

***Lisbon via Boston* by Eric Evans**

AN INK PUBLICATIONS BROADSIDE

JAZZ PHASE

It's just a phase I told my wife
when it all began – I'll get
what I need and then move on.

Little did I know that every
Eric Dolphy note would imprint
itself on my DNA, that Cecil
Taylor would work my ribs
until I'm breathless. It never
occurred to me that Coltrane
would occupy a place on the
wall held in other homes
for Buddha or a pope. All that
time ago, when my friend got
me started, I just never understood
that one day improvisation would
turn into something analogous to
breathing, that my heart would
beat to its own free-form time.

SUN KIL MOON'S TINY CITIES AT 10:30 ON A SATURDAY NIGHT

They're not his songs
but they may as well be,
so finely does he work
their corners and bend
their notes, staking
his claim with authority,
a conquering hero with
a mission in mind,
knowing full well that
possession is the greater
part of any law.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE DIGNIFIED

"You ask me am I crazy for
playing the cello, why do you
not ask if they are not crazy
for shelling Sarajevo?"
– Vedran Smailovic

How do you serenade a mortar shell,
accompany a hail of rifle-fire, find
the notes to accompany the shudder
of destruction? Do the bullets fall
intermittently or do the snipers
consent to keep something akin
to a measured beat, the constrictions
of time bound to the dictates of
an anonymous trigger finger?

Music as its own form of weaponry
is a beautiful thing, a wounded solo
atop the library rubble, a primal
scream in formal wear, twenty-two
days in a single spot and then a
graveyard tour for the sake of the
dignified, the measures and bars
giving rise to the voices kept to
a whisper, the pauses and rests
like the collectively held breath
of the irreducibly damned.

LISBON VIA BOSTON

I could have easily followed her
back to Massachusetts, would've
carried her Telecaster case and

worn a Red Sox cap if necessary,
anything for a woman with a wrist
tattoo of a broken record and the
song that goes with it, the grooves
worn down by a thousand upward
strums while some writer makes
note of her Portuguese descent, a
country I've always wanted to see,
Lisbon via Boston, an indirect
route to a Mediterranean world,
her chocolate brown eyes the stuff
of postcards and lies, half-truths
about my ever wanting to return,
content to reside in the guitar
string nest of her wandering charms.

BAR BANDS

The bar bands work the essence
of the thing, no lights, no effects,
just the soundtrack for your standard
Tuesday night, the bricks and mortar
that build the bridge through the
week and a day beyond if you're
the slightest bit lucky.

The bar band is your brother-in-law's
break from his shitty job, his aging
home and the indignity of having to
answer for both. It's the kid at the
corner figuring his way through a
chord at a time, a beer-soaked
mentorship in the ways of the broken
string and the empty house, the singular
applause of the soundman as he
checks his watch and starts to
shut the place down, the buckle
and snap of cases and knobs
echoing through the barren club.

AT A PUNK ROCK SHOW WITH MY 12-YEAR-OLD SON

His first.

His first time experiencing the way
the kick drum rattles your sternum
and the bass guitar – his instrument
of choice – when mixed just right
will rearrange your insides.

His first time to scream himself hoarse.

His first time to shake his body loose.

His first time to see me do the same.

His first time to know the singular
scent of spilled beer and sweat.

And when the slamdancers got a little
too enthusiastic, it was the first
time in a long time that he turned
to me for cover, sliding to my side
as smoothly as he possibly could,
taking note, I'm sure, of my upraised
hands and protective stance.

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