

Dr Livingstone, nor do we presume to be, but away from the comforts of our own native climes, facing relative unknowns, we follow Thoreau and find adventure and peril in the foreign everyday: driving on the wrong side of the road, a wrong turn down a cobbled street, a wrong coffee order. We depend on the generosity of locals to indulge us as we shout English, wave maps, curse and sigh and gurn. We form strong opinions. We become experts. At home, it's just a disappointing steak. Reheated at the Grill Courtepaille in Ajaccio, for example, it becomes: 'I can honestly say this is the worst meal ever!' And by that I mean: a meal that makes the trip one worth talking about for years.

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MILIEU

Corsica, 1971: not only was *Granite Island* finally released, but Jim Morrison and Pamela Courson dropped by in what would be The Doors' singer's last ever holiday. Some time later, TRAVIS ELBOROUGH views Morrison's long lost Super 8 footage, an eerily fascinating relic from the true end of the 1960s.

OVER-SATURATION

May 1971. Jeans are most likely dark blue and flared. Hair is quite probably long and flowing. Conversations, even among reasonable people, drift easily from the *I Ching* to macrobiotic diets. Dona Z. Meilach's *Macramé: Creative Design in Knotting* is seemingly everywhere. As are its results, with no bathroom worth its bath salts free of spider plants suspended in webs of string. But not everything feels quite so laid-back and groovy.

Richard Nixon is in the White House and Edward Heath is in Number 10. The Vietnam War creeps on. Sectarian violence has flared up in Northern Ireland. In pop, or rock music as it's now known, Alan 'Blind Owl' Wilson of Canned Heat, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin are all dead. The Beatles have split up. Paul McCartney is married and has a farm on Kintyre. Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys is the co-proprietor of a health food store. And a whole year has passed since the trial of one-time would-be-Beach Boy, Charles Manson.

Hunter S. Thompson, having returned from a district attorney's drug conference in Nevada, has just penned *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, his jangled, uproarious obituary for the free and easy 1960s. The Rolling Stones are in tax exile around the Côte d'Azur. As for Jim Morrison, the once Adonis-like and now drug-jaded and alcohol-bloated lead singer of The Doors has decamped to France, moving from Los Angeles with the aim of cleaning up and concentrating on his poetry. He has taken a flat in that most poetic of cities, Paris, on rue Beautreillis in the Marais.

At this precise moment, the so-called Lizard King, famed for his unwashed leather trousers and alleged to have whipped out his John

4. HEALTH FOOD STORE

— Despite the existence of a Beach Boys single called 'Vegetables', it came as a surprise when, in 1969, Brian Wilson opened a health food outlet named The Radiant Radish. Although short-lived, the shop held more potential than Wilson's other entrepreneurial ideas, such as a 24-hour trampoline store.



Thomas live onstage, is not in town. He's off on holiday with Pamela Courson, his flame-haired 'cosmic mate' and the dedicatee of a self-published book of poems, *Love Street*. The pair will flit to Marseilles, Spain, Morocco and Corsica. Morrison, an ex-masters student of film at UCLA, always keeps his Braun Nizo S56 Super 8 movie camera to hand, if proving less capable of hanging on to his passport. The Super 8 camera is with them when they visit Napoleon's birthplace and up and rolling when they take in a Corsican cemetery at another spot nearby.

2 July 1971. Courson and Morrison are back in Paris, after further jaunts to London and the Lake District. Pam, knocking around with Count Jean de Breteuil, the French aristocratic drug dealer and lover of Marianne Faithfull, is rarely without heroin. Morrison is drinking heavily ('I woke up this morning, and I got myself a beer'), and writing increasingly little. In photographs from this period, he appears clean-shaven but often looks puffy and somewhat pie-eyed. Drained glasses and empty bottles on café-bar tables, rather than notebooks, are a recurring feature in these images, though in one or two he is actually sporting a rather plush sky-blue woollen sweater tied around his neck in the continental fashion, lending the gone-to-seed Dionysian rock god a slightly afternoon-spent-golfing air. This, however, is to be Morrison's last night on earth.

What he does that night will remain a matter of immense conjecture. Rumours of sweet-and-sour Chinese food. Beers and a limp body being bundled out of a nightclub toilet. A last-minute viewing of the Robert Mitchum western *Pursued*. Snorting heroin off credit cards. Whisky. Brandy. A cold bath. A warm bath. God only knows. But in all instances the same conclusion: a corpse, formally identified as his, is lying in a bathtub waiting to be examined the next morning by French paramedics and hastily buried at Père Lachaise cemetery.

Pam, for her part, is to tell the world that she and Morrison spent at least some of those final precious hours together watching the Super 8 movies of their various travels, with the result that Corsica may be among the very last things that flickered before the heavily inebriated 27-year-old singer's eyes.

ROAD TRIP

Photographer OLA RINDAL spent a weekend travelling by motorbike around Corsica trying to capture its essence for *The Happy Reader*. More images from the trip are found on pages 33, 34, 52, 59 and 60.



21 March 2015. Jeans are mostly black and skinny, and ripped at the knees (again). No one does macramé, though knitting and craft beer presently remain 'things'. Spider plants are still around. Beards are everywhere and far bushier than the one sported by Jim Morrison for a while. Morrison has been dead for forty-three years; Pam for forty. *The Doors*, Oliver Stone's grunge-era biopic starring Val Kilmer and released to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of his passing, is a decidedly aged twenty-three years old, somehow feeling more dated, if no less embarrassingly passé critically, than its subject these days.

At an antiquarian book fair housed in a cavernous, strip-lit, thick-carpeted basement room of the Hilton Olympia on High Street Kensington, such time is money. Or perhaps more accurately a certain kind of accumulated timelessness is. Weird scenes, especially involving young musicians whose lives were cut short (Jimi Hendrix, John Lennon, Kurt Cobain, Amy Winehouse), are a goldmine for dealers trading in choice items from rock's ever-wilting back pages.

And here this afternoon, one of the choicest is up for sale: a two minute and thirty-seven second reel of Super 8 film labelled 'Cemetery in Corsica'. Recently acquired by Lucius Books of York from a private collection in California, it's the only single reel of Super 8 almost definitely shot by Jim Morrison ever to surface. The price tag is £16,500. James Hallgate, of Lucius, neatly attired in check shirt and suit jacket rather than leather pants and love beads, and not known for using the phrase 'Hey, man' as a greeting, cordially offers a digital copy for prospective customers to view. Beside a copy of *The Hashish Cookbook* by Panama Rose, a laptop is fired up and Corsica, 1971, scenic if over-saturated and juddery, soon hovers into view. An Abe Lincoln-bearded youth with lank hair in a soiled-looking T-shirt briefly appears, before the camera settles on an idyllic-looking graveyard. The red-headed Pam, a gamine Jane Asher-like junkie whom Morrison first met in a club called the London Fog on Sunset Strip five years earlier, lurks amid lush bowers and mauve-grey stone monuments. What follows is not unlike a low-rent version of the trip scene in *Easy Rider* or a Jesus and Mary Chain video circa 1985. Clad in green flared trousers and a white peasant smock with billowy sleeves, a natty striped purple neckerchief knotted around her neck and eyes heavy with make-up, Pam pouts and mouths something about not wanting to move before prancing about the place like a demented flower fairy. Morrison pans round, zooming in and out, settling randomly on individual tombs as names (Angela Difrage) and dates (1825-56) bleach in and out of focus. His gaze repeatedly fixes upon the little photographs of the deceased inset on the more modern stones. A soon-to-be dead man is filming pictures of the dead. And in a graveyard that, thanks to France's penchant for pointy-arched neo-Gothic memorials, appears alarmingly similar to Père Lachaise. Almost as if gifted with some eerie premonition of his life running out, Morrison then flicks the speed of the camera and a skipping Pam, not much longer for this world either, goes into slow motion. The effect is dreamy and druggy, and frequently used by Wes Anderson in his movies whenever he's striving for some semblance of gravity or emotion after killing off a minor character — some guy in a red bobble hat or an Indian child, say. Normal speed returns momentarily for a few further patchy seconds as wreaths, graves and Pam rush by, before the film hurtles to its end.

5. CHOICE ITEMS

In 2011, one of John Lennon's teeth was purchased for £20k (\$33k) at an auction by a Canadian dentist named Michael Zuk. He has said he's planning on using DNA extracted from the tooth to clone the former Beatle and raise him as a son.

6. THE HASHISH COOKBOOK

This recipe collection was written by Rosalind Schwartz under a pseudonym and published in New York in 1966 by her partner, the poet Ira Cohen. It had the honour of being one of three marijuana-related books to be banned in Australia in 1970, the others being Dave Fleming's *The Complete Guide to Growing Marijuana* and a tome of anonymous provenance simply titled *Hash Cookery*.

7. CORSICA, 1971

Other popular holiday destinations in 1971 included Kauai in Hawaii, Acapulco in Mexico, Costa Smeralda in Sardinia, Burma, Iran, and the newly opened Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

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The whole reel unravels in far less time than some of the late Ray Manzarek's organ breaks. It was not for nothing that the group were, after all, nicknamed The Bores by some of the more waggish music hacks. Unlike life, it often went on, and interminably on. Only premature death and the constraints of 12-inch vinyl LPs were enough to stop it in its tracks. This brief film, an artefact of brief lives, rather than an artwork, however artily it may have been shot, only underlines that fact. The dead live on, on film. Those fortunate enough to die young, and wearing clothes that could still pass for fashionable, age better than us. Not for Pam or Jim, however grimly they perished, the indignity of arthritis, Alzheimer's, or sharing a stage, as two of the group's longer-surviving members did, with The Cult's Ian Astbury. If the past, as L. P. Hartley once claimed, is another country, it remains one, unlike Corsica, that we can only visit vicariously. No matter what, a Super 8 film can't bring Jim, Pam or 1971 back. That Crystal Ship has sailed. And even if it could, would we truthfully want to go there? This app-less land of landlines and instant coffee, of tax exiles and would-be poet-rock colossuses? This foggy province of beer for breakfast, ten-minute guitar solos, hangers-ons, pushers, groupies, Tuinal and ultimately lethal track marks? Corsica, surely, at this time of year and in our own epoch, would be a much safer bet.

1. ORGAN BREAKS

—
Ray Manzarek's best organ solo ever was performed in Boston in 1970, and lasted for five minutes and fifty-three seconds.

TRAVIS ELBOROUGH writes books addressing topics such as the way we listen to music (*The Long-player Goodbye*) and one of the strangest transactions ever to have occurred (*London Bridge in America*). He lives in north-east London. His best ever holiday was, he says, 'a high time in the Low Countries a decade or so ago'.

IS CORSICA A COUNTRY?

Over the centuries, movements for Corsican self-rule have taken many shapes. For an insight into the mind of a contemporary separatist, VIRGILE DALL'AR-MELLINA secured a rare phone interview with EDMOND SIMEONI, a longtime (but not always) non-violent figure known as the 'father of modern Corsican nationalism.'

'A spessu conquista mai sottumessa.' Often conquered, never subdued. This popular motto gives a hint of the long and troubled history of foreign occupation in Corsica. Ever-coveted by powerful neighbours, the island was successively ruled by Rome, the Saracens, the Holy See, Pisa and Genoa. After gaining a celebrated independence from Genoa in 1755, Corsica was quickly — in 1769 — conquered by France. In the twenty-first century, Corsican nationalism is divided. Autonomists ask for more local power and equality within the French state, whereas independentists want Corsica to be a separate sovereign nation. And although many Corsicans are still fine with the status quo, there has been a noticeable resurgence of both kinds of nationalism during recent decades.