

muslingauze

Stockholm

[Disclaimer: It's no secret that Bryn Jones -- probably best known as the artist Muslingauze -- was quite reserved as a person, and somewhat of an enigma, it seems, even for those who knew him closely. I cannot claim to have been a close friend; our paths merely crossed for a few days the summer of 1998. But after Bryn's tragic, premature death, I felt that I wanted to tell the story of what happened while he visited Stockholm for the first, and as fate would have it, also the last time. Bryn might not have approved of having the rare live photos below put up for public display, I have had some serious qualms before deciding to do so anyway. My intention is not to desecrate the memory of a dead person; rather this site is meant to commemorate a unique artist whose star was steadily rising. Most fans will now never get the chance to attend a Muslingauze concert; seeing these pictures should hopefully be the next best thing.]



For 1998, Stockholm, Sweden, had been appointed to Cultural Capital of Europe. As part of these festivities, the [Nursery](#) organisation received fundings to arrange a festival for experimental music and arts throughout the month of June. Muslingauze was one of the artists that had been invited, others included luminaries such as Aube, Lydia Lunch, Sol Invictus, Panasonic, Hybryds, Peter Brötzman, Con-Dom, Zoviet France, and many more. The German fishing trawler cum cultural platform [M/S Stubnitz](#), which in its home port of Rostock hosted some 200 cultural events a year, was invited to serve as a scene for the events. To make a long story short, M/S Stubnitz immediately ran into trouble upon its arrival in early June. After that customs officials had made a minor cannabis find onboard, the tabloid press blew up the story about the "party boat loaded with drugs and weapons". Quite predictably, various authorities, local politicians, and vocal lobbyists, demanded that the ship should immediately be sent back to Germany. This didn't happen, but as a result Stubnitz didn't receive a license to sell alcohol on the premises -- a major blow to the financing of the festival. Over the following weeks, Stubnitz and its crew were ceaselessly harassed by the authorities, most notably by the Rave Commission, a special police squad invested to thwart the drug dealing at raves, techno clubs, etc. By the time Bryn Jones arrived, everything came to a climax.



The Muslingauze performance was slated for June 13th, with local band Sephiroth booked for the support slot. This wasn't a Friday the 13th, but still Bryn's visit was riddled by bad luck from the beginning. His flight from Manchester on the 12th was cancelled! It was impossible to change the booking to another flight that same day, and for a while the Muslingauze concert was in jeopardy. Luckily we managed to get a seat on a flight on the



morning of the 13th instead, the same day as the show. When we finally picked up Bryn at the airport, he was clearly taken by all the uncertainty surrounding the trip, and from not getting a whole lot of sleep since he had to leave home early at dawn. But he soon got into a better mood when he noticed the fancy BMW that us in the Nursery had at our disposal. Other people have mentioned that Bryn didn't really seem to be aware of how appreciated his music was around the world. This was also my impression: he couldn't believe that people on these northern shores listened to his music, and he repeated several times that we shouldn't be disappointed if noone showed up for the concert. Then after some breakfast on the ship, and after resting for some hours, it was time for the customary sightseeing. Bryn and I went for a walk through the central parts of town, and had a fruitful chat in the meantime. In retrospect, I wish I had been taking notes or something, so that I could have given a more accurate account of what we talked

about. Stockholm reminded him of Amsterdam, with all the waterways. We talked about his music making, a passion that occupied all his time -- so much that there wasn't time to listen to any other contemporary music. It appeared that the music he would perform that night were select pieces of his output from just a few days before. He explained the meaning behind the name Muslingauze, a play on the words "muslin" and "gauze" that had totally escaped me, English not being my mother tongue. Of course we also talked a bit about the political situation of the Middle East. Once back on the ship, it was about time to start the preparations for the night, with soundchecks and everything. Also it wasn't long before all hell would break forth.



Unknowingly for us involved with the festival, the Rave Commission had decided that it was time to sink M/S Stubnitz and its undesirable clientele, once and for all. On the evening of the 13th, they raided the ship and enforced the closing down of it. At this point Bryn wasn't yet aware of all the turmoil that followed in the wake of Stubnitz' arrival, so his first reaction was that the police had come for him -- since he was a supporter of the Palestinian cause, he was clearly a



"terrorist". We could assure him that this was not the case, but things were bad enough as they were. Suddenly we were not allowed to let any people inside the ship! After a short pow-wow it was decided that Muslingauze would perform anyway, in front of a tiny crowd consisting only of some crew members, festival workers, and a select lucky few that managed to sneak in before the doors had to be locked. Approximately 50-60 disappointed concert-goers that never were let inside had to remain on upper deck. But they had not come in vain: Stubnitz' skilled technicians brought out some speakers and TV monitors, so the assembly could at least see and hear a live video transmission of the show.



This was our way of saying "up yours!" to the police, and Bryn approved of this idea -- he said he had seen the same sort of oppression from the cops happening back in England. Unfortunately, I was only able to see parts of the concert myself as there were so many other things to handle at that point, not least talking with indocile police officers and upset fans of Muslingauze. But Bryn had a backing DAT tape with pretty harsh, rhythmic textures, his sort of patented spiralling hypnotic beat, to which he played on two or three different drums with great skill -- both with his bare hands and with a stick, as seen on the photos on this site. It was a very good concert, pity only that the circumstances turned a potentially fantastic party into something much lesser. Even though Bryn never got to see them all, at least he was now aware of that there was a not insignificant contingent of fans in Sweden.

Some concluding remarks: Three days later the decision to close the ship was overruled, and the festival could progress again. When this is written, it has recently been announced that the days of the Rave Commission are counted; it appears that around 50% of their apprehensions have been unfounded, a fact that contributed to the decision to disband this patrol. Obviously I cannot control how these pictures are downloaded, but out of respect for Bryn Jones, I ask that they are not used in various other contexts.

All photos © Christian Pallin, 1998. Thanks to Mikael Oretoft for aid with scanning. Any comments or objections can be [emailed](#) to me. Rest in peace, Bryn Jones!

-- Mårten Sahlén, Stockholm 1999-02-21