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Pride Runs Deep tour report – Eastern Europe tour 2008

Day 0 - Friday 18/4

Final day of preparation for the tour. Today we'll pick up the van and collect some gear. Morning sunshine was brutally smashed by the rental company, announcing the van wouldn't be available before 18:00 (instead of 12:00). Oh, how we love these little surprises. So after re-scheduling the activities planned for the day and struggling through traffic jams, we arrive at the rental company.

To our relief the van works great. One more surprise though, it has a cd player instead of the expected cassette player. So the whole crew packs over 300 cds on last minute notice. Just hope we packed enough of them to last us through the countless hours on the road... ha!

All is well now for the next day and we head home for a well deserved night of too few hours of sleep.

Day 1 - Saturday 19/4

Some arrive early, some late. Apparently Edwin "missed" the train, but I bet he was just sleeping in, the lazy bastard. We stuff all our gear and other luggage in the van, and it fits surprisingly well considering the amount of stuff gathered by the 8 people who will be traveling in the van.

At about 9.30 we hit the road, off to Eastern Germany for our first show. At the German border we team up with the guys from

Bound in Blood and after some chit-chat we head into Germany. Sometime later a shock of horror goes through the van as we realize we didn't bring any Slayer cds along. Oh well, we'll survive, probably. Then, out of the blue, our roadie Dennis starts to find himself in horrible pain due to an

almost exploding bladder. Guess those 1 liter cans of beer got the best of him. We try to find a place to stop, but none show up, so we just get off the highway in order for Dennis to relief himself (mostly over his own pants). Damn those Germans for selling us them tasty big-ass beers and then deprive us of truck stops for many kilometers.

As the afternoon closes in we start getting closer to the club. We get off the highway and enter rural Eastern Germany. Only, we still have about 25 kilometers to go, and as the small roads lead us through tiny villages and dark forests we start to wonder where the heck we'll end up. But finally we make it to Neustadt an der Orla, which is actually a reasonably sized town. The club, EXIL, is pretty cool. It's small, consisting of four different rooms; one with a stage and bar, two chill-out rooms with couches and a kitchen which also doubles as the backstage area. The stage is only about half a meter high and the dance floor is covered with two Persian rugs on which the word "MOSH" is duct taped. First band of the night is a local band called S.P.A.D. Being local they get a good response to their set. Next one up is BIB. They play a great set, and although unknown to the crowd, they also receive a very good response.

Then we get to do our thing, for the first time ever in front of a foreign audience. Though wasted from a long journey, everyone is looking forward to rocking hard. The crowd reacts with heavy 2-stepping, moshing, circle pits, rowboat-into-pile-on, leap frogging. We're even persuaded into doing an encore (since we don't have any more material, we just repeat two songs). Crazy shit for real! Tonight we have to sleep in the club, but that's going to be a bit of a problem, since there is an afterparty going on until the early morning. It's called a 90s party, although we don't see why, and the only people that are being entertained are about eight metalheads who are getting completely wasted. Some try to sleep through all of this while others seek refuge in the van. Ivar is highly irritated by all of this and repacks the luggage in the van in order to crash in the load compartment. Much to the surprise of others who later come looking for their sleeping bags and find someone sleeping there. It turns out to be a good choice for Ivar. With earplugs inserted, it's reasonably quiet, and taking a midnight piss only requires opening the back door; he can piss straight out of the van.

In the meantime the others are still doing some heavy partying. Unnamed BIB members and show promoters are being spotted running around in their underwear, others help emptying the venue's alcoholic drinks stock. Barry ends up dive-rolling over Martin, who's lying on a couch, and smashes through a framed picture, leaving broken glass behind for Martin to sleep in. Martin doesn't even care. In the early morning the metalheads are kicked out onto the street and after some drunk screaming and yelling, it is finally silent. It must have been 05:00 or so.

Day 2 – Sunday 20/4

After a short, lousy night for some and an ok night for others (the van-sleepers), we have a cup of coffee and then head for Zittau. We have to drive about 280 km; a piece of cake, by far the shortest drive of this tour. It's funny when you realize that before this tour, we'd never even driven more than 200 km to get to a show.

We take it easy, pause several times and arrive early at Cafe Emil, which hasn't opened yet. So we decide to take a walk around the ghost town that Zittau is on a cold Sunday afternoon in April. We find the BIB guys, who'd driven ahead of us, in a bar and join them for some hot drinks. Pascal thinks the following sentence will get him some hot chocolate: "Hey sir, geef me effe een chocomel".

It works too. Then starts the discussion about when we should leave for Zagreb, Croatia. Tomorrow we have a show there, and it's a long way to go. Probably about 13 hours, and we have to cross several borders with possibly annoying customs. Finally we decide to start driving right after tonight's show.

This will most likely rob us of precious hours of sleep, but at least we'll be sure to make it to Zagreb in time. Martin and Alex volunteer to drive.

After this we return to Cafe Emil, which has opened in the meantime. The club is located on the first floor, on the second floor there's a large room with beds, and there is also a shower in the building. Many find this quite pleasing and decide to make use of these facilities during the couple of hours left until the show starts. At around 8 we are served a good three-course vegan meal, which is not appreciated by everyone as some of us are convinced carnivores. There is a pretty big stage in the club, but because the club can't pay the sound guy (who owns the P.A.) for this show, we set up a floor show. Not a bad thing, because, as First up is a German band called Reason To Care. These youngsters play a good set of old school sXe hardcore with high vocals. BIB follows, and plays what would sadly be their last show on this tour. Mark's (singer of BIB) mother is suffering from cancer and the situation calls him home. Of course it's a shame we won't be able to finish the tour together, but naturally everybody respects Mark and BIB's decision. We sincerely hope Mark finds the strength to cope with these difficult times.

While BIB is playing, we wake up Martin who slept through dinner and the first band in order to get as much rest as possible for tonight's drive. He clocks a good six hours of sleep! Then we get on stage and the show turns out to be pretty good. While at first it seemed like it would be a wasted night, we manage to get the crowd going again. Funny to see the attending "hardcore" audience standing still while a bunch of "alternative" guys let themselves go in the pit, fueled by alcohol.

After the show we get our stuff into the van again and say our sad goodbyes to the BIB guys.

Day 3 – Monday 21/4

1:30 on the clock as we start our journey to Zagreb. The ride starts in high spirits as we empty the case of beers provided by Cafe Emil and embark on a farting war. After a few hours the energy is finally gone and people doze off into a light sleep; often interrupted by pit stops and cramps from lying in uncomfortable sleeping positions. However, it proves to be a wise decision to leave at night, since a large part of the route is non-highway. Mad props to Martin for driving through the night.

At around 16:00 we reach the Croatian border. We were afraid we might have to unload the van, but the customs just check the passports. The police, however, wanted to take a look at our luggage, and the officer wondered whether we'd have to pay something for the PRD cds we were bringing. We overheard his co-worker telling him it was no problem, but he came back and asked what the cd's were for. We told they were for promotional purposes, to which he replied "Your promotion starts here". And we had to give him two cds. Some corrupt bastard, but at least we didn't have to unload the van.

Sometime later we finally make it to Zagreb and everybody is exhilarated to leave the van. The ride proved to be a literal pain in the ass and everybody was getting on the edge and of each other's nerves. But it would turn out to be SO worth it. Martins parents-in-law are from Zagreb and they own several apartments/houses throughout the city, and we were allowed to crash in one of 'em during our two nights stay in Zagreb. Sweet!

But no rest for the wicked just yet, first we had to play a show. The only problem was that we didn't know how to get to the club. So we asked this woman from "our" building, and she was crazy/kind enough to drive along with us to show us the way. Turns out the club were only a couple of minutes away, nice. It was called Rock Club Time and it looked pretty cool, it was located in the basement of some building. Fortunately the promoter had been able to fix a drum kit and a second guitar cabinet, which BIB had taken home with them. He'd also brought some food for us which his mother had made, good stuff. So far no complaints about the food at the clubs!

We were the only band to play that night, the show had been moved to a different day only a week ago and it was a Monday night. So we didn't really expect anyone to show up, but sure enough there were about 30 people in when we started playing. We were all dead tired, but we gave it our best. The show wasn't the tightest, but still pretty energetic and we even got some of the crowd going again, cool! It was funny how they didn't really know what to do with the moshy parts (just some headbanging), but they mostly went nuts during the fast parts. Usually it's the other way around from what we've seen. Afterwards we said goodbye to some cool locals we'd hung out with prior to the show and went 'home' pretty quickly. But before we could sleep we had another challenge to face: carrying all our gear up to the 4th floor, where the apartment was located. After that it was finally shower-chill-sleep time. Still, most didn't go to bed until 2:00 am.

Day 4 – Tuesday 22/4

Some wake up around 9 and enjoy some very sunny and warm weather on the apartment's balcony. What a great way to start our day off. After paying a visit to the local supermarket and some good breakfast we are ready to check out Zagreb. We take the bus and tram, where Alex pleases all passengers with one of the nastiest farts ever. Zagreb has a nice old town center and we check out some of the sights and then some stores – lots of great skate clothing stores. We ran into a kid from last night's show who guided us around a bit and then had a drink with us by a bar, outside in the sun. Dennis got some new shoes – the old ones smelled so bad that he left them at the store, where they threw them away immediately. Later we have dinner at a nice and cheap restaurant and then get some Jägermeister and ridiculous sunglasses for a couple of cheap laughs. We decide to take the tram back early to the apartment. While waiting for it to arrive, we pulled a couple of Jackass-like pranks on the Zagrebians waiting.

For example Dennis bending over in front of someone, 'accidentally' showing his huge ass-crack. Infantile, but hilarious nonetheless. Back at the place there are about sixteen 0.5 liter beer cans waiting to be emptied, which we'd bought in the supermarket that morning. Ivar starts with one and thinks it tastes kinda funny, and after decoding some Croatian he realizes the beer is of the non-alcoholic kind. This causes some (Edwin, being sxe) to laugh out loud and others (Martin) to stare at their beers disillusioned, mute. Ivar decides to take the bus for a beer-run, even though he already had a buzz going. He succeeds, to the relief of many. Hilarity all around when later that evening Dennis finds out he's been drinking non-alcoholic beer for some time, while there's still a 'real' beer standing by his chair. This causes Pascal to laugh out so loud, he breaks through his chair, which of course had everyone rolling on the floor laughing. Everyone hits the sack pretty early, to enjoy another good night's sleep.

Day 5 – Wednesday 23/4

Everybody's up early and we get all the gear down the stairs and into the van, actually earlier than scheduled. Tonight we're playing a show in Vienna. The drive should bring us there in about 5-6 hours. The atmosphere in the van is really good as we cruise over the well constructed roads of Croatia.

Soon we reach the Slovenian border. This time the customs officer not only wants to see our passports, but also the driver's license and the documents for the van. He takes his time looking at the documents with that typical customs-attitude. Then he tells us to park the van somewhere and we have to open the back door, while he gets a trolley. Everyone's thinking: ok, this is it, now we have to unload the whole darn thing. But once he sees the amount of luggage piled in the compartment, the look on his face changes. And when we show him our gear list, we are dismissed.

Sometime later, while we are driving through Slovenia, we get pulled over by the police for another passport check. Ok... we've just been checked at the border... I guess we really did look suspicious.

They also do an extensive check, and since we're at a gas station, we decide to just take a break. Then disaster strikes, not by the police, but by Edwin, who closes one of the van's doors, not knowing Marcel's hand is in the door pane. Two of his fingers get stuck, and in a reflex he pulls them back, ripping some skin of one finger. After screaming from the top of his lungs he almost passes out, so it takes a while before we're able to continue. Marcel ends up with one black nail and a finger in bandages, and he suspects he won't be able to play tonight. We're just hoping he'll be alright by then.

The rest of the trip goes well, although the drive through Vienna eat up so much time (thanks to our wonderful navigation system *cough* that there's no time left to check out the city, so we go straight to tonight's venue: the Viper Room. This turns out to be one of the most awesome places ever, which is once again located underground. First stairs down there is a backstage area and some bathrooms, another stairs down there is the actual stage. It all looks great, and it's the biggest place we'll play on this tour. Tonight we'll be headlining for four other bands, all local. The first two bands respectively play their first and second show. The drummers asked if they could use our cymbals, because they didn't have them. Pretty lame to ask for it on such short notice, because they just wouldn't be able to play if we'd said no, so we didn't really have a choice. Maybe they should have bought some gear instead of the expensive fashion caps they were wearing. The bands were all pretty diverse, all hardcore, but each incorporating flavors of either death metal, emo or mosh. The crowd mostly consisted of fashion emo fruitcake kids, and it was interesting to see that there seemed to be more girls than guys. Most of the kids were totally into 2 stepping and beatdown moshing. One guy was really funny as he tried spinkicks although his pants were too tight. There was a really cool backstage area, which was a separate bar with lots of mirrors and cozy corners to sit in. But there was no entrance control so everybody was just walking in and out and it was crowded all the time, so we didn't hang out much there, and definitely didn't leave any of our stuff there. So it wasn't really much of a backstage area I guess. The club was pretty crowded at first, but unfortunately, by the time we had to play, a bunch of people had already left. I guess that's what happens when you book five bands on a Wednesday night. Still quite some people stayed to watch us and they had enough energy left to go nuts during some songs (the 2-step and mosh parts), we even got two girls dancing with us on stage, haha. At one point Ivar grabbed one and carried her over his shoulder unto the dancefloor.

After the show we get some help with our gear so it was up again in no time. Tonight we'd be sleeping at Floppy's place, the guy who'd booked the show. He had a very nice and clean place in an old apartment building downtown Vienna, with plenty of room for us to crash.

And crashing is what we set out to do pretty much right away, since it was already 2 in the morning, and we had to get up again at 8. Some were wise enough grab the opportunity of taking a shower, while others chose to hold on to the carefully gathered dirt on their bodies. This time Alex and Martin crashed in the van, so we could leave the gear in there. Since parking was kind of a problem in this area, we'd put the van in a rather awkward position (between a car and some garbage containers, halfway onto the pavement). But we figured we'd be off early anyway, so it would be ok.

Day 6 – Thursday 24/4

The van's parking position proved to be far from ok, because the van crashers were brutally awoken by an old wining bitch hitting the windows with her keys, screaming something about an outrage and Polizei. Then someone else came along, who asked in a civilized way if we could move the van, because we might get a parking ticket. So we did, and after saying goodbye to Floppy we get back in the van and start looking for a supermarket. We were a bit late according to schedule, but this turned out to be fortunate, since the supermarket we'd found had only just opened. We get food and drinks for the day and since today is Marcel's birthday we also get some party supplies like hats, balloons and horns. Especially the horns caused plenty of laughter, as we annoyed each other and the pedestrians while struggling through the traffic of Vienna. Later on, Edwin would get so irritated by the horns that he threw them in the trash bag.

We pass through the Czech Republic again and enter Poland. The roads are getting worse and so do the conditions of the many villages we pass through. As we are deprived of highways again, the kilometers pass by slow and the temperature in the van rises as the sun is burning. Especially the back of the van is not a 'cool' place to be right now.

Finally, after another long day of driving we reach Club Schron in Piekary-Slaskie. The neighborhood we end up in looks like the kind you don't want to park your van in, but the venue is cool. I mean literally cool, it's little more than 10 degrees inside, so instead of burning alive we will now freeze. Oh, the irony! The venue is located underground again, it is divided into small rooms, which have a bit of a cave/castle atmosphere, and are connected with small hallways and stairs. The stage is in one of the 'bigger' rooms and is just big enough to hold a drumkit and two guitar cabinets. The room's just about bigger than a rehearsal place so we hope no more than about 20 people will show up, otherwise not everyone will be able to watch us, haha. And that's what happens, since there is another show going on, only 15 km from here, with more bands. The promoter wasn't able to find a substitute band for BIB, so we are the only one to play tonight. We start playing around 21:00. During the show, it's cool to see how people get a little looser with each song. When we start, some are sitting down and others are just nodding their heads a little bit. After a while some start a mosh pit and in the end pretty much everyone is moving in their own way; no hardcore dancing 'code' here. Again the crowd insists on an encore; three more songs.

So another fun show!

Afterwards we hang out with some of the crowd; the Poles turn out to be very hospitable and talkative, and they invite us to drink some vodka with them. When we are getting back in the van, people are still hanging around us and talking, most of them a bit drunk. With some bums hanging around as well it gets a little grim, but things stay cool and we leave, heading for the promoter's girlfriend's house, where we will spend the night. It's a pretty big place on the edge of town, so once again plenty of space for us, and woohoo, there's a shower as well. We left the venue pretty early, so plenty of time left for sleeping. Right before midnight Pascal sings a hilarious "happy birthday" to "Marchello" (again, because we also did it during the show, just to annoy him). Marcel recorded it with his mobile and now uses it as a ringtone. After wishing each other goodnight for about half an hour we go to sleep.

Day 7 - Friday 25/4

After a good night's sleep we head for Bydgoszcz, a pretty big city in northern Poland. The weather is great and the ride is pretty smooth, although it's once again a long one: about 8 hours. This can partly be blamed on making a lot of stops. That's what you get with 8 people in a van who all need to do their thing like piss, get food and drinks, smoke and stretch their legs. We arrive at the Estrada Bar to find a really cool place with walls full of promotional posters for hardcore shows. The club is pretty big and consists of two rooms, one with a high ceiling, a bar and comfy couches all over the place. Then there are some small stairs which lead to another room with a stage, which is very spacious and not too high. We get our own backstage area with toilet, nice! (although the toilet is located in some small room with cleaning supplies and all kinds of junk.) It's a promising show as it is Friday night and the club can count on a group of regular visitors.

After unloading the equipment, Twixi (the promoter) takes us to a vegetarian/organic restaurant called Green Way. On the way we pass numerous posters promoting tonight's show. The food is great and to Marcel's relief it's not pasta. (He hates it and we've been served pasta three times so far). They've got some great smoothies too. Edwin, being vegetarian, is of course as happy as can be.

Then it's time to start the show. The first two bands, My First Time and Good Old Days, are from Poland. Both play a really great set of fast oldschool hardcore and are well received by the crowd, who go off right from the first chords. Then we get to play and it's fucking great. There's movement going on during the whole set: old style slamdancing, circle pits and pogo style! Both Alex and Ivar get to

crowdsurf while singing. It's a complete madhouse and we have to play two more songs as an encore to please the crowd. Pretty much everyone agrees that this is the coolest show so far.

Afterwards we stay for some time drinking and hanging out with locals. Pascal manages to kiss a girl, and then another one. When we leave for the hotel, he plots on getting back for sexy time with pretty lady. She can do sexy things with his gram. But the rest of the band doesn't think this is such a great idea, since it's getting pretty late and we have another show to play tomorrow. The hotel turns out to be quite a long way from the club, so it's out of the question anyway.

Twixi and the owner of the club ride along to guide us to the hotel. Unfortunately they are both pretty wasted and they brought some vodka in the van to get even more wasted. They argue as we drive through the city. Twixi keeps saying "Ok ok, I must focus", while 'Owner' keeps yelling directions in Polish. It was both hilarious and very annoying at the same time. After driving in circles for some time we finally make it to the hotel. Martin opts to spend the night in the van while the others occupy two hotel rooms. They look alright, although only one of them has a bathroom and shower. It takes some time to get Twixi and 'Owner' to leave, as they want to stay and drink some more vodka. The vodka, however, is still in the van, so we tell them to go look for it there, knowing that Martin is notorious for falling asleep fast and sleeping deep, so there's no way they will wake him up.

When Pascal and Edwin take off their socks, they release an air so foul that Ivar forces them to take a shower, for the sake of everyone's health. They obey, fortunately. After Edwin "accidentally" wrecks some of the curtains, we fall asleep at around 3.

Day 8 – Saturday 26/4

The last 'real' day of the tour! We wake up around 8.30; the stay in the hotel had been quite pleasant, be it kinda short. Our final destination would be Wroclaw, and the drive was probably the smoothest so far. No highways, but it was pretty quiet on the road. Except when Dennis mooned some construction workers, and then a bus full of young schoolgirls. I sure felt sorry for them.

We were hoping to get to Wroclaw early, because it's supposed to have a really nice old town. But when we do, the clock's already passed 17:00, so we just stay at and around the club. I guess that's what touring is all about. Traveling all over the place but not really seeing anything.

Tonight's venue, the Wagon Club is once again a cool place located below ground level. It's situated in an old train station, and that's also the theme that used for the interior. Outside there's also an old passenger car that is being used as a bar, pretty awesome. We unloaded the gear and hung outside the club a bit, which was not a bad thing since the weather was great.

Tonight we'd play with Deathrow, a hardcore band from the Warschau area, so they'd driven about as far as we had. The show would start at 21:00, but by then not a lot of people had shown up yet, so we weren't really expecting much of this show. This one guy who'd seen us play in Piekary also showed up. He didn't speak English, but apparently he liked us so much he was willing to drive quite a bit to see us play again. How cool!

Deathrow plays a good show while more people are starting to come in, but there's not a lot of movement in the crowd yet. Then we play, probably the worst show of the tour. Everyone was just exhausted. Still the crowd seems to dig us and there's quite a bit of dancing, so it's still a pretty cool show. Afterwards we hang out with some of the crowd. Once again they insist on drinking vodka with us, but not everyone's into that, because we'd decided to get back in the van right after the show, and drive straight home. Some can't resist and get a taste of some really smooth, quality vodka. Local custom was to chase it with coke.

But as said, we couldn't stay long so the hanging out is over soon and we say goodbye and start driving. First we stop at a gas station to buy some drinks and food; Ivar gets a bottle of the earlier mentioned vodka. The spirits are high and some are talking about "drinking throughout the whole night". We'll see about that. And so we head into the dark night with Martin behind the wheel.

Some enjoy their beers and soon the bottle of vodka is opened. Dennis got a glass from the club to drink from. Of course all of this doesn't go unnoticed to various people's bladders, so soon there's an urgent need for a pit stop. While getting out in a hurry, Dennis accidentally kicks the bottle of vodka out of the van, which falls into pieces. A feeling of pity arises in some, while Edwin finds it rather amusing. Still he is the one who's responsible enough to clean it up, so the van won't drive through the glass when leaving.

Later on the alcohol kicks in again to hunt Pascal, and he feels the need to vomit in the van.

Dennis manages to get a trash bag for him, but Pascal is too drunk to puke straight, and half of it missed the bag. The smell in the van is the worst, and we have to stop before others start puking as well. Pascal's pretty much passed out by now, and we take all his stuff which has puke on it and put it in a trash bag. This deals with most of the foul smells.

After this everyone in the back starts falling asleep (what happened to the "drinking all night" plans?), while Martin and Alex stay awake to watch the road. After a couple of hours they get so tired that even 4 coffeekicks in 1 hour can't keep them awake. Since nobody is in a state decent enough to be able to drive, we decide to just take a nap on a parking lot for an hour. Then, with regained strength, we drive on, back into the Netherlands. We arrive in Amsterdam around 13:30 or so, to drop off Maggy, who has to work again the next morning. Then we head for Rotterdam, drop everyone off at their homes. Ivar is the last to get home, at around 17:30h.

And so the first tour of Pride Runs Deep ends. I think I can speak for everyone when I say that it's absolutely crazy, exhausting, intense, but most of all: lots of fun! The shows were great with awesome crowds, the atmosphere in the band was generally good, and there were hardly any 'real' problems to face. Hope we can do this again soon!

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