

TIME TO DIE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL SIEBEN

NOT SO STRAIGHT SHOT from North Adams, MA, to Chicago, IL, in mid-June, 12 hours, 14 hours? We knew from the beginning we wouldn't be getting there until early in the morning the next day, but drive you must and we got going kind of late after one last exhilarating dip in the swimming hole up by the natural bridge where the clear, cold creek feeds into the Hoosic River. Through Williamstown past the most well-endowed college in America, hard not to laugh at that designation, then up winding Route 2 past the Grafton State Park and the Peace Pagoda down into dilapidated Troy and over the Hudson to Albany. West through the vastness of New York state; it's really long, nearing Rochester around 6 pm—and hey! Let's call Zippy, the Rochester connection, and check it out because we'd both never been there.

Zippy met us at the skateshop and took us to the local-built renegade spot by the train tracks on the huge slab of concrete that rests on toxic ground courtesy of Kodak. A few cement lumps, a rail, a pizza slice thing, and it was nice out there with the freight trains slowly rumbling past. Fooled around for a while, and then to a restaurant where the service was horrible and the Buffalo wings were very hot. Near the birthplace of Buffalo wings, but we weren't in Buffalo, close enough, though. These wings came in three gradations of hotness. Going for it, ordered the hottest which turned out to be exceedingly spicy, tongue was on fire, could barely eat four



of them. Well, we should be going. Got to make it to Chicago but right as we're about to leave Zippy starts telling us Rochester used to have a subway and it's easy to get into the tunnels. He's a big Rochester booster and if we'd like he'll give us a little tour. Who knew Rochester ever had a subway? Turns out they had quite an extensive system that flourished for a couple decades until closing down in the late 1950s due to, amongst other things, pressure from the auto companies, or so the story goes. Zippy knew how to get into them and was happy to oblige a visit to the subterranean depths if we were so inclined. Being tunnel freaks we couldn't pass it up so let's check 'em out. Drove downtown and by some famous wings and beer place, took a right turn off the

sidewalk and past a fence that was barely there to descend below street level and suddenly we were where the tracks used to be, enclosed on three sides with the slow river creeping by on the left seen through arches. The smell of the standing pool of water was really rank as Zippy took us on some sketchy wooden walkway over what looked like the ruins of a Roman bath, smelly as all hell, the walkway missing planks so we had to walk on the sides with our hands on the rail in the murky darkness. Hopped over at the end into a long high-ceilinged space under the bridge as Zippy expounded on the Rochester subway, graffiti everywhere of

course, such a cool feeling being down there as the city continued its business above. Drank it in, and then back past the odiferous pools of water and up the hill to the street. It was time to go, thanks Zippy. Around 10 pm, stopped for coffee and cigarettes, got on the 80 and now the long haul westward. *Continued on page 102...*

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THROUGH FAR WESTERN NEW YORK past Buffalo and then into Pennsylvania where the air was moist. There's a storm ahead and soon we started seeing some lightning, at first just hot flashes, heat lightning, no rain, pushing 70 miles per hour. Everything's fine. Somewhere in Pennsylvania the first drops started hitting and the lightning got more regular, big strikes coming down up in the distance. Well, I guess we're driving into the shit. But

this was getting biblical and just got more and more intense as time went on. Next, after 20 seconds of dead air with the sounds of moving things around in the background, a lamentable but typical break in continuity that happened, often making those tapes (some MDC from that brutally direct no nonsense first record). The police are the Klan, the mafia, so you better take your stand. Fuck the Multi-Death Corporations with their Misguided Devout Christians. The four last songs from that record, the others are on some other tape. "I'm a cancer cell/here to tell/You need me/I own you/I deserve the light"

"KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD AND VOID WILL SHOW US THE WAY"

it took a while, there was still just a smattering around 2 am but then it started pouring, which was bad enough but nothing compared to the huge long streaks of lightning up ahead. Holy shit, this is serious. Converging jagged lines of intense white light seeming to hit the roadway just a few hundred yards up ahead with the thunder booming concurrently as we headed into the maelstrom.

We'd started blasting the music, talking less, going forward—no turning back—turn the volume up high, we'll make it through. Tapes because Daniel's car has a tape player. The rain was coming down hard now and every few seconds two or three bolts of lightning with the whole night sky lit up like daytime and the semi-trucks as they passed or we passed them were sending up huge plumes of water that made it hard to see for 10 seconds or more. Or as Daniel called it, "dust," the water dust thrown up by those roadway behemoths. Wipers going full blast, sheets of water, between narrow gauntlets of Jersey barriers set up for construction, and after one particularly long passage it was like we'd gotten to the other side of an underwater passageway gasping for breath upon breaking the surface, and Daniel said, "God, I hate that." Listening to a tape made in 1983 in Estes Park, CO, which still worked fine after 23 years. Memorex MRX1, 90 minutes with a song list handwritten in red, blue, yellow, and green ink folded up inside on the back of a Mecht Mensch flyer. On one corner the plastic had broken away so you could see the chocolate-colored tape inside. First Flipper's insufferably hilarious rendition of "The Old Lady that Swallowed the Fly," then White Trash with "Nazis in My Neighborhood," some good Colorado hardcore, followed by Gang Green, the Groinoids, and the almighty Proletariat from Boston's *Unsafe at Any Speed* 7-inch compilation. The night sky in a constant explosion,

and a pause, then galloping forward with urgency, "Cold and wet/Out of work/And desperate...Gotta make it home/Shoot some hope/Feel the warmth/Kill the light" from "Kill the Light." "Stuck on drugs/Goin' drinkin'/Feelin' nuts/Goin' crazy/Feel like shit/Feelin' queer/They got

a label for this behavior/Call this living/Goin' drinkin'/Call this living/Think I'm dying" and "Turned 18, see any hope/Think you'll fit, no one gives a shit/It's all pitch black... And there's no God in heaven so get off your knees." "American Achievements."

American anthems. Some tape hiss and the ultimate lightning storm driving soundtrack, Void from the 1982 *Faith/Void* LP on Dischord, a masterpiece if there ever was one. The

Faith half is golden, but over the years Void has seemed more and more the not-really-superior but certainly standout side, with its proto-metal absolutely unhinged musical chaos, and right then after that gap in the tape it started with the low growl that turns into the insanity of "Who Are You?" "Who are you and why am I here/Who are you and why am I here?" It's screamed out by John Weiffenbach like he's being flayed alive with Bubba Dupree's psycho guitar solos going off in 17 directions at once. Yeah!

Keep your eyes on the road and Void will show us the way. This shit is great, amazing, totally insane.

As the drops pound the windshield another semi Hagpop-Lloyd container from who knows where on the right drums drums drums, and the guitars descend into the lower depths of hell and feedback.

This is good for the soul. "Time to Die" erupts with outlandish teenage vitriol and some of the most inadvertently funny and also chilling lyrics of all time. "I'm so fucking filled with hate/I need to decapitate/Just for kicks I need to kill/Everybody's got to get their thrills/It's time to die you're next/It's time to die you're next/It's time to die you're next."

Bracing. "Man, this doesn't seem to be stopping, it's like the end of the world." The storm, not the music.

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Really biblical, apocalyptic, and then in the doom up ahead a light in the sky moving across to the left. "Jesus, really glad I'm not on that plane."

"Condensed flesh was the flesh that the Nazis acquired when they tore the bodies from the barbed wire in Dachau/

They burned the cadavers to brown never escaping the terrible sounds of condensed flesh...condensed flesh...was their specialty." Keep going, keep driving, Chicago is now only six hours away if we stay alive, but maybe this really is the end of the world. It seems like it could be. How are we going to know when it does finally come down? This is as good a way as any; in the water-soaked blackness, punctuated by atomic light every few seconds, the intervals getting shorter and shorter. The end is nigh but just keep going now 3 or 4 am, it's not letting up. The tape clicks to the other side halfway through Void, at first gurgling with the volume going up and down. It's an old tape, but after struggling through "Ignorant People" the beginning of "Change Places" starts all distorted but snaps into clarity, screaming and ranting God knows what. The rollicking guitar and strange chik-chik sounds of "Organized Sports" with what seems like little kids yelling along with the chorus, "Organized sports/Let other people have their chanceeeeeee." Backwards-sounding tape loops, maniacal guitar, and "I'm not the hand of their tools/I'm going to live by my rules" of 'My Rules,' utter chaos in "War Hero," then spiraling, screeching, scorching Bubba at the beginning of

"DEVILISH LAUGHTER ACCELERATING TO ABSOLUTE AURAL ANARCHY"

"Think," with completely nuts traces of words spilling out in a mostly indecipherable torrent. "Why do angels cry in the night/ When a young pianist builder Kimberly as Iris, exacting Moran as and gets orchard Lake Avenue in America." Genius gibberish, and last but certainly not least, the "Aaahahhahahahahaha" demon's babble of "Explode," which if you look on the lyric sheet in lieu of lyrics it reads, "EXPLODE: BOOM...BANG...CRASH.... etc." That does it justice, devilish laughter accelerating to absolute aural anarchy, wailing and moaning. Well then, a tenth of a second until The Faith; tighter, more controlled, invigorating, "Sometimes I think too much/Sometimes, not enough/But either way I still got views/I live my life the way I choose." Well said, Alec MacKaye.

Looking over at Daniel, concentrating, hair lit up by another bolt, eyes forward, we're skimming forward. He had it under control but it was just getting too scary and, after one particularly close call with a semi, he looked over and said, "You look worried." And I was. Let's get off, this isn't worth it. Pulled into the next rest stop where people were stranded in their cars and a mini-van pulled up and disgorged an Amish family who ran inside. Wait—aren't they supposed to be taking buggies? But they had a driver; a normal guy who emerged who I guess was their chauffeur. Both of us passed out. About an hour later we woke up and the rain had stopped, almost like the whole thing had never happened except for that fresh after-the-deluge scent resplendent even there at the crappy rest stop. I got behind the wheel and started driving west with Daniel sound asleep. Headed into the Indiana morning, the road already dry, the air cleansed, windows open, fresh breeze coming in, it's all safe and easy now, a couple hours to Chicago. Put on Nina Simone and that was a needed change, but really couldn't have gotten through those long, drenched, electrified hours without Void.

For Sean Finnegan, drums, Void. 1965-2008. RIP. ♠