, to be honest. I've had discussions with Laura before about this; in Glasgow we lived close to Hampden Park Stadium but there were tenement blocks pretty much next to it and I can think of many an advantage and disadvantage of being that close. Especially in the UK where all our large stadia are primarily football. One of Laura's concerns was that a concert noted for lights and firework effects was scheduled for its most northerly venues in the height of summer, where the sun wouldn't even be setting until nearly 10pm, never mind the long civil twilight, but we realised one of the reasons was that the only places in the country big enough to host someone like Taylor Swift were places that were otherwise busy for 10 months of the year. And it did eventually get dark enough to see some really cool lighting effects, not least on the wristbands that everyone got given on entry to the stadium. Except us, apparently.

Liverpool was chocka with Taylor Swift ephemera. All the shops were playing her music (with the exception of Mathew Street; Taylor Swift may be popular but in their eyes, she's no Paul McCartney, and they have a brand image to maintain), and there were artworks scattered around the city representing her albums, all decked out for the Instagram crowd. And so many people were there obviously for the concerts (she was there three nights; ours was night one). It all felt quite joyous and friendly.

As an aside, you may know that one of the trends amongst Swifties is for friendship bracelets, usually with song titles or lyrics beaded on to them along with bright colours and trinkets, and there's a whole 'let's swap' vibe with them. In case you don't know, it comes from her song "You're On Your Own, Kid", which has the lyrics "So make the friendship bracelets, take the moment and taste it, you've got no reason to be afraid". A few days after the concert, all three of us were riding the lift in the tower block in Salford, wearing ours, when we were joined by a younger couple who were also bracelet-wearing Swifties. We had a quick chat, and they gave Laura and her mother spare ones they had to hand. They paused for a sec, and just before they left for their floor, they gave me one too. Now, Laura and her mum had simple song or album titles, I don't recall what, but what I got was a song lyric. I don't know if it's blindingly obvious in my presentation, but Laura felt it apt I was given one that was an abbreviated version of the lyric 'Shade Never Made Anybody Less Gay'. I felt amused.

Someone else who went to a Taylor Swift eras tour concert was Juliet, who you can find online as 'I am a Polar Bear'. Because she likes cold places, especially Iceland. I've known her for years but we finally met up in Tbilisi earlier this year, and I've finally got her on the podcast. Though she did wonder how I manage to cope with recording so often. I asked her to contribute because she was posting about her journey to the concert, which she also did by train. Except her concert was not in Liverpool.

JULIET : I went to see Taylor Swift in Warsaw. I knew how hard it would be to get tickets, so I applied for four cities and four different countries, and Warsaw happened to be the one where I got lucky. It was on my list in the first place because I went to Gdansk in 2019, and I read my Poland guidebook and went, this whole place looks amazing, I'm going to do a big train trip next year and see as much of it as possible, and then 2020 happened.

But now it's 2023 and I've got a ticket to Warsaw and I can start planning it. Except I couldn't because Poland's so big and everywhere look great. Where do I fly into? Where do I fly out of? Is Warsaw at the beginning or is it at the end? How long do I go for? And so I pushed off for like eight months. I got my ticket in July 2023 and I didn't start planning until March 2024. The reason I went for the train was that I watched Carl Watson's video of his trip over land to Istanbul to get to Tbilisi for Traverse earlier in the year, and I went, this is it, this is the answer to my problems, this is how I get there. I just take the train and I let the route guide my itinerary.

The route went London, Brussels, Berlin, over the Polish border to Poznan, and then it was a straight run to Warsaw, so I put a little wiggle in that by going south to Wroclaw, and then it's a straight line from Wroclaw to Warsaw through Włódź, so I added Włódź to it as well, and I had three nights in Berlin, one in Poznan, two in Wroclaw because it was my birthday and I didn't fancy hauling my luggage onto a train on my birthday, one night in Włódź, and then finished up with three in Warsaw.

It all went very smoothly once I got into Poland, but I had a bit of trouble getting there. Day one was Friday, 26th of July, the Olympics opening day, this is significant. The Eurostar was 11 minutes late into Brussels, and I only had 20 minutes to get on the Cologne train. By the time we'd stopped and disembarked, I don't think I'd even figured out what platform I was supposed to be on before I'd already missed it, but I hadn't realised that at the time because I wasn't looking at the time properly, and instead of looking for the 10-25 that I should have been on, I was staring at the 9-25 that I thought I'd just missed. It turned out I hadn't. It was now an hour and a half delayed. That was loads of time until I realised that I was looking at a train that was already an hour late. The trouble was that my ticket was very specifically for the 10-25, and I was going to have to get a new ticket for a different train, and I couldn't buy a ticket for the 9-25 because as far as the website was concerned, it had been and gone. So I went to the machine, the machine refused to acknowledge that Berlin existed. I went to the ticket desk and they said, you idiot, Berlin's in another country, you need to go to international tickets. At international tickets, they said, well, why did you miss your train? And I said, well, the Eurostar was late. And they said, right, you need to go to the Eurostar desk. They will give you a voucher. So that was nice and easy. Eurostar didn't question. They just gave me the voucher and I ran for the train and I got on the train. And then I had an hour to sit and catch up on whatever, and I discovered that the reason everything was so chaotic and the reason Eurostar hadn't questioned me was that was the day that three high-speed French rail lines were sabotaged. All the Eurostars were a mess, and they just wanted to get people out as quickly as possible. I got into Cologne an hour late. I only have 30 minutes to change there, but it turned out that was plenty of time. And I did get on the next available train there. I'd been a bit concerned on the Cologne leg because I had a voucher saying I could get on the next available train. And what I technically got on was the previous train on a different route with a different operator. So I was very glad to get there without having my ticket checked because I'm not entirely sure I should have been on it. But I got to Berlin and that was all good.

The next problem was getting to Poznan because all the regional trains out of Berlin and half the S-Bahn was closed because of engineering works in central Berlin. I'd had an email literally every day for a week telling me your train is cancelled. Please sit here for alternatives. No, no, no, there are no alternatives. Luckily, there are always alternatives. The train to Poznan was running from Frankfurt-an-der-Oder at the German-Polish border, so that was fine. I just had to get there. I should have taken a regional train from the centre of Berlin to Frankfurt. That train was running, but it was only running from Erkner. Erkner was at the end of the S-Bahn, so all I needed to do was get to the S-Bahn. So in the end, it was a U-Bahn to Friedrichsdrasse, an S-Bahn to Erkner, regional train to Frankfurt, and then I was on my way. Then I was on the train I was supposed to be on, so I'd had to leave an hour earlier than planned and take three trains instead of one. It was all good. Got there. And once I was over in Poland, everything went very smoothly.

Stopping in Berlin, Poznan, Wroclaw, and Włódź, it took me eight days to get to Warsaw by train. Instead of the two and a half hours it could have taken by plane, and that turned out to be a really good decision. I'm not a huge fan of Berlin. I think maybe I need to give it another go when it's less hot. But I really like Poznan and Wroclaw, and I'm also glad I didn't miss out Włódź, which isn't quite such an obvious stop, but I really liked it. Warsaw was overrun by Swifties. Every other person was wearing an armful of friendship bracelets. Every third person was wearing an official t-shirt. Every shop and hotel and cafe, they were all playing Taylor Swift. There was a big Taylor Swift mural up on the side of a building not far from the stadium, so obviously we all made our pilgrimage out there for a selfie at some point over the weekend. And the whole city felt like a big party, which is quite an achievement because it was also the weekend commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. So that was two very different moods in one city at the same time.

I got into Warsaw Friday evening, got my bearings, and then Saturday night I put on the homemade silver sequin anti-hero t-shirt dress of my dreams that I had carried with me all this way. And off I went to the stadium for the whole reason I'd done that journey in the first place. So I think it was a really good adventure. I visited five new cities, I had a big train adventure, and I got to see the Eras tour. So the whole thing was pretty amazing. Good summer.

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A good summer, not a cruel summer. Though it could well have been, and one of the receptionists in the office building I work in had a ticket to see Taylor Swift in Austria earlier this month. Sadly, as I'm sure you know, those concerts were cancelled, but she said she had a very special time anyway – she was one of a huge crowd of Swifties in the city who did an en-masse acapella rendition of the entire concert (though I don't know what they did in respect of Surprise Songs!), and then had more time to explore the city than she expected, and decided she really liked it. Every cloud, as they say. I'm sure there's a Taylor Swift lyric to describe that feeling but I can't think of one right now. Because I'm not a Swiftie.

{section separation jingle}

There are of course other ways of travelling for music, and I was going to go into a whole natter about music festivals but this episode got a bit long so I'm going to do another episode entirely on festivals in general later in the year; to be honest it won't be much effort as I've pretty much written it already as part of this pod.

Also featuring in an upcoming pod is the use of music culture in order to travel to a place for a reason – for example seeing where a music video was filmed, or seeing a building used in an iconic shot of an artist, or simply walking down streets that inspired musicians to write, or seeing where they lived, where they recorded. Liverpool's obviously big on this, with whole tours devoted to going past John Lennon's old house and the site of Strawberry Fields. Everywhere Is Interesting, and that's just one example how.

Alistair brings another aspect to 'travelling for music'. Rather than travelling to watch someone perform, what if you are the person who's performing?

{ALISTAIR: The first concerts that I remember attending were the Children's Concerts at Liverpool Phil(harmonic) in the early 80s, packed tight in the car with mum and dad and my sister learning about all the instruments in the orchestra. I developed to deliver the cello and the drums, so obviously when I was given the opportunity to learn one or the other, my parents stayed me towards the cello. In hindsight, not a terrible idea because I got so little coordination in my feet.

In my early teens, I was excited as my nan and grandad were taking me to hear my favourite cello concerto, the mighty Elgar. I practically worn out the tape of Jacqueline du Pré playing that incredible piece, but unfortunately, a combination of baked beans for dinner and the terrible state of the Dock Road meant that I was physically sick and had to sit in the bar area with the ushers. They looked after me well and thanks to the incredible sound system in there, I could hear it piped into the bar, but I'm still gutted. I never got to see it performed then.

It was many years later that I finally got to. Thank you, Natalie Klein. Since then, I've accompanied the piece four times and attempted it at play through with Cypher Orchestra when the soloists couldn't make it, but as yet there are parts of the second and fourth movement that really, if I'm playing them, should not be inflicted on the public.

[to be expanded upon]

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At school I was kind of nudged into music. I ended up learning the trombone and then the trumpet for a couple of years, and yeh they put me in the school band. Note that the UK, not even the school I went to, doesn't have anywhere near the kudos attached to school bands – we don't have marching parades, we don't have band camp, we don't have inter-school competitions. As such, the average UK school band is exactly as good as you imagine. Or fear. We have occasional recitals and performances that serve as a way to drag parents away from watching evening soap operas and meet the teachers rather than being of much use to the teenager's school career. I'm sure most the kids who took an instrument did so cos it got them out of an academic class once a week. Anyway, I ended up in the brass section because we had a big open-house music evening where we could playtest all manner of things and I was told, direct quote, 'I had good lips for blowing'. Shush.

Anyway, no-one can be mythered to haul an instrument of that size around with them all the time (except Alistair, apparently, whose cello felt about as big as he was at the time), and it's not like either instrument is actually that interesting really; you can do things with them but they're not the most versatile in the world. And the mouthpiece just tasted like rough metal. So I stopped. No great loss.

So clearly, I was never destined to travel anywhere to be a musician. My role as a punk poet, now, that's been delayed for twenty years owing to a completely different issue, the same reason this podcast is rarely timely and consistent.

Finally, Claire suggested one other way of Travelling for Music, but rather, it's travelling *through* music. And this is yet another way, relating to my last pod, how the world has changed for the better.

{CLAIRE: So it's quite funny watching how the world has changed like finding music, finding new bands, because obviously, you know, when me and you were kids, you had the local radio stations. You had like the magazines for me. It was like Kerrang and that type. You had the TV stations, again. Kerrang was my favourite. But now there's a whole new generation who can get music from anywhere around the world simply with just things like Spotify and actually through boyfriend's brother's daughter, they've been able to discover things like she's found it and then her dad's found it and then passed it on to us. So I now listen to Mongolian throat singing. There's a Mongolian band who have mixed heavy metal and Mongolian throat singing together and it works really well and never would have come across something like this when I was a kid. Like you just would never but now you can get music from all around the world just there on your phone, on your laptop and it's incredible. I love just having a look at bands from just random countries. You're like, do you know what, today I'm going to try and find some French heavy metal people and you can just do that now and I love how the world has changed in that way that we can find random small bands from countries we may never go to.

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It's definitely true you can get a feel for a place through its music, in the same way as you can through other forms of culture – and I mentioned that in my episode on Street Art, for instance. I know people who, when they go to other countries, they try to listen to some of the music from that place, read some of the literature, to get a feel for the vibe of a place. In a future episode I'll be talking in-depth about my belief that 'everywhere is interesting', and how some people do indeed travel because of the music that's been made there. As for Mongolia, a chap I know back in Sheffield also came across presumably the same Mongolian heavy metal throat singing band, because I don't imagine it's a particularly crowded genre, and it's definitely worth listening to, even if only to say that you have.

And definitely better than Taylor Swift's Fearless Vault Tracks.

{end pod jingle}

Well that's about all for this pod. Join me again next time when I talk about Salford, because everywhere is interesting. Until then, bring on all the pretenders; one day we will be remembered. And if you're feeling off colour, keep on getting better.

{Outro voiceover:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure. I hope you enjoyed it; if

you did, don't forget to leave a review on your podcast site of choice.

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Until next time, have safe journeys. Bye for now.}