

Buskers in Oslo around 1980
filmed using Super 8 film

Contents

Buskers in Oslo around 1980 filmed using Super 8 film	3
The American busker in Karl Johan Gate, Oslo.....	4
“Cock in my pocket”	4
The song.....	5
Poetic analysis of the song	5
The performance.....	5
Still pictures from the films.....	5
Black singer in Karl Johan	6
Comment	6
My brother Alistair and Hans Klægstad in Karl Johan	7
Why celebrate 17 May?.....	8
My brother Alistair visits me in Norway.....	8
Schumacher's assault on Battiston - 1982 world cup semi-final.....	8
‘Forspill’ and ‘nachspiel’	9
The Royal Palace in Oslo	10
Karl Johan Gate (street), the Royal Palace and May 17th.....	12
Oscarsborg Fortress.....	12
May 17 Music Marching Band around 1980.....	13
Violinist in Karl Johan, Oslo	14
My ‘helper’ Safira	14
Playing the bagpipes in Karl Johan	15
“God Save the Queen” and Safira at ‘Spikersuppa’	15
Safira and me in Spikersuppa.....	16

Buskers in Oslo around 1980 filmed using Super 8 film

In social democratic capitalist societies everything is regulated; taxes have to be paid, regulations have to be followed. What would happen if this was not so? We would end up being a 'third world' country like Thailand, where small-time creative entrepreneurs can develop their talents. Thus, on the streets of Bangkok one will meet 'women of pleasure', hawkers, musicians, beggars, monks, and so on – none of whom pay taxes to the government, but who perhaps pay 'taxes' to the local police.

In many Western countries (such as Norway) such creative energy is extinguished. 'Women of pleasure' are not allowed to sell their wares in the street in order to 'protect' them (besides it does not befit a 'respectable' country like Norway, and it does not look good for the tourists (it's better to keep this sort of activity hidden behind closed doors! Moreover, these women do not pay taxes and are despised by the avaricious Norwegian government for this reason). Hawkers are not allowed to sell their goods on the street either, because the 'tax-paying' shops do not welcome this small-time illegal competition, besides these people are also 'tax dodgers', which is one of the most punishable crimes in Norway.¹ However, the Church are still allowed to 'beg' (such as the Salvation Army). Gypsies, or rather Romani people, are also allowed to beg (in Norway as of 2022). One suspects this is because of the Norwegian government's bad conscience that they tried in the past along with Hitler to exterminate these people; they attempted unsuccessfully to carry out the genocide of the Romani people by sterilizing Romani women, that is, racially inferior peoples who do not have pure Aryan blood flowing through their veins.² Of course, I don't want especially demonize the Norwegians, they were just following a general trend in

¹ Former international football player John Carew has been sentenced to prison for one year and two months after being found guilty of tax evasion. <https://www.lifeinnorway.net/john-carew-jailed-by-norway-for-tax-fraud/> Date accessed: 30 Dec. 2022.

² The Norwegian government apologised to the country's Gypsies yesterday for decades of oppression under a former policy that was called Norwegianisation, but it refused any general compensation. The Gypsies suffered from abuses that ranged from forced sterilisation to their children being taken away and placed in ethnic Norwegian homes or institutions. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/dec/09/2> Read: 29 December 2022.

Europe during the interwar period (1918-1939). However, it should also be pointed out in this context that although the 'democratic' European and Western countries defeated the Nazis, who specialised in exterminating minorities and vulnerable groups in their millions, the Western powers took up the baton where Hitler left off and continued to persecute and abuse minorities in their own countries, such as the native Americans and African Americans in the US, and the Roma people in Norway (as well as in other European countries).³

But to get back to the point of 'street people'. Depending on the political climate - sometimes street musicians are allowed to perform in the street - at other times they are banned. Obviously, when I filmed this American street musician, the government were more liberal (around 1980).

The American busker in Karl Johan Gate, Oslo

Without doing much research, it seems that the American busker is playing on some kind of 12-string Elizabethan guitar.

"Cock in my pocket"

I thought the song the American was singing was something he had made up on the spur of the moment - but doing a search on the Internet it seems that this song has also been performed by "The Stooges"⁴ some three years



³ "Between 1934 and 1977 Gypsy women in Norway were sterilized twice as often as other women." <http://www.norwaypost.no/index.php/business/general-business/12824> Read: 29 Dec. 2022.

⁴ The Stooges, also known as Iggy and the Stooges, was an American rock band formed in 1967 by singer Iggy Pop, guitarist Ron Asheton, drummer Scott Asheton, and bassist Dave Alexander. The Stooges are widely regarded as a seminal proto-punk act. Edited from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Stooges Read: 30 December 2022. My comment: The dates are interesting here - they were formed in 1967 at the height of the 'era of the Hippie', yet also considered to be 'punk', a music genre that emerged some years later in the mid-1970s.

earlier.⁵ However, the Stooges were a proto-punk band singing raw rock.⁶

The song

*I got my cock in my pocket and I'm reelin'
down the old highway*

I got my cock in my pocket and I'm reelin' down

the old highway, yeah

*I'm gonna whip it on you, honey,
gonna whip, truth or dare?*

*Gonna get up, turn around, try it
anywhere.*

*I got my cock in my pocket and I'm
shovin' it through your pants*

*I got my cock in my pocket and I'm
shovin' it through your pants*

*I just want to fuck and I don't want
no romance*

Yeah, I just want to fuck and I don't want no romance

Oh, go!



Poetic analysis of the song

Pants – romance – a brilliant rhyme! And also a kind of oxymoron – pants and romance – that is, opposite words or ideas put together.

The performance

In other words, the American busker had taken a 'revolutionary and progressive song' (punk), and turned the clock backwards performing it as a blues song; he turned the clock even further backwards by performing the song on a several hundred years' old instrument!

Still pictures from the films

The still pictures often show details that you might not notice when watching the film. One of the still pictures here shows the American busker in Karl Johan Gate being admired by two old Norwegian ladies.

⁵ <https://genius.com/The-stooges-cock-in-my-pocket-lyrics> Read: 29 Dec. 2022.

⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOvpz_oUA_8 Read: 30 Dec. 2022.

Black singer in Karl Johan

Around about this time, perhaps on the same day, I filmed a black singer who performed “Proud Mary” and “Johnny Be Good”.

Proud Mary

*Left a good job in the city
Workin' for the man every night and day
And I never lost one minute of sleepin'
Worryin' 'bout the way things might have been*

*Big wheel keep on turnin'
Proud Mary keep on burnin'
Rollin', rollin', rollin' on the river.*

Johnny Be Good

*Deep down in Louisiana close to New Orleans
Way back up in the woods among the evergreens
There stood a log cabin made of earth and wood
Where lived a country boy named Johnny B. Goode
Who never ever learned to read or write so well
But he could play a guitar just like a-ringin' a bell
Go, go
Go Johnny, go, go
Go Johnny, go, go
Go Johnny, go, go
Go Johnny, go, go
Johnny B. Goode*

Comment

Apart from the great performance of the songs by this young handsome skilled black musician, there is something else one notices when looking at this old film, and that is the young blonde Norwegian girls swarming around the guy like bees around a honeypot, that is, our ‘want-to-be’ Chuck Berry. This is especially amusing because despite the fact that Norway is a so-called tolerant multi-cultural society, there is nevertheless an ingrained racism, especially in the older generation, who are dying out; but also in the younger generation of racists, some who are having to spend their whole lives in prison for racist crimes, while

being subject to being 'put in the stocks' for the general public to despise.⁷

One wonders whether or not it is so humane to abolish the death sentence. In so-called enlightened countries, the worst of criminals are imprisoned for life; they may keep their lives, but they are 'placed in the stocks'⁸ as a person to be publicly despised – someone who one can throw rotten fruit at (figuratively) for the many remaining years of their lives.

My brother Alistair and Hans Klægstad in Karl Johan

In the film clip with the black busker, you also see clearly that it is Karl Johan – the main walking street in the centre of Oslo. Moreover, the King's palace can also be seen in the distance. Karl Johan stretches from the main central railway station to the palace.



⁷ Anders Behring Breivik, a Norwegian far-right racist domestic terrorist, known for committing the 2011 Norway attacks on 22 July 2011. On that day, he killed eight Norwegians by detonating a van bomb at Regjeringskvartalet in Oslo, then killed 69 young Norwegians who were participants of a Workers' Youth League (AUF) summer camp in a mass shooting on the island of Utøya. Breivik was found guilty of mass murder and terrorism against the Norwegian state. Breivik was sentenced to the maximum civilian criminal penalty in Norway, which is 21 years imprisonment in addition to preventive detention, which is the possibility of one or more extensions for as long as he is deemed a danger to society. Edited from:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anders_Behring_Breivik#:~:text=Breivik%20was%20sentenced%20to%20the,at%20least%20ten%20years%20imprisonment. Read: 29 Dec. 2022

⁸ Stocks are feet restraining devices that were used as a form of corporal punishment and public humiliation. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stocks>

Why celebrate 17 May?

'Karl Johan', or Charles XIV, Jean Bernadotte, was King of Sweden and Norway from 1818 until his death in 1844. Before his reign he was a Marshal of France during the Napoleonic Wars. We can't really try to unravel the Gordian knot of Norwegian / Swedish / French history of the nineteenth century here, but just point out the fact that Norway was a 'colony' of Sweden in the nineteenth century. It is also ironic that Norwegians celebrate 17 May (1814). The fact is in 1814, Norway ceased to be a Danish colony, but became a Swedish colony instead – this is hardly something to celebrate? In other words, Norway did not achieve full independence until almost 100 years later in 1905.

My brother Alistair visits me in Norway

When I took these films my brother Alistair was visiting me. Alistair visited me in Norway on more than one occasion. But I wonder if this was in 1982. Alistair was a 'betting fanatic' throughout his life. He had placed a lot of money on France and Platini winning the world cup; I said he had made a mistake, because he hadn't taken into account the magnificent talent of Rummenigge, the German centre forward.

We were sitting in my kitchen in my flat in Lofthus, Oslo, watching the semi-final on some ancient black and white TV which I had bought at a flea market. As far as I can remember the French had taken the lead in extra time. But then the substitute Rummenigge equalised with a brilliant, thunderous volley.

Schumacher's assault on Battiston – 1982 world cup semi-final

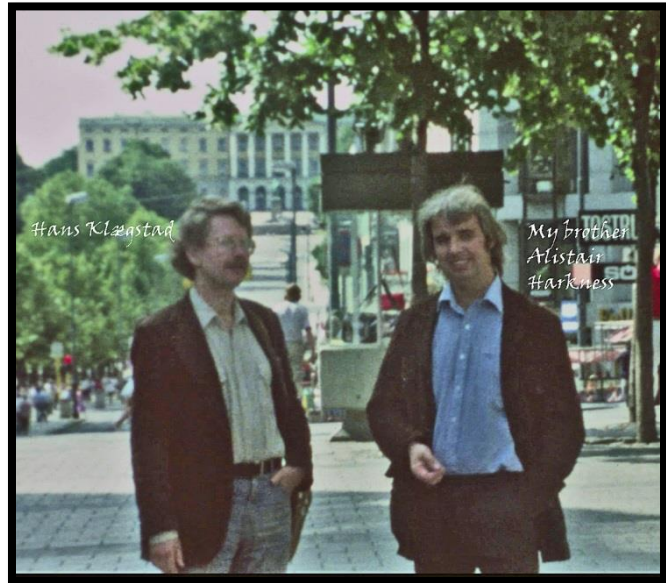
Of course, in the 'old days' soccer players could commit violent crimes on the pitch and go free. Goalkeepers were often perceived as 'victims' and incapable of committing violent crimes.

In the second half, the West German goalkeeper Schumacher wilfully collided with the French player Patrick Battiston, which knocked Battiston unconscious and forced him from the game with two missing teeth, three cracked ribs, and damaged vertebrae, though no foul was given. To this day, Schumacher has not been convicted of assault. An ethical question arises here. Is sport a kind of vacuum where you can

commit violent crimes and go free? Well the answer to this is an obvious yes; this is exemplified by the sport of boxing where grievous bodily harm is rewarded by millions of dollars, and murder (the killing of another boxer) never reaches the courts. Absurdly, some of these violent criminals are heralded as fighters for human rights (cf. Muhammed Ali).

But back to what I was saying, this film might have been taken in 1982. There is an interesting still shot (see below) of my brother and my communist friend Hans

Klægstad standing in Karl Johan. Hans Klægstad was a witty and intelligent young man who was socially engaged. When I was living in Sogn Student Town in Oslo in the late 1970s and early 1980s I was staying in the same 'student flat' as him; the student flat had several rooms and a joint kitchen. We often



used to watch the 'tippekampen'⁹ The 'tippekampen' heralded the start of the 'forspill'.

'Forspill' and 'nachspiel'¹⁰

'Forspill' – this is a difficult concept to explain to non-Norwegians. During the post-war period the Norwegian government have implemented various measures with the aim of reducing alcohol consumption. Not least was the imposition of punitive taxes on the sale of alcohol in state-owned shops ('Vinmonopolet'); the irony here is that the state were able to fill their coffers. Ordinary Norwegians thus adopted various tactics and strategies to avoid the Norwegian state's

⁹ Tippekampen ('Betting match') was a Norwegian football program that ran on the Norwegian state-owned television from 1969 to 1995. The program consisted of live football matches from England and was broadcast between 4pm and 6pm (3 pm start in England). The selected match was from the week's 'betting coupon'.

¹⁰ *Nachspiel* (from German, "afterplay") is a less formal, often improvised, festive event after the actual party. A *nachspiel* often lasts between 3 am and 6 am depending on the closing times of bars, but can also last until late the next day.

punitive taxes. One way was to make your own brew, that is, moonshine (Norwegian: *'hjemmebrent'*). Another alternative was to do your shopping in the neighbouring country, Sweden, which had adopted less punitive measures. Another strategy was to avoid public places of consumption, where prices were increased even more because these establishments had not only to pay taxes on the sale of alcohol, but they also needed to make a profit. In other words, people had avoided the incursions of the state and capital by adopting their own solutions such as the *forspill* (pre-partying). In addition, there was something called *nachspiel* (night-partying). The Norwegian government also had strict regulations regarding the opening times of businesses selling alcohol. Thus, most bars had to stop serving alcohol around midnight, so people had to carry on partying in their own homes until 6 in the morning. This was in contrast to the liberal Denmark, where you could drink 24 hours a day, as Danes at that time often drank a schnapps for breakfast.

But I'm losing the plot here. The point was I used to drink beer with friends on Saturdays in the communal student kitchen. Hans' friends would also turn up to watch the *tippekamp* and drink beer. Most of his friends were communists,¹¹ amongst them were Hans Halvorsen (who was also a student) and Rolf Jørgensen (who was a train driver for NSB). Ironically Hans Klægstad, Rolf Jørgensen and Hans Halvorsen, at a later point, all lived at Thorvald Meyers Gate 17, Oslo (today I live at number 27 – some 40 years later). Their older communist friend 'Hystad', who owned the block of apartments at Thorvald Meyers Gate, had let them rent apartments there at a low price.

The Royal Palace in Oslo

The two films, one with the black busker and the one showing a band marching down Karl Johan on May 17 (probably 1982) both show the Royal Palace in the background. A photo from the invasion of Norway

¹¹ I never got involved in all the discussions of the various communist groups in Oslo at this time. In other words, there were many such groups who seemed to hate each other more than they hated the right wing opposition. I seem to remember that my friends belonged to MLF – a breakaway group from NKP; but on searching this on Google, there seems to be a contradiction here as it states that MLF was a Maoist grouping – and my friends hated the Maoists! See: https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxist-Leninistisk_Front

by Germany in World War II also shows the Royal Palace in the background.

Karl Johan with the Royal Palace in the background



Royal Palace, Oslo

The Royal Palace in Oslo was built in the first half of the 19th century as the Norwegian residence of the French-born King Charles III John (Karl Johan), who reigned as king of Norway and Sweden.

The palace is located at the end of Karl Johans Gate in central Oslo. Charles John chose the site for the permanent royal palace on the western side of Christiania in 1821 and commissioned the architect, Danish-born Hans Linstow, to design the building. The Parliament approved the stipulated cost of 150 000 *speciedaler*. Work on the site started in 1824.

The Storting (the Norwegian Parliament) refused additional grants as a demonstration against the king's unpopular efforts to establish a closer union between his two kingdoms, Sweden and Norway.

Eventually, improved relations with the king made the Storting grant the necessary funds to complete the building. The roof was laid in 1836, and the interiors were finished during the late 1840s. King Charles John never had the pleasure of residing in his palace before he died in 1844.

Karl Johan Gate (street), the Royal Palace and May 17th

There are several ironies at play here. Norway's national day is on 17 May, the date the Norwegian Constitution was signed in 1814. However, on 4 November 1814, the kingdoms of Sweden and Norway formed a personal union under one king. Of course, 'union' is a euphemism as Norway was to a great extent under the rule of Sweden, and spent much of the next ninety years (Norway became independent in 1905) in various disputes with its 'big brother' Sweden. The ironies here are that Norway celebrate 1814 (when they came under the rule of Sweden) rather than 1905; another irony is that the 17 May celebrations focus on Karl Johan Street (named after the Swedish-French king), and also focus on the royal residence - the Royal Palace, which was also built by the Swedish-French king. Prior to 1905, the conflicts between Norway and Sweden heated up.

Oscarsborg Fortress

The Oscarsborg Fortress is located in Oslo Fjord where the fjord narrows at Drøbak (*Drøbaksundet*), which is a natural point for the naval defence of Oslo, the capital of Norway.

By the end of the 19th century, tensions were growing between Sweden and Norway, and so the Norwegians decided to upgrade the fortress. From 1890 new improved German guns were installed. The main armament was three 28 cm calibre guns (11 inch) manufactured by Krupp.

The Swedish Navy never invaded Norway before its independence in 1905, so the fortress went unused, at least for another 35 years.

Germany invaded Norway on 9 April 1940 for no accountable reason. The German cruiser sailed up the Oslo Fjord with the intention of quickly defeating Norway. However, they hadn't calculated that they had sold some Krupp cannons to Norway some 35 years previous. After being fired upon by the cannons of Oscarsborg, Blücher rolled over and sank at 07:30, with the death of as many as 1,000 soldiers and sailors.

In other words, the Germans were stopped in their tracks by being fired upon by their 'own' guns. Perhaps this is a warning – one shouldn't sell one's own high technology to other nations, because you never know when it will come back and hit you in the face.

The sinking of Blücher delayed the German occupation long enough for King Haakon VII and his government to escape from the capital. The king's escape was made into a film in 2016, called "The King's Choice."

May 17 Music Marching Band around 1980

Norway's national day is characterised by children's parades, marching bands, and traditional costumes.

One of the Super 8 films here shows a marching band on 17 May, around 1980, being led by majorettes in white-skirt uniforms. Of course, the

soundtrack is playing Bob Dylan's "Rainy Day Women #12 & 35" which I dubbed on the film when editing.



Violinist in Karl Johan, Oslo

One of the street musicians I filmed was a brilliant violinist. In fact, he must have been a professional. I did a quick Google search but couldn't find anything about him. But I'm sure a more advanced search would find something as I seem to remember he was part of the cityscape around Karl Johan for many years in the 1980s.

My 'helper' Safira

My girlfriend at the time, the young Safira, held the microphone during the filming. We later went to *Spikersuppe* ('Nail Soup') in Karl Johan and had a drink, chat and a sing-song (see below).



Playing the bagpipes in Karl Johan

All kinds of buskers played in Karl Johan around 1980, including a Scotsman playing bagpipes.



“God Save the Queen” and Safira at ‘Spikersuppa’¹²

As mentioned above, Safira helped in the filming along Karl Johan. The films were made in the vicinity of *Egertorget*.¹³ It is only a short walk to

¹² Spikersuppa (literally meaning nail soup) supposedly gets its name from folklore: A poor woman went along the houses nearby, telling everyone she was making soup from cast-iron nails. People were naturally surprised and wanted to see this strange soup. She said she only needed a few ingredients more (like potatoes, onions, carrots – you get the picture), and people happily contributed so she could make her nail soup. In the end, she had tricked everyone to give her all the ingredients she needed to make a perfectly ordinary soup, and thus managed to fill her belly that day. A telling tale about conditions Oslo faced way back when. Today Spikersuppa is the area that stretches between the Parliament Building and the National Theatre, dominated by a large pool and several cafés. During the colder part of the year, the pool is transformed into a skating rink where you can rent skates and tumble around. When you’re cold enough, you can enjoy a hot chocolate at one of the cafés nearby (like Kaffebrenneriet or Grand Café, two other highlights on Afar.com). There’s also a Christmas market during Christmas, which sells handicrafts and the traditional Norwegian Christmas drink, gløgg. <https://www.afar.com/places/spikersuppa-oslo> Accessed: 31 Dec. 2022.

Spikersuppa, where there is an outdoor restaurant, where you can take refreshments.

Safira and me in Spikersuppa



¹³ *Egertorget* is a pedestrian mall located at the intersection of Karl Johans gate and Øvre Slottsgate in Oslo.