

Vital, Electric, Alive — The Story of Logic Downwards

story · January 1, 2016

Prologue

*I was traveling with tourists packed in a bus looking over flat lands\
We didn't know what to expect we were relying upon our guide\
We were all involved in conversations amongst ourselves\
The din of dueling voices coalesced to make for a garbled mess\
And the guide came on the mic to say*

**Just as dreams pass so in turn will this\
We will soon escape from this landscape emptiness\
Just as all illusions sometimes drift away\
So it is inevitable that this scene will change* [1]*

The Call

It was a magnificent spring day in May, 1989, Cranford, New Jersey when I received the call. The windows of my apartment were open wide and I was sitting on an old storage trunk picking an acoustic guitar, welcoming the warm breeze and sounds emanating from the street below. The building was a 2-story brick walkup with tall, floor to ceiling windows. It stood in the center of town overlooking the train station which provided easy access to the vibrant musical playground of New York City. My space was the top floor directly above a dentist's office and shoe store, so while it was necessary to be civil during the day, after business hours I could get relatively loud without fear of disturbing anyone. A few of my previous tenancies did not afford me the luxury of playing music at a decent level without a visit from the cops, so it was a welcome change to be able to turn up the volume and be left alone.

At the time I had a few different musical projects going on but primarily I was the guitarist in a band known as 'Logic Downwards.' It is a difficult group to describe stylistically, and I don't mean that in the way that a lot of musicians do. Members of bands often declare: we don't sound like anyone else, in order to generate interest. The reality is that we all draw from our influences – consciously or unconsciously, and those influences make their way into our work. In the best cases, we have taken in prodigious volumes of music and manage

to assemble a unique sonic collage of our own to unleash upon the world. What makes the music of Logic Downwards so difficult to categorize, even to this day, is that we incorporated a number of various, diametrically different styles and genres together and intermixed them in odd arrangements. This is not to say that it was our intention to do this, which was the beauty of it. Instead, it just happened to turn out that way.

Like any number of bands, we were musically inexperienced and unschooled – factors that played a key role in our overall sound. We didn't know anything about playing songs in a certain key, so we were all over the place, abruptly changing keys and tempos all the time – and often incorporating atonal chord progressions, not by design, but just because they sounded right to us and were most natural to our playing style. We stitched parts of songs together to fit the setting of the stories they told, either bridging the transitions with odd interludes or coming completely to a halt with one part before immediately launching into another. It could be a little jarring, but it worked somehow, and if it was weird or unusual to our ears, all the better. And though we sometimes began songs shouting out 1, 2, 3, FOUR! we didn't consider that doing this had any real significance in terms of keeping each of us musically in sync. Mostly, one of us would just begin playing and the rest would jump in whenever. It could appear as sloppy to some, but it worked in spite of itself, because each of us were very comfortable with this approach. And we looked the part – most people didn't suspect that our sound was based on these limiting factors. Instead our audiences assumed that we meant to play the way we did, and they were right, because we didn't really know any different.

In the end, this naïve quality turned out to be our undoing. Though we had an edgy, professionally produced demo recorded by a seasoned engineer who was able to capture our sound without modifying our style, we had difficulty getting gigs with any regularity. Not because the people booking bands for clubs didn't like us; they just didn't know what other bands to pair us up with. These were the days when groups played 40 or so minutes of original material and then got off the stage. Any number of acts often shared the same bill on a given night, so the line-up was relatively important. Inserting Logic Downwards into a line-up of like sounding bands was infinitely challenging. One promoter confessed: "I can't put you with the metal bands and I can't pair you up with Southern rockers or any of the cover bands. Your style doesn't mix well with the jazzers, pop or new-wave artists. Honestly, I'm at a loss as to where to fit you in on any of the bills."

It was a practical approach from the club's perspective. Promoters didn't like to mix genres, they wanted to make sure that whoever was in attendance would sit through an entire

evening's worth of bands. Putting us on the bill meant risking people would leave when we hit the stage, because the style of music would abruptly change, rather than gel cohesively with the other acts.

We were truly a punk band at our core – but with a broad sweeping and ambitious musical vision that made it difficult to gain acceptance with the hardcore scene as well. In addition to frenetic, 3-chord anthems; there were also quiet, lengthy introspective numbers as well – and often the two styles were different parts of the same song. So we were outcasts even among the punk rockers. But with a crisp, polished demo in our hands, we were able to secure at least an initial gig at a number of bars and clubs. The trick was being asked to come back and ultimately that was dependent on how many people came out to see us and how well we were received. We had been at it for several years with mixed results, but not for lack of effort. It was evident however, that we had not yet found our audience.

So it was a surprise of sorts on that spring day to receive a call from a promoter inviting Logic Downwards to perform as part of a July 4th music festival at Nomahegan Park in Cranford, New Jersey. We had no previous experience performing at an event of this nature. I had no idea who else was on the bill or what the lineup was, only that we were scheduled to go on stage at 2pm which sounded as good a time as any for an all-day music fest. Perhaps later in the day there would be potential for more of an audience but I had no qualms with the time slot presented to us. It would most certainly be the largest crowd we would ever have performed in front of. I had submitted our demo tape on a whim, never expecting that we'd be selected to participate. But getting the gig was good timing, mostly because the way things were going; this was going to be the band's last show.

*We were traveling in a pass that ran between some grassy hills\
And through that pass we could see a building from which a waterfall spilled\
The water emitted from a black coffin with a white cross painted on the lid\
Someone turned to me and this is what that person said*

*Just as dreams pass so in turn will this\
We will soon escape from this landscape emptiness\
Just as all illusions sometimes drift away\
So it is inevitable that this scene will change*

**Inside the building was a shopping mall of much consumer fame\
I looked in it for something special but I couldn't find a thing\
I paused to talk to a shadow man inside a shadow store*

He said what makes this place so special lies up on the second floor* [1]

Bands break up – it is one of those inevitable outcomes that seem pre-destined. It was especially so with Logic Downwards. We were just waiting for the whole thing to fall in on itself. There was no chance that it wouldn't. With the odd mix of personalities in the group it could have been any one or more of us that opted out. There were the usual band politics and power struggles but oddly enough those things did not factor into our demise. We each held strong to a pretty uniform desire to play original music which superseded most of our personal issues and adversity. Our uniting bond was that desire and our relative musical inexperience. It would just take one of us to remove themselves from the fragile equation to bring it all down.

The chemical makeup of Logic Downwards had all the necessary elements of a punk rock band's key architecture. Our drummer, Scott, never had a lesson in his life – so his approach to the kit was not only completely fresh but it allowed him to play on his natural strengths and utilize a style that he was comfortable with, right from the start. While he lacked some of the fundamental skills that a mentor may have imparted to him, he wasn't short on knowing what sounded good to him and what made sense in terms of how his playing could best accent, drive and otherwise serve the songs. I don't think in terms of punk rock you could ask for anything more from someone who hadn't even hit a crash cymbal until they had a full band standing in front of them.

The bass player, Brian, was more methodical. Brian just wanted to know what notes he needed to play and when. To the benefit of the band, when the root structure of the song was in place, he'd rarely stray from it. There was nothing flashy or over the top about the rhythm section. Scott and Brian embraced their roles and played well within their limitations. In this respect, they were bandmates to be treasured. In a punk rock band; simplicity, drive and passion top virtuosity 10 out of 10 times.

Duane provided much of the melody as the band's keyboard player. It was an instrument we knew we had to be very careful with, as a load of bands at that time abused its signature synth sounds. Duane and I coordinated our parts closely, playing off one another with a mind towards keeping the parts tasteful and succinct, rather than a dominating saturation.

Our front-man, Bruce, provided the vocals and an endless supply of lyrics. He was the catalyst, the gunpowder in the dynamite – his curiosity always sparking a light. He had a wily, nervous energy that gave him a somewhat dark edge that was ever-present. Bruce exhibited an appreciation for the idiosyncrasies of the world akin to someone who had only

recently been introduced to fresh air. He relished shining a light into the shadows of society. It was a raw, uncluttered view – and no detail of his observations escaped him. He recognized the importance of each puzzle piece of the world's dark underbelly and sought to exploit it, to extract exactly how it fit in or failed to. And he was successful at incorporating this into his lyrics and the condensed structure of a song.

The stories and subjects of Logic Downwards songs often reveled in macabre and morbid concepts. They were filled with lost and lonely characters often reeling from the sting of life's bitterness or from self-induced hardships. Drug addiction and infidelity were among the topics as well as twisted, imaginative musings on life and death and the troubled lives and stories of those who lost their way. The song titles themselves are somewhat telling of Bruce's reflections on mortality, IE: Nacht Und Nebel, Babies Fly, Stained Blood Money, Death Rap, Anger Sex, Surrealistic Kill Nightmare, and of course Life / Death – one of our signature opening selections.

*Life is just shadows\
Animating a shell\
Death is merely passing\
To another realm\
So soft and slow\
And then you're mesmerized\
As you pass on over\
To the other side* [2]

Conversely, the underlying message of many of his songs often underscored the importance of living life with vigor and purpose. Bruce was nothing if not a poet who was, like many of us, deeply intrigued with the nature of life, the stories it contained and the various dark labyrinths its characters found themselves lost in. His creative abilities at being able to successfully portray these worlds and bring its characters to life made no small impression on me as a curious and inexperienced songwriter myself. We complimented each other's strengths as the well-crafted lyrics became vivid imagery next to the mostly atonal and minor keys I was writing music in. His words now had a soundtrack. Literal, scenic landscapes became aural nightmares. My simple guitar riffs blossomed into sounds infinitely more dark, compelling and complex than they would have ever been on their own.

*In a grey room that is three feet wide with a mirror at the end\
And with dim lit ceilings eight feet high claustrophobia sets in*

*I sink into my staring eyes into that distant depth\
At the end of those double black corridors I come back upon myself\
And the pain that's in the eyes sometimes can bind one down\
Gravity besets the muscles and ropes you to the ground*

**In mounting terror and helplessness I see my thus bound form\
As invisible hands shove silver needles into my lips and tongue\
I scream in pain for the nightmare to end\
But is this a nightmare or is it real* [1]*

How We Met

I met Bruce at a party to which I happened to bring my guitar to. He was already friends with Duane and Scott, who were also present at this initial gathering, which took place in the breakfast cereal capital of the free world: Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I was in town visiting family having relocated to the swamplands of Jersey a year prior. As I shook Bruce's hand I noticed that he held a fat notebook with a sheaf of loose paper that I immediately recognized as song lyrics. They were scribbled with ink up and down and all over the page as though penned by a madman. Upon realizing I carried a guitar, he bristled with excitement. It wasn't much more than an hour later that we had taken over the living room of the small apartment and engaged all the parties' participants in a rollicking, free-form hootenanny. I had all my gear, a small battery powered amp and a number of effects pedals that I lay out on the floor. I handed Bruce a microphone and away we went. Others joined in utilizing whatever was around; there was an old electronic keyboard, drumsticks, bongos and beer bottles aplenty.

It went something like this: I would tweak a few knobs on my amp or effects pedals and then fly through a riff or two. Bruce would take in the music...listening for a minute or two before hurriedly flipping through his notebook: "I have something for that," he'd say, pages of lyrics falling to the floor until he located the right one. And then we'd go from there, improvising the music and extracting verses, choruses and carving out bridges from there – making it all up on the spot, never thinking about it too long or noodling about. It was a swift and decisive process.

It would have been nothing more than just a free-form jam session, except that somewhere along the way we began to hit on something special. The songs came together quickly and easily, their construction effortless, spontaneous and raw – and what's more – one after another, not only did they work, but they began to sound really good...to take on a life of

their own. They each had a distinct beginning and ending – no aimless meandering. And they definitely had infectious characteristics, perhaps potential to make an impact with a wider audience. In particular, there was a song called Two-East Thing which we all agreed was so good that we had better record it right then and there, lest we forget it. Dean, the host of the party brought out a portable cassette recorder and documented the event. When we listened back later, we realized the seeds of the band had been planted in just those few minutes.

A few nights later Bruce, Scott, Duane and I got together again. We had no place to play, it was a weeknight and nobody's residence would allow for our late-night musical shenanigans. There was no holding us down to a respectable volume. Bruce suggested that we make use of an all-night parking ramp downtown. The battery powered amplifier required no electrical outlet, so we all piled into my car and drove up to a level in the ramp where there were only a few other vehicles, got out and picked right up where we left off at the party. The acoustics in the concrete structure were stellar – they provided a natural reverb that magically complimented the guitar and vocals. We soared. Compositions and melodies, parts of songs and full songs, replete with verse and choruses echoed up and down the passageways, one after another, far into the night.

Bruce's vocal style was much like his personality; edgy and dark, at times jittery but always emotive. He sang with a lot of passion – it added a nice texture to his range which was pretty broad. He could whisper or wail and sing everything in between. He didn't always hit every note he was going for but I don't think he had ever been in a band before, so he was still finding his way. Like a lot of us, he knew what sound he was going for in his head but wasn't quite sure he could emulate it. It mattered not. His energy and enthusiasm fueled my playing – pushed me beyond my comfort zone and into a stream-of-consciousness state of improvisation. That he had a song for every riff I could imagine or make up on the spot was a boon to our ability to compose lots of material in a very short amount of time. He was scarily prolific. His notebook never got thinner, quite the contrary, he was always adding more and more pages of lyrics as he fed off of his daily observations and surroundings, the characters he encountered and their stories. It was clear that there would never be a shortage of words – the onus was on me to provide the music. This was liberating in many ways, as there simply wasn't time for me to ponder too long about any given song. Often Bruce would have a certain type of music in mind for a specific part of a song, IE: "This should have a New York Dolls type of feel to it, you know, like Looking for a Kiss," or "Think Raw Power for this part," and another I remember was "Can you do something like The Cramps'

Surfin' Bird"?

At the end of the night we all went our separate ways. I headed back to New Jersey and Bruce back to school in Iowa City. And though we made no concrete plans, our paths were destined to cross again – it was inevitable that we would start a band, because it just so happened that Bruce was from nearby New York City. It wasn't long, maybe a few months and he moved back. Duane and Scott wound up heading out East and joining as well, rounding out the instrumentation with keyboards and drums. When Bruce recruited our bass player Brian from a bus stop in Queens, we were poised to begin planning our takeover of the world, or at least making some noise in it.

*Now don't mistreat my angel babe\
When she's knocking on that Heaven's door\
She's got a little token for her entrance in\
She's got a little shot for Saint Peter\
She's got a little shot for God's arm\
She's got a little shot for the Madonna\
She's got a little shot to make the angels swoon\
And she's saving another one just for her too* [3]

The Garage in Roselle

At the onset, a one-stall detached garage that stood behind my apartment building served as our initial rehearsal space. It was one of several that lined the seedy complex in Roselle, New Jersey and not much to look at – but we weren't particular about cosmetic appeal. We were more concerned about the proximity of the other apartments in the complex and being able to keep the volume of a full band muted enough so as not to disturb anyone. The residents in the set of buildings were divided into renters and owners – and the owners in particular were an obnoxious, agitated crew of fun-hating curmudgeons. They looked down on the renters as if they had more rights and privileges, as is often the case in similar living conditions. Most of them were retired, rarely ventured out and were eager to call the police to report a disturbance at any opportunity. This complicated the task of housing band rehearsals in the small space, even with it being detached and some distance from the units.

I was convinced that the neighbors would make trouble for us whether they heard us playing at any volume or not. If they had even the slightest indication that there was something going on akin to the (gasp) horrific notion that a punk rock band was regularly gathering in the complex, they would be at the ready to put a stop to it. As such, we went to great lengths

to avoid detection. All the gear was loaded in at night. After Scott set up his drum kit inside we closed the doors and instructed him to make some noise as we walked around outside to hear how well the sound was muffled. Not unsurprisingly, the beats carried well beyond the alley and would definitely give us away. It was clear we would need to further sound-proof and insulate the space if this were ever to work. While we thought about how we were going to accomplish that, it was decided that we should rehearse at least one night a week in a Manhattan studio. Rehearsal space was not cheap and we were all short on funds, but there was no other option.

We found a relatively inexpensive rehearsal spot in SoHo, began to sort through new riffs and lyrics and polish up the songs we had previously worked out. On the rides home through the industrial neighborhoods we cruised down streets lined with dumpsters, which we noticed were full of foam, mattresses, carpet, padding and other assorted materials. There must have been an upholstery factory somewhere close by. We all thought of it at the same time: it was perhaps crass – but this discarded material could serve as cheap sound-proofing for the garage in Roselle. So when rehearsals concluded, we began dumpster-diving; pulling over and filling the back of the pickup truck full of whatever we could find that could serve as insulation. It took several loads, but in a matter of weeks we had constructed a padded cell within the garage nearly a foot thick on each side. Blankets were hung up around the interior to give the space a more cohesive, if not primitive look and to provide a minimal barrier between us and whatever stained history the mattresses held. As a trial run we all got together one Saturday afternoon and played a modest volume at first, to test out the neighborhood decibel level. We each took turns outside to see how much sound escaped and realized that our efforts had paid off. There was only a barely audible, muffled indication that a band was wailing away inside the garage. Regular rehearsals began at once.

The one caveat to our being discreet about the goings on inside the garage was electricity. There was no power – not even a lamp overhead. So it was necessary to string an extension cord across the alley and into the basement of the apartment complex, where we made use of an open outlet that was housed in the light bulb socket over the basement stairs. With this single outlet we powered several spotlights, three high-wattage amps, a fan in the summer and a portable heater in the winter. It is incredulous to me now that we never once blew a fuse. At the time, none of us knew any better. Our ignorance served us well. Surprisingly, nobody ever noticed or questioned the long span of orange cord between the two buildings.

The space was everything we'd hoped it would be. We rehearsed for hours upon hours, culminating multiple sets of songs and running through them tirelessly again and again. The

music was paramount – we were impervious to the bitterest cold or sweltering heat. We played in our parkas, fingerless gloves and heaviest winter attire. The key was to keep moving and we didn't have any problem with that. In the summer heat we'd have to take frequent breaks to keep hydrated, though I don't recall that it was ever so unbearable that we couldn't practice.

As time went on we got careless and our once clandestine rehearsals became impossible to conceal as we'd often loiter just outside the garage in between sets during warmer weather. War with the neighbors promptly ensued. They frequently called the cops on us to complain of noise though I'm not convinced that noise was the issue at all, but just the fact that a 'renter' was taking liberties combined with a habitual gathering of young punks. This was confirmed by cops who burst into the garage, often while we were in the middle of a song. They were always polite and often apologetic, as I think they themselves found it difficult to hear much of a credible disturbance. They'd tell us to keep it down and then went about their business, having done their due diligence. It was especially frustrating because at no time did we ever rehearse into the late evening hours. But there was no time of day or night that our being there wasn't a source of agitation for those insidious neighbors. If they felt like it, they'd call the cops on us at high noon. The ire we felt for them inspired Scott to pen the song: Love thy Neighbor.

*And with all my monumental inconsequential\
Everlasting indecision lay before me\
I thought it out one last time\
To discover why my furnace fails to heat my house\
After all, it warms every louse up in my neighborhood\
Their petty lives blown up with self-importance\
Their mouths ooze with insignificance\
If they actually said something cool\
I'd advise them to hush\
Less the blanket of the masses\
Crush them into dust*

*Their gray matter has been dead for years\
Oh please give them a shot\
Jump up and down on their lives\
And rob them there till they choke* [9]

When they realized that we were only slightly inconvenienced by the cops and that it wasn't going to prevent us from playing – the neighbors hit upon another angle. One day we had a surprise visit from the local Fire Marshall. He was polite as well, but there was no realistic chance that our setup was going to pass an inspection, should it come to that. It didn't help that on the day he stopped by it was cold outside, so we had a portable heater on as well as some high powered lamps that got pretty hot. The Marshall pointed out the obvious, which was that we had constructed walls within walls, mostly of highly flammable materials in a condensed space – and had only one exit; with a plethora of electrical gear all powered by that single, over-allocated outlet. Dejectedly, we decided to abandon the idea of using the garage to rehearse. The neighbors had won, but we would not go quietly.

After that last garage session we opened up the doors wide and moved our gear right out into the middle of the alleyway. I launched into a feedback-infused version of the Star-Spangled Banner on guitar, poorly imitating the masterfully chaotic rendition of the song made famous by Jimi Hendrix. At full volume out in the open we nearly turned the complex inside out. There was an angry face in every window, shouting obscenities, shaking their fists and giving us the finger. I was anticipating bottles and cans thrown in our general direction, but surprisingly that did not happen. In a fitting gesture, Brian brought out a crusty, almost petrified American flag from the garage rafters and began waving it in the air defiantly over our heads. My version of the tune was sloppy and perhaps barely recognizable but for a few notes, though I was easily able to conjure up shrieking wails and tormented howls of feedback. The intent was not virtuosity, but rather to summon forth the disruption and noise that so offended our archenemies. The buzz-saw distortion saturated the alley and strafed to and fro off of the buildings as though we were playing at the foot of a canyon. These natural acoustics assured me that our swan song was not lost on any of our antagonists. I kept at it for a good 6 or 7 minutes, the guys cheering me on. When the final few notes rang out and the echo of power chords subsided, we unplugged our gear, picked up and went on our way.

The cantankerous residents had been shouting the whole time, though their curses were simply drowned out by guitar feedback. Once the sonic onslaught had ended, it gave our adversaries the opening they had impatiently waited for. The cacophony of obscenities hurled at us in unison was a sure sign of our small victory in the face of defeat. Despite the vitriolic responses, not one of us engaged in retort. We simply didn't bother, there was no point – we didn't even know these people. This dismissal, our unwillingness to acknowledge them only served to enflame them further, and it felt glorious, even in our defeat. We had, at

least symbolically, hit back and drawn blood.

There were to be a number of additional run-ins with the neighbors in the coming months which prompted me to relocate and form a more peaceful co-existence with those surrounding me. Scott, Duane and I ultimately decided to rent a house all to ourselves next to a city park in Scotch Plains; a safe, sonic distance from any other residences. We chose a large, unused bedroom and nailed carpet on the walls, door and ceilings just to be sure the noise was adequately dampened. This solved the rehearsal dilemma once and for all, though it was not to be the last time we'd have the cops called on us that summer.

*It's the bad guy killers and the gangster dudes\
With quarters in their ears\
And the rapes are up and there's suicide\
And lots of room for fear\
Everybody that is good is hiding from the streets\
Still suburban white sheet souls that cannot stand the heat\
It's a 'Sade love affair it's the crime that's coming down\
It's a 'Sade love affair it's the heat that moves this town*

**You like the bite of a whip in flesh that's hot\
That leaves the bone laid bare\
Party hardy over a still born child and act like you just don't care\
You pushed the man down from the stool\
And laughed as he jerked around\
A spastic dance in inner space one foot above the ground* [4]*

Finding a Name

The first argument a band will get into is usually over the band's name. Unsurprisingly, for us in those early days, it was a source of great conflict, a constant argument that seemed like it would go on forever. Bruce suggested we call ourselves '3rd Rail' in reference to the electrified and dangerous side-rail on New York City subway tracks. He had even written a song for it.

**You've got electricity\
Born of necessity\
Making you feel at times like you're out of control\
That electricity*

Which shoots through you to me\
Makes you a walking suicide\
You're like a live 3rd Rail* [5]

I thought it was a fine name but Scott and Duane were simply aghast at the prospect, for what specific reasons I did not know, besides the fact that there were other bands that had already used the name. But the rest of us did not have any engaging alternatives either, so the battle went on for months. It often seemed that the decision making process in the band revolved more around personal attitudes towards one another than lucid thought. On the subject of band names, there was a chasm of personal taste between all of us. All viable options were put to vote. But we were a fickle bunch, the list of possible names changed so often that it was impossible to create a ballot of possible choices. What name we liked one day – we often hated the next. A band's name had to be time-tested, tempered and kicked around for a couple of weeks before it could truly be assessed for coolness. It began to get ridiculous. When we had secured our first gig, we realized we had to have a name, so somehow we came to an agreement that 'Alienation' was the one. I think we chose it to represent our music being 'alienated' or something along those lines. Perhaps it was an unspoken reference to the opinion that we fit into no specific scene or genre. It was not a stellar choice – and I think we all knew this – but it was the only name we could all agree to stomach for the time being, so we pretended to like it. 'Alienation' it was to stay for some time.

The First Waltz

That first live show was held in an artist's loft in SoHo. It was huge, cavernous space, with wall-sized canvas paintings draped about in various stages of completion. Bruce's mother was the owner and artist – and because of the relationship, we were able to utilize the space to showcase 2 full sets of our original material, which was unheard of for a band of our inexperienced stature in those days.

Our friend Tom had a great love for director Martin Scorsese and imparted it on himself to fully document this first gig with his video camera. We decided it would be cool to pay homage to 'The Band's' timeless film 'The Last Waltz' by entitling Tom's production appropriately as 'The First Waltz.' Tom was not one to do anything half-assed. When he set out to make his documentary, we had to agree to let him follow us around all day long with his camera. From the early morning to the late evening he captured planning, preparation, travel, pre-show rehearsal, a ton of ridiculous outtakes, the show itself in its entirety

(including an apocalyptic intermission poetry reading by our friend, Mr. Richard Kimball) and countless mock-interviews with the band and other random individuals.

Tom was always bent on getting a laugh, so his interview questions were silly, and some were plainly absurd, IE: everyone was asked repeatedly to give our thoughts on the Holland Tunnel. Even the questions that seemed to be serious in nature on the surface were often just pre-requisites to setting up some gag he had in mind, whether it actually came to fruition in the final cut of the video or not. And because he wasn't well-acquainted with Bruce, our singer's camera time off-stage was rather unfairly limited. (He was, after all, the band's front-man.) In addition, I thoughtlessly commented in the video that the musical backbone of Alienation was Duane and I – when most assuredly it was Bruce. Bruce led the creative charge and the rest of us followed. Sure, I contributed a number of riffs to help set the stage, but it was the songs and the narratives of Bruce's characters in them that made up the real impetus of the band.

Tom collected hours upon hours of material and then set about editing it down to just 120 minutes. He even managed to capture video of a run-in with those infamous neighbors of ours, complete with cops whom were called to the scene to intervene in the (mostly) verbal clash. Having run out of reasons to complain about the band rehearsing in the garage, the neighbors aptly seized on the opportunity to harass us as we were loading up our gear. They charged that we were blocking the driveway, despite the fact that there were two driveways not just the one we happened to be parked in for all of 10 minutes. Apparently we were parked in the 'owners' driveway. It was a little incredulous to me that they were frothing at the mouth at us over something so minor, but that illustrates how infuriated they remained after our alleyway salute to them not long before.

Scott was the real star of the videotape – firing back curious rants to Tom's silly questions with his own brand of random ridiculousness on penises, the general stupidity of society's masses and the importance of rubbers. Scott made certain we never took ourselves too seriously, a very worthwhile contribution. To Tom's editing credit, all of the off-stage revelry and interviews were neatly interwoven into the final cut between song performances. Having a good digital copy of this video these days is a real treasure – even more so because we tragically lost Tom not long afterwards. He was one of the premiere fans the band ever had. For years, after I had moved on to other bands, he would still yell out requests for Logic Downwards songs at shows. "Hey Joe, play SHIVER, SHIVER!"

A whole army of our friends showed up to 'The First Waltz' and brought others with them,

so there were a fair number of people in attendance that night. Another notable highlight of the evening was that Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys made an appearance. (Bruce's brother David was well acquainted with the Beasties, Adam in particular.) Under the rented spotlights we were wide-eyed and afraid – not one of us had ever stood before a live audience. Our body language clearly gave our inexperience away. Personally, it was as though someone had nailed my boots to the floor. Every move I made felt like a stumble. I held on fiercely to the neck of my guitar as if it were the only object providing stability. Overall, we were as clunky and awkward as kids at a high-school dance, though we did manage to hit all of our musical marks. The long, full days rehearsing paid off. We seemed to be very well received too, which gave us a boost of confidence. At the end of the night we were elated and excited for whatever came next.

*So become an itch under their crotch\
That they don't want to scratch in public\
Become an itch under their crotch\
That they want to ignore but that they have to scratch\
'cause in this life you've got but one choice\
You either rein it in or you give it voice\
But if you rein it in you better stay alive\
'cause our crime it will not be denied* [4]

That same summer we were invited to play at a party in the backyard of one of Logic Downwards' stoutest supporters. His residence sat quietly tucked away on the border of 2 New Jersey towns, Garwood and Cranford. After all our recent troubles with public disturbance, I repeatedly inquired with our host, Paul Petrucelli, as to whether this event was going to fly with the neighbors or not. Paul assured me that everyone in the vicinity had been notified and agreed to permit live music that evening up until 10pm. Nevertheless, we were only mid-way into the second song at 8:07 before the cops shut us down. In hindsight, I'm sure the intimidating squall of noise we regurgitated into the pleasant summer evening spread far beyond the neighbors Paul was able to reach out to. I wonder if we would have been allowed to continue if we had played something less threatening. I don't think anyone was prepared for the menacing thrall of atonal carnage we laid bare that evening. (Albeit only 5 minutes worth of 'Life/Death' and 2 of 'Shiver, Shiver' which indicates that someone probably made a call to the cops the instant the first chord rang out) In many ways – it gave us punk rock cred to be cut off. Minus Paul, who felt awful, and perhaps a handful of others, it still did not feel like our target audience was present. But we would not be silenced – it

was up to us to find them. The question was: would we be able to?

*Somewhere are the unresolved dreams\
And frustrations of the many and few\
When you find them won't you solve them\
Somehow they may depend on you\
We're waiting for a god\
Waiting for a king\
Waiting for a Buddha\
Or any fucking thing\
Waiting for somebody\
To come and show us why\
Why we should want to live and\
Why we shouldn't want to die* [8]

The Demo

We recorded our first demo at SRS Studios in Scotch Plains, New Jersey. Seth, the engineer, was a fine old salt who helped guide us through the process, easily being able to discern that we were inexperienced and more than a little naïve. Like any good engineer he was able to help us accent our strengths and build on our weaknesses without compromising our unique sound, which I truly believe he was quite fond of. We chose four songs that were a little more accessible from our growing catalogue. A bombastic powerhouse on infidelity (Trust) a somber, heroin-fueled dirge on addiction (Neutralizing Johnny's Pain) a punk-rock anthem (Waiting) and a grassroots protest swing (Shiver, Shiver).

The overall recording was a little reverb-heavy, in keeping with the wet sound of that effect used and overused during the 80's. Because we knew it was going to be difficult to capture much of our edgy rawness, we decided to record live in a big room and overdub as little as possible. Our good friend Rich sat in on these sessions for moral support – in many ways playing the role of a producer. Much of what I was exposed to musically in those days came directly from mix tapes Rich would put together for me. Stiff Little Fingers, Black Flag, Husker Du, Minor Threat, Rites of Spring, Culture Shock, Subhumans, Big Black, The Minutemen, 7 Seconds, Dead Kennedy's, Sick F*cks, Dagnasty, Bad Brains, etc. Rich and I attended CBGB Hardcore matinees with regularity and witnessed some amazing underground shows featuring the likes of industrial legends Sink Manhattan and the infamous False Prophets.

I was not kind to my instrument in those days, breaking strings with such regularity that even carrying one or two extra sets wasn't nearly enough. When performing 'Trust' I habitually bent the guitar over my knee in order to conjure up random noise in the feedback-infused interludes. During recording I was unable to replicate the sounds I had been getting when we played the song live. In between one take Rich walked over and suggested that I wasn't really putting my heart into it. Nodding towards my guitar, he urged me to 'kill it this time.' It was that very next take that we nailed. In the recording, the neck and strings of the guitar audibly bend to a point not recommended in the owner's manual.

Once the demo was complete, we promptly ditched the name 'Alienation' and held yet another vote for a new band name. Every band member contributed to a master list of close to 100 names which we then voted on, knockout style – each of us selecting 5 and then voting on the remainder and so on. I wish I still had the full list because there were some amusing choices. Scott offered up the most imaginative, albeit absurd titles; Soft like an Egg, The Shaking Platitudes and Logic Downwards. They were all completely unattached to meaning of any kind, sans our own bizarre attempts at interpretation, but they were original and had an oddly appealing ring to them. Though none of us were in love with the name, only one remained by process of elimination, and we became 'Logic Downwards.'

*If you're moved by a passion so deep\
That you feel you've got to off it all\
Don't surrender to this global dung-heap\
Grab the world by its balls\
Don't sit on it, let it eat you away\
Turn it into constructive energy\
There's no one in the world with nothing to say\
So grab a guitar and vent that pain* [6]

CBGB's

As we shopped our demo around, the very first official gig we were offered turned out to be part of a showcase night at New York City's CBGB's. Every Sunday and Monday evening, new acts were able to audition for a premium spot on a future bill with other new talent / up and coming bands. We took this very seriously – our chance to make some headway in a very competitive stomping ground. If any band epitomized the gritty, punk-rock culture of Manhattan's Lower East Side in the late 80's, we certainly felt like we were one of them. All the local bands we loved lived and played there – they were very familiar streets to us.

Our live act had matured since that first gig in SoHo. We now had a certain swagger, a confidence in our ability to stand out. Beyond our small circle of friends we'd done nothing but drawn the ire of everyone in earshot – but everyone in range either clung to a specific genre, were musically conservative or otherwise mostly content with the mainstream mediocrity – so that was a victory. CBGB's was a real chance for us to find our audience.

The club was packed to the rafters that cold, January evening. There must have been a dozen or more bands scheduled that night and each of them brought with them as many bodies as they were able. The great thing about CB's was that everyone was required to load their gear right through the front door, so you had to wade through the crowd in order to get backstage. It was intimidating but cool at the same time.

The band playing prior to us consisted of a lanky young lady on lead vocals sparsely attired in stretch pants that had been worn thin and so often that they no longer retained a secure grip about her waist. She had blindfolded herself in what was obviously some sort of performance art piece and sang with a lilting, fluttery voice that paid no mind to melody or tune; alternately clinging to the microphone and holding up her pants, which we were all certain would drop to her ankles at some point during the show. The guitar player stood barefoot and every so often randomly stepped onto a small toy keyboard which lay on the floor at his feet. From the manner in which he slammed his toes down haphazardly upon the thing, it was clear that there was no virtuosity intended. Far be it for those of us in Logic Downwards to criticize originality – this band was, if nothing else, interesting to observe, albeit void of any musically appealing element.

When the time came, Logic Downwards took the stage with fervor. Though our experience playing live in front of a crowd was still ridiculously limited, nothing could dampen our excitement to do so. We were no longer statuesque, but bounced around and about the stage as though we had been jettisoned. For all its use and abuse, the sound system at CB's may have been the most crystalline of any club in the city. The mix was perfect, the band sounded as big and imposing as a subway train horn through the catacombs of the midtown tunnels. Our short set was succinct, blistering and chaotic, a tumultuous burst of nervous energy and triumphant elation. We played with authority and conviction, which was evident as a crowd of strangers danced, cheered and celebrated the moment with us. Everything went right that evening; Bruce's vocals never sounded so raw and unhinged – giving the tales and the subjects in his songs an authenticity that could not be denied. The stage of CB's ignited his soul – matured him. From that point on, whenever Bruce stepped onstage, he became the characters he sang about; the junkie, the drunk, the dreamer, the loser, the

lost soul, the pedophile, the necrophile, the rapist, the demented evangelist, the homicidal maniac, the suicidal psychopath, the whore, the broken-hearted lover, the sex-addict, the deviant child, the merciless sadist, the unfulfilled masochist, all the damaged and downtrodden came alive. He spat out their tormented lives and embittered existence onto the canvas of the stage, their destinies colored by the cacophonous sound the band churned out behind him as though propelled through a grinder of doom.

It felt like a glorious victory. Guitar feedback took on a life of its own, echoing through the PA system like a belch of sulfuric brimstone permeating the crowd. The keys became as prominent as a pipe organ in a church cathedral, saturating the graffitied halls and chambers in a drone of death and resurrection.

As we departed the stage, we were greeted by our friends as though we had turned over every table and chair in the house. There was no one present who believed that we hadn't passed the audition. No one that is, except the person in charge of evaluating the talent. To our great surprise, when I called a few days later, I was informed that Logic Downwards had a long way to go – and that we must 'get our act together' if we ever wanted to play there again. The response was so negative I'm not entirely certain this individual was even present when we played. Then again – the band that preceded us were booked into a prime spot, never mind the blindfolded lead singer whose pants were falling down and the absurd guitarist playing a toy keyboard with his toes. It may just have been that we were not appealing to right audience once again. Even if that disapproval was only one person, it was the person who happened to be calling the shots. It was a devastating blow; to be shot down by Manhattan's premier live venue for alternative, under the radar, talent.

In retrospect – this experience hearkens back to my theory of the band's ultimate demise: people whose job it was to pair bands together to fit a musical showcase, not only didn't like us, they despised us. We were musically so all over the map that it was easier to reject us outright rather than try to fit us in somewhere. Though, I couldn't imagine that being the case with CBGB's – they seemed to gravitate towards these kinds of line-ups. But for the other clubs in town, Logic Downwards became an acute disruption to whatever musical flow was present. And while it was cool to be difficult to label – it also prevented us from being able to get out in front of an audience.

*Shout with rage\

Scream if that's what it takes\

Let them know that you are real\

Let them know just how you feel\
That you're a human being\
Vital, electric and alive* [6]

Despite this initial rejection – we forged ahead with our demo and secured several gigs at lesser-known Lower East Side establishments; The Lismar Lounge, Nightingale's and McGovern's, as well as some local Jersey dives: (The Cove and Scoundrels.) Our typical set list looked something like this:

Life / Death, Trust, Waiting, Nacht Und Nebel (Night and Fog), Neutralizing Johnny's Pain, Shiver, Shiver, Dream in Passing, Confusion, Stained Blood Money, Angel Babe, Who's this other?, Anger Sex.

Occasionally we would throw in a cover song – either Joy Division's Day of the Lords or Merle Travis' Sixteen Tons. Very early on we used to play Trouble in Mind and a few others. Duane wrote and sang a few songs – Dead Air and Exercise in Futility and also passionately provided vocals to Love Thy Neighbor, an incendiary tribute to our neighbors, written by Scott. There was no shortage of songs to choose from: Looking for Danger, Gravity, Ka-boom, Harry, 3rd Rail, Jim, Old Man at the Bar, Freud Bop, Psycho Pup, Babies Fly, Hunger, Death Race, Fall out of Grace, Love, Fly Sara, Vital, Electric, Alive, Exercise in Futility, Surrealistic Kill Nightmare, Love thy Neighbor, Death Rap, Dead Air.

Despite our jumping from one musical style to the next without warning, our songs had memorable hooks throughout. There was a definite appeal, content and depth to the material – and one could say that they didn't like it, but they could never label it as boring. Retrospectively, it is a shame that Logic Downwards were not able to attain exposure to a wider audience – because I think we could have made inroads to the lively scene of the time, had we found even a small vein of followers amongst the streets of Alphabet City and beyond. But it was not to be. In just a few short years, without consciously knowing it, we were on the verge of splitting up, preparing for one last gig.

Rowan Joins

The first domino to fall was when Brian suddenly quit – never mind that we had a gig scheduled. He apparently had been contemplating leaving for some time. Though it left us in a spot, none of us harbored any ill-will over his departure. Brian was a good kid. His musical aspirations were a little different than ours and having given us several years already, he felt liberated to pursue them.

It could very well have been over right then and there were it not for the saving grace of our acquaintance to multi-instrumentalist Rowan Bishop whom I worked with at the local King's supermarket. Rowan got wind that we were down a bass player and though he was primarily a guitarist, he offered step in and help us out.

This was huge, because in addition to the upcoming gig, it was decided that we should go back in the studio and record at least one more song, if for no other reason than the purpose of documenting a moment in time. We had a demo that represented us well but it lacked some of the sound and fury that our limited audiences had become accustomed to. We booked time back into SRS Studios with the intent to record Logic Downwards' most incendiary anthem to awakened sexuality: Anger Sex.

*Possession by the Devil\
I've harbored secret evil\
As my head burst in flames\
Echoes loudly\
Flames that say to me...* [7]

Rowan was a fan and supporter of Logic Downwards, having attended several of our gigs, most notably our CBGB's audition. He had been in several local bands in the Jersey area and was no stranger to our style or material, so it didn't take him long to get acquainted with our set list.

It was clear from the start that Rowan's musical sensibilities and talents were a lot more refined than ours. This was apparent the first day of rehearsal – when he openly inquired as to who was going to 'count us in' to the start of each song. Duane, Scott, Bruce and I looked at each other for clues to this riddle. He went on to explain that the drummer normally takes into account the tempo of any given song about to be performed and clicks his sticks off to lead the band into the beginning of the tune at the precise moment it is intended to start. It was a practical, painfully obvious approach, though it had never been so to us. The problem we had with the method was that up until this point – it was simply something we had never done. Starting a song for us was as instinctual and as coordinated as a car merging into heavy traffic on the turnpike. It was just something that worked itself out in a relatively short period of time.

But none of us could dismiss the practicality behind this approach, nor deny that it may be necessary with a new band member or that finally, as musicians we may greatly benefit from the application of this method. I will not say this was an easy or seamless transition –

as silly as that seems – for surely we could imitate what was already ingrained in our ears from the vast catalogue of music we loved, all artists who embraced the simple functionality of this practice. But introducing even a fraction of musical discipline and structure into Logic Downwards was akin to tying our shoelaces together. We couldn't get out of our own way – not because we couldn't grasp the concept of counting in – but because in all our hours of rehearsal, we had never practiced it. The only cues we ever needed were based on body language and the slightest of nods and movements. The idea that we would need to listen to each other and lock our musical arrangements into a specific point in time was new to us, and as a result, launching into each song became more calculative in nature as opposed to spontaneous.

This issue was compounded by the fact that the execution of this method was completely foreign to our drummer; the one member who needed to get a handle on it more than anyone else. This knowledge, this new expectation, handcuffed Scott – absolutely froze him to the point that it rendered us incapable of properly starting a song without sputtering along out of sync. I believe it was this moment that Scott decided he did not want to be in a band anymore.

Somehow we were able to trudge along – albeit under Rowan's ability to count us in, rather than Scott, though this did not alleviate Scott's timing issues. It was as if a spell had been cast that left our drummer cursed – to be forever attempting to catch up and play along with the rest of the band, rather than driving the tempo of the songs himself. This made recording Anger Sex a little challenging – as a key part of the intro involved a single drum progression that cued the rest of the song. It was a simple four beat riff that Scott was able to nail each and every time, prior to the introduction of this new methodology. I believe we were only able to capture a solid take of it during recording by complete accident. Scott was a free-form player in the purest sense – it is where he excelled as a drummer. For the band to move away from that was uncomfortable for him and thus detrimental to his playing. Despite this, we were able to record a spirited version of Anger Sex.

As luck would have it, Logic Downwards secured a gig at the New Jersey club Scoundrels in June. This opportunity gave us a chance to showcase the band with Rowan as our new bassist prior to the outdoor festival. I don't remember a whole lot about the show, but I do recall being hit square in the face with the head of Rowan's bass during one of our more energetic numbers. It was a complete accident, no harm done outside of the fact I may have missed a few chords due to seeing stars. Rowan was a lot more active and mobile onstage as opposed to Brian who preferred to stay anchored. He ended up hitting Bruce with his bass

the very same night. Clearly it was going to take some getting used to having another member of the band bouncing around the stage with us, though it was a good problem to have.

Perhaps it was Rowan's infinitely more practical approach to keeping the band in time, but the dynamic between he and Scott was a tenuous one. Personality wise, Scott was a somewhat quirky character and even those of us who were pretty close to him were at times befuddled by his behavior. He could be warm and genuine and at complete ease one moment – and in the next look right through you as if you weren't there. Rowan was a recipient mostly of the latter, and over the course of several months it began to take a toll on him. A week or so before the Independence Day gig, Rowan pulled me aside and hinted that we should do something memorable to close out the show. I was all for it – but not sure what he had in mind. He suggested, or rather, volunteered to execute a flying leap into the drum set during the last seconds of the final song to close out the show. I didn't immediately make the connection, but it was evident that part of Rowan's motivation was that he wanted to get a rise out of Scott. I thought he was kidding at first, but when he persisted, I found myself agreeable to the idea.

It didn't seem like a big deal at all. Though we didn't purposefully destroy our equipment, we did often mistreat it during the climax of our shows which often ended in a free-for-all fury. Like the iconic punk bands that we drew influence from – it was a regular part of the live dynamic to put all of oneself into each moment; uninhibited, unrestrained. During performances of Anger Sex, in particular, Bruce and I often fell to the stage floor, writhing about as though we were in flames. To accommodate our dual vocals during the final chorus of the song, Bruce would find me and position the mic in a small space between our mouths as we both sang our parts into one microphone with as much passion as we could muster, exchanging sweat and spit and hot beer breath.

Muscle against silk

Like my blood and milk

I've got a strange desire

Light me up I'm going to catch fire

Given up on hope

What use is love?

I shot my load

Take a deep breath

I'm going to go under now

*Freeze frame clip\
A bite of life\
Encapsulated in a slice of time\
Take my anger and take my sex\
Wrap it up and piece it all together again* [7]

There was no denying that Logic Downwards were already akin to whirling dervishes onstage; so in my mind it was only fitting that we exploited some of that willingness to get crazy in front of what would most assuredly be perhaps the largest audience we would play in front of. For the purpose of spontaneity, Rowan and I decided that we would not disclose his plan to our bandmates or anyone else.

The Last Show

Though we did not know it at the time, Logic Downwards took the stage for the last time on that sunny, 4th of July afternoon. It wasn't quite the grand exposition that we had hoped it would be. There was definitely a key element missing. Perhaps it was the oversized festival stage. We had always played together in close quarters – both during rehearsal and in clubs. I remember setting up my amp and effects pedals and feeling pleased to have so much space. Duane was all the way down at the other end of the stage, Rowan hovered back near the drum set and Bruce stood lost and lonely in the middle, a healthy 4 or 5 strides separating each of us. Initially we all assumed this was a good thing; a nice change to have so much space for once. But we were wrong. The roominess seemed to sap the energy right out of us. The stage monitor mix wasn't quite right from the start and there was no cohesiveness to our many layers and the multiple parts of songs we stitched together. In an intimate setting, our style was much more effective. It's difficult to describe but I think we felt exposed and out of place. Stripped of the grimy, graffitied walls and dank shadows of the clubs we were accustomed to playing had a prevalent, negative effect upon us. Our songs had, after all, sprung from that same darkness, all the way back to the parking ramp and the dingy garage in Roselle. Here, a wide path of lush, green grass bathed in sunlight separated us from our audience.

I suppose it could also have been the amusement rides, laughing kids and balloons, the summer breeze, flying flags and streamers, or the smell of cotton candy and corn dogs wafting by. We were strangers to a family-friendly atmosphere and a cheerful, casually amused crowd of onlookers a safe distance away from the stage. Though we were certainly the freak-show of the day, Logic Downwards did not mesh well into this carnival-like circus

environment. It was too safe, as if we were confined in a cage, or behind a thick plate of glass.

From the first chord on, it was evident that whatever mojo we once had was rapidly evaporating into the ether. When the realization of this began to set in during the second song, I tried to remedy it by closing the gap between us. But I quickly realized that had I attempted to walk over to the other side of the stage, my guitar cable would have either disconnected or pulled my amp over – it simply wasn't long enough to cover that ground. I was tethered into my corner. I think the others felt this same displacement – as if cast into a spotlight of their own. The whole of Logic Downwards was critically the sum of its parts. Albeit a cliché, I'm not sure there is a better analogy. Our strength was in each other and our abilities to play off one another – more so than any shred of talent that individually we may or may not have been able to cough up. So much so – that introducing even a modicum of breathing room between us was debilitating.

To complicate the already wilting performance, I had the not-so bright idea to introduce a 12-string acoustic guitar into one of the new songs in the set list. Not only had Logic Downwards never incorporated an acoustic guitar of any kind into our set – but I had never played one live, with a band, in front of an audience before. I don't believe we even rehearsed with the acoustic prior to the show. It added nothing but to foreshadow that the band was, in reality, coming apart at the seams. This was the exact opposite of playing to our strengths, in fact it felt like I was selling out. My playing had no bite – it was whimsical and clumsy; and that was all on me. I was, in my subconscious mind, already in another band.

The audience was distracted, confused and seemed collectively to wonder what in the world we were doing there. We were used to that response to some degree – but in this case the band was wondering the same thing right along with them. Everyone was out of place. We appeared to be on the same train, but in completely different cars.

As we wound up the short set – feeling as dislocated and scattered as dice rolled off a table and kicked across the room, I think the subconscious realization that these were our final moments began to set in. We had one last gasp for the world – as we launched into our closing anthem: Anger Sex. It wasn't our best performance of the song by a long shot – but it was redemption of sorts. It righted the musical ship and squared us back on the course that we had initially set out upon. There was no winning over this audience – they too, were not there for us. It was apparent at that moment that if there ever were people out there who

appreciated the music of Logic Downwards, we would never find them. But the moment that we realized that, we snapped out of it. Once we decided – 'fuck this town, fuck this show, fuck this crowd, fuck everybody!' it was as if the spell of disillusion had been lifted. It didn't matter anymore. Not these people, not this show – certainly not this nauseating festival of fireworks, none of it. It was simply the last page of the book. These awkward, meandering moments did not define us – the moment that we stopped trying to play for the audience and played at them instead – that is what defined the true essence of Logic Downwards.

The crescendo of Anger Sex filled the afternoon air like a polluted haze. I attacked the guitar, savagely raking my pick across the strings of the final chord as Bruce emphatically wailed, voice breaking, imploring the nothingness above; a smattering of mangled notes swelling up before bursting into the cathedral of blue sky; toms, kick-drums and bass, stomping and trampling defiantly over all. And then it was finished.

As the din rang out and began to settle, out of the corner of my eye I saw Rowan dive headfirst through the cymbals of the drum set in mid-air, one arm outstretched, the other clutching the bass guitar at his side. From the height he had sprung to, it was clear he had made a run for it, propelling himself up and over the toms, momentarily into Scott's lap and down to the stage floor in a heap as our startled drummer retreated, practically falling down himself. I hadn't been certain Rowan would go through with it, but he did – and with committed enthusiasm at that. He lay bleeding from a sizable cut above his eye, as the cymbals, mic stands and microphones had all come crashing down with him. As he got to his feet, a slow ripple of blood wept down his face, which he casually wiped away with his hand. Each of us surrounded him – in various modes of amusement, disbelief and surprise as he then smeared the blood from his fingers onto the plush fabric that lined his guitar case. It was an oddly symbolic gesture that fit the moment in a way that none of us could have predicted.

The stage hands were taken aback, but clearly unamused, and yet they also seemed to be at a loss as to how to react. It was evident that we needed to clear out of there in a hurry, both to ensure Rowan wasn't in need of medical attention and before whomever was running the show decided to attach some monetary penalty to our abuse of their equipment. "I saw The Who do that once," muttered a member of the sound crew as they ushered us off the stage.

And so, like a blue plume of smoke in the echo of a single, final gunshot – Logic Downwards dissipated like a ghost into the blurry smog of the afternoon. Though there

would be an uneventful epilogue of sorts, the prolonged battle between us and the neighbors, the cops and promoters, combined with the struggle to find our target audience was over.

Epilogue

In the weeks to follow, Logic Downwards limped along. Scott got married, quit the band and we placed an ad in The Village Voice in search of a new drummer. 'Tony Bennett to Bad Brains' it read, in an amusing tribute to a description our sound. We thought we were being clever until one of the drummers auditioning wondered aloud what Tony Bennett songs we were going to play. And though one could criticize Scott's limited abilities and odd style of playing – the short list of drummers we auditioned did our songs no justice whatsoever. In the middle of the futile search – I was more than ready to move on myself – and late one night outside of a club in the village – the band officially broke up.

There would be other recording projects, bands, musical endeavors, challenges and numerous memorable moments that we'd share as friends and bandmates – but what became of Logic Downwards would be left to a few tattered flyers, and a stack of weathered, poor quality cassettes and VHS tapes among a handful of yellowing, faded photographs.

It is an odd human behavior, but looking back on it, I marvel at how often we casually disregard the experiences that help us to grow and ultimately lift us to new adventures and exciting places. It is as if we barely recognize these moments – and hastily file them away. I am as guilty of this as anybody, which is a large part of my writing this retrospective. The broken up stories and untimely setbacks aren't often recognizable as the building blocks that ultimately define a part of us, of who we are. They remain as dusty and forgotten as old relics banished to a box in the closet that we tire of moving around with us from place to place. Still, I cannot solely attribute nostalgia as the driving factor that awakened these memories. It was the music. When the cassette reels spin and the moments, the sounds and their stories come to life again – vital, electric, alive.

— joe Wilford, 2016

All lyrics included in this article were written by Bruce Waid unless otherwise indicated. Lyrics to 'Love Thy Neighbor' [9] were written by Scott Thompson.

****Song key:**** [1] Dream in Passing · [2] Life / Death · [3] Angel Babe · [4] Death Rap · [5]

3rd Rail · [6] Vital, Electric, Alive · [7] Anger Sex · [8] Waiting · [9] Love Thy Neighbor

Logic Downwards was: Bruce Waid, Joe Wilford, Duane Larson, Scott Thompson, Brian Manelli and Rowan Bishop.

Band photos: Robert Englehardt.

Thank you: Seth from SRS Studios, Joe from Cranford Guitar, Scotch Plains Music, Paul Petrucelli, Richard Kimball, Tom Gallison (RIP), David Waid, Dean Williams, Rich from Time Electronics and those who came out to see and support us.

Special thanks to Rowan for helping me reconstruct some of my faulty memory.

To hear the Logic Downwards demos, visit Logic Downwards on Bandcamp. For photos and more about Logic Downwards visit the Logic Downwards website.