



PRESS RELEASE: 8/21/13
Pere Ubu Visa Petition Rejected.

Ubu Projex, the art and business directorate of the American band Pere Ubu, can confirm that notice has been received this weekend from the United States Customs & Immigration Service (USCIS) rejecting the visa petition for British band members Keith Moliné and Graham Dowdall (aka Gagarin).

The sole grounds for rejection is the band's refusal to seek approval from the American Federation of Musicians (AFM).

"The AFM are the antagonists in this affair," band leader David Thomas said. "They have no business telling me who can and who cannot be in the band."

Details can be found in previous press releases, www.ubuprojex.net/press/ubuvisa.pdf.

Cleveland guitarist Dave Cintron will join the band for the September US tour and provisions are in place for Moliné and Dowdall to link remotely for one of the songs in the set.

There has been much disbelief and incredulity about this not-uncommon example of the obstacles international bands now face when seeking to tour the US.

"The whole process has been going on since May, with several delays and absurd complexities," Thomas said. "The Cintron version will be magnificent, I have no doubt. If I cannot put a band together without government interference and without a pat on the head from the AFM, like a grateful dog, then so be it. I have no interest in frittering my life away with campaigning.

"We will proceed with our music. Nothing will be announced from the stage. We won't be writing 'protest' songs or haranguing audiences.

"There are visions and ideas to pursue. There's too little time to waste it on fighting stupidity. In the words of the MGM lion, 'Ars longa, vita brevis.'"¹

¹ Yes, we know it was Hippocrates.



PRESS RELEASE: 8/18/13

"We Fought the Faceless Government Clerk, and the Faceless Government Clerk Lost!"

Following on from press release dated 8/11/13

(www.ubuprojex.net/press/ubuvisa.pdf), Pere Ubu announce revised line-up and revolutionary remote performance from the two British group members.

Pere Ubu has added Cleveland guitar maestro Dave Cintron to the lineup for its September tour of the eastern USA and Canada. Mr. Cintron substitutes for British guitarist Keith Moliné, who is unable to enter the US due to the visa approval process delays, ongoing since May. The group's second synthesizer, Gagarin, is also unable to join the band on tour, but plans are in progress to produce a remote performance live from their homes in London, by way of a complex cell/broadband system.

Band leader David Thomas says that the show will be different to the UK and Europe tours but it *will still* be Pere Ubu and the audience will be witness to the morph that is part of this band's unique history. "Mr. Cintron brings a unique perspective to the songs and we will subsume that into the collective. Pere Ubu is The Borg."

The improvisational nature of both the band's composition process and its performances means that all the songs in the set will have to be rewritten and relearned, particularly those from new album *Lady From Shanghai* (Fire Records).

"We will do what others call impossible," Thomas says. "The songs from the new album are anti-logical, played in nonsensical structures and with inscrutable tunings. None of it can be written out or translated. We will devise new patterns of anti-logic.

"The remote performance will only be for one song but it's a victory nonetheless," Thomas said. "For a month I've been in my studio working on this project. Everyone says it can't be done... Oh well."

Gagarin was to play his own material as a support act in many of the tour's cities. Instead, Mr. Thomas will take to the stage and manage a remote performance of the music. Other members of Pere Ubu will contribute and Mr. Thomas promises to dance.

"Moral victories? We got a million of 'em," Thomas said. "And lots of Pyrrhic ones!"

Many fans are angered by what they see as an attack on freedom of expression. "With all due respect, it's nothing as grand as that," Thomas said. "Big organizations are comfortable with hierarchical methods of production, but the cultural history of the last hundred years is marked by the emergence and then dominance of a more chaotic folk methodology found in jazz, rock, blues and country music - music of the 'people.'

"The visa restrictions are the product of a mind set relevant to the 20s, when the hierarchical paradigm seemed to be the only game in town: orchestras, big bands, show bands, Tin Pan Alley, etc. Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph/microphone would eventually change all that.

"Lawmakers, in response to the paradigm shift, have been encouraged to codify 'artistic merit' as a visa requirement. That's when you get a real mess - faceless government clerks ticking boxes.



PRESS RELEASE: 8/11/13

Pere Ubu US Tour To Go Ahead Despite Visa Petition Delays

The visa petition to allow American avant-rock band Pere Ubu to tour in America is, as of this date, still pending. Regardless of the outcome of that process, Pere Ubu will honor its concert dates this fall.

“Fans have bought tickets, flights, hotels, and made plans,” Pere Ubu’s David Thomas said. “We will not let them down.”

The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) is the latest and only remaining obstacle. If the band hands over a “consultation fee” of, at least, \$300, the union will send a letter to the US Customs & Immigration Service (USCIS) objecting or not objecting to the visa petition.

Two British citizens have been in the group for the last four years. To tour in America with those British citizens, Pere Ubu must prove that the band itself, or the individual musicians, are of ‘world class’ caliber and have a respected international reputation. Pere Ubu provided the USCIS with voluminous documentation spanning its thirty-eight year history that attested to the group’s considerable reputation and nearly universal critical acclaim. The application states that the band must also seek a consultation from an appropriate labor organization.

“It’s preposterous,” Thomas said. “The USCIS note on their website that a negative or even positive response from a union does not affect their decision. Why, then, are we required to ‘pay off’ the union?”

“I do not recognize the musician union’s authority in this matter,” said Thomas, a US citizen resident in the United Kingdom. “If Steven Tyler wants some guy from Greater Lower Slobovia to be the guitarist in Aerosmith, then what right does the Government have, through its deputies in the AFM, to comment on the validity of Mr. Tyler’s choice? More to the point, musicians in a band like Pere Ubu are not interchangeable - when someone new comes in we have to re-compose the entire repertoire.

“A foreign tool maker wants to work in the US. There are a 100,000 unemployed tool makers in the US, all of whom can do the same job. A union, sensibly, might have a say in the matter. There are a 100,000 unemployed musicians in the US. Not one of them could ‘fill in’ with a band like Pere Ubu.”

It was also noted in the petition that Pere Ubu is a group of mavericks - independent contractors and amateur musicians who have forged an iconoclastic path for nearly forty years. All are co-composers in a group that relies heavily on improvisation. More than twenty-three albums have been released on both major and independent labels, including Mercury, Phonogram, Geffen, Chrysalis, Cooking Vinyl, Rough Trade and Universal.

“The AFM has a role in many areas of the music industry,” Mr. Thomas said. “But, as regards Pere Ubu, they are not relevant. We provided the USCIS with all that they asked for but I said,

'No, there is no labor organization to consult.' As well, there is another principle at stake - I will not seek approval from an organization that requires payment for the 'privilege.'"

Mr. Thomas went on to say, "I do not question the Government's duty to guard the country's borders. I just wonder what the AFM, or any other business, has to do with it. I would like to point out that there is only one other country on the planet - a small one - that has any such requirements for musical groups. Pere Ubu used to tour behind the 'Iron Curtain.' We came and went freely - not even the East Germans were in any way concerned with the musical nature of our visits. We did once run into a Swiss border guard who told us, 'We don't want your foreign kind of music in our country - we have our own music.' But he had to let us in anyway."

A proposed Congressional bill, recently passed in the Senate, speeds up the visa process for artists, but it hands over more power to arts organizations and the AFM, both already inserted into the US Government's chain of visa approval, to judge the worthiness of artistic and musical expression. The AFM lobbied for the bill's passage.

The Pere Ubu visa petition was submitted in late May. One of the two British musicians involved has previously been granted a visa as a member of Pere Ubu without an AFM consultation.

"Knowing Ubu fans, there will be a spontaneous movement to raise the \$300," Thomas concluded. "Do not do it. Our booking agent volunteered the money. We refused it."