



This month we have the next instalment of Bob Henrit's Tokyo journal. Thank you to everyone who said they enjoyed reading the first part in the May newsletter. This month...Japanese TV, sightseeing, the earthquake and...the first gig. The final instalment will be in next month's newsletter.

We have a new feature from this month..."Thought for the Month". Russ will be sharing some of his philosophy.

I am looking forward to hearing from you....stories, "letters" and questions. Anything Russ related...please send it to me at this email address.

Sue

NEWS

Russ has reworked "Voices" with just guitar and vocal for UMU Music. Keep an eye on the UMU Facebook page for news about that and a video showing how it was done.

<https://www.Facebook.com/pages/UMU-Music/203647439819957>

The original...as we all know it. <http://youtu.be/FNrbrhQknLQ>

After the success of their first EP, "Toe in Water", Christian B & Lavvy Levan, as Friday Fox Recordings, have a new EP, "Thank You". It is already getting play all over the world before its release on 23rd June 2014. It will be available on iTunes as well as other good online stores.



For news and reviews see Friday Fox Recordings at...

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friday-Fox-Recordings/415985281850189?ref=hl><https://soundcloud.com/fridayfoxrecordings>

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Certain sayings have affected me greatly and I want to share them with you, so, here's my first 'THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH' - 'Having Images of Ourselves' -

We all have an image of ourselves, sometimes the image is negative 'I'M NOT VERY GOOD' - other times - 'I'M REALLY GOOD' - But both images give us pain....Feeling 'I'M NOT GOOD' can stop us doing things for various reasons....[one] - People might agree with you; [two] We might be laughed at, etc....Also, if you're feeling 'I'M A DAMN GOOD MUSICIAN' - It only takes one person to say, "I don't think you are", then, the image we have of ourselves is hurt...it's as if someone has put a pin in our bubble and it's burst. So....What's the solution.....'DON'T HAVE AN IMAGE AT ALL' - Does that sound difficult? - Yes, I know it does - But follow your train of thought and see how we make images all the time....you'll be amazed!

*Love,
Russ*

YOUR QUESTIONS

Is it true that you worked with Bryan Adams?

Russ: "I haven't worked with Bryan Adams, although, he did phone me and asked to meet me for a chat - I met him at Abbey Road studios and he told me he loved 'Voices' and asked if I might write something like that for Tina Turner and said that he would like to produce it....He told me he'd recorded with T.T....I drove him back to the Montcalm Hotel - [where he was staying} a good man."

HITS FOR OTHERS

This one is maybe not so well known. Russ's own recording of "Are You Cuckoo" appeared on his album, "Winning" in 1976. The same year The Bay City Rollers put it on the US version of their album, "Dedication".

<http://youtu.be/X9QKXsbH-vI>

FROM RUSS

I don't know how Bob does these blogs, it must be difficult to remember the fine details....I must say every time I turned around to speak to him, he looked in thought and/or he was writing.

Having a blog is a good thing to have to recall the memory.

FROM BOB HENRIT

Konnichiwa Japan - Part 2

We were speaking briefly on the subject of television in Tokyo earlier and one of many weird and wonderful things I saw on it was a game of hockey on ice wearing wellington boots (which having once ill-advisedly played broom-ball on that same ridiculously difficult surface in a French ski resort is extremely dangerous, especially if alcohol was used to coerce you onto the ice). Another seemed to be exclusively about two tarantula-like spiders either copulating, fighting to the death, or possibly both. There were also relentlessly cheerful family shows which again had unfathomable subject matter. (I seem to remember Chris Tarrant hosting a series along these lines on UK TV a few years ago.) One particular musical programme where the audience always clapped enthusiastically on the on-beat may well have been a little like the infamous 'Gong Show' which was on in America in the eighties. Who knows? It was definitely a talent (less?) competition where the whole audience took their turn in getting up to do their thing. There was a very large presenter chap who stood next to the contestants conducting them and helpfully showing them exactly where the downbeat was - every bar. Once they'd been 'gonged out' they returned to their seats and gave each other high fives and tens - more like footballers having scored a goal rather than someone who'd just been humiliated in front of the whole Japanese nation!

Unless I was missing something with the complicated TV controller, the Shinjuku Prince's available programmes were unusual in that they didn't have BBC World Service - even though they did have CNN. It also appeared to have not one, but several Karaoke channels; a sports channel, another showing traffic jams, even more showing still pictures of plates of food and otherwise a whole slew of what I sincerely hope were reality TV channels. My favourite though was a 'Non Stop Live Mix' with DJ Oshy who you've probably guessed it mixed music - live. He was ably supported by two very pretty and smiley girls who held up the albums (one of which was 'Like a Virgin', the album not the girls) which Oshy was using as a base on which to work his magic.

The itinerary for the next day mentioned sightseeing and the fact that we were being picked up at 14.00 and it transpired the plan was that we were to be taking the train to a Shinto shrine. We gathered for breakfast and

only just beat the curfew set at 9.30, all five of us with the exception of Stuart who doesn't seem to do what I've always been led to believe is the most important meal of the day. Somehow it seems to coincide badly with the time when he's sleeping! He's obviously in his element in New York when he can break his fast at any time of the day. We relaxed in front of the television listening to the sounds of birds outside an open window being piped into our room. I'm sure it was being piped because with rooms on the 23rd floor it would, I feel, have been a serious mistake to have windows you could open up there and I'm not sure what sort of domestic birds would have been happy to be flying that high, other than Hawks and Eagles that is!

At precisely two o'clock in the afternoon Tetsuya turned up to take us to visit the Shinto shrine and since we were travelling on the train we would have to keep pretty close to one another as we headed for the station. It was extremely crowded, (as Tokyo always seems to be). It would really have helped us to follow Tetsuya if he was holding a small umbrella high over his head like Tokyo guides do - even though fortunately it wasn't raining. (Speaking of raining, the first time I went to Japan I was sitting on the plane with the Kink's lighting designer who told me that the natives can actually be heard to wrongly phrase: "it are raining". I didn't believe him for a moment until somebody stopped me on the street in the gentle rain for an autograph and really did misuse that phrase!)

Eventually we fought our way through the madding crowd to take the train to Shibuya where the Meiji Jingh shrine was situated. Now I've spent quite a bit of time on my own in Tokyo and this has necessitated taking trains everywhere. It may seem I'm boasting but I've managed to negotiate amongst quite a few others The New York Subway, The Paris Metro, The Boston Mass transit, The Taiwan bus network, and I've never come as close to being as hopelessly lost as I was on Tokyo's train system. Fortunately this time we had Tetsuya with us to guide us on the Kiekyu line (or was it the Oedo line?). Whichever one it was fortunately he knew exactly where we were headed and more importantly, where to get off. It was Harajuka station to be precise, from where we walked through smiling crowds for a few hundred yards and into the shrine. Music plays a

large part in the life of the Japanese and all of the everyday parts of it are accompanied by different computer generated, and possibly computer composed, catchy tunes. Doors open on trains to one tune and close on another; trains arrive at the station to one tune and for all I know leave on yet another. (What has changed for the better though are the on-board announcements which are now in Japanese **and** English. Slightly more reassuring but by no means fool proof if you happen to be going in the wrong direction.)

Shinto is Japan's original religion which despite having neither a venerated founder, nor a holy book is still deeply rooted in Japanese life. The shrine itself is dedicated to the Emperor Meiji and his Empress, Shoken who evidently had a hand in building the place something like a hundred years earlier. It has 100,000 shrubs growing and one of every tree indigenous to the country. Even though the place extended over 175 acres, it was packed with people paying their respects on a late spring weekend a month or so after the Cherry Blossom festival and intent on enjoying themselves. More or less the first things we encountered were huge barrels of wine on the left side of the wide well-trodden path and huge tubs of sake on the right - all laid carefully and artistically one on top of another. (Unfortunately I couldn't find information anywhere as to why they were there and whether they were potable.)



(At the Shrine. Photo by UMU Music)

We passed under a very, very substantial solid wooden arbour called a Torii and eventually arrived at a large square in front of the pagoda-roofed shrine itself. Here our progress was halted by a wedding party. Obviously it was a Shinto wedding with a priest carrying what looked like a large wooden pestle leading the procession followed by an immaculately dressed crocodile of guests gliding slowly along behind. The bride and groom were immediately behind the priest and his assistant. She was dressed in a beautiful shining silk kimono with a shaped white hat (something like a catholic priest's biretta) and he was wearing the robes of The Emperor because once married he would be the emperor of his family. The bride's strangely-shaped hat is designed to cover her imaginary (?) horns and signifies she must keep them covered – but presumably alludes to the fact that she still has them! They floated slowly by us and it was a very moving experience. (No pun intended.)

These were by far the slowest moving people in all Tokyo where the inhabitants are always happy to 'hurry up and wait'. I asked Tetsuya how much the ceremony would cost in sterling and was flabbergasted when he told me 500,000. Fortunately he was speaking in yen and matrimony was much more of a bargain in sterling, at £5000 and all the guests are obliged to loan the money to the happy couple. Could this be the reason why the wedding was nothing like as well-attended as its western counterpart!

There was a guy in the wedding square who was pretty obviously not part of the ceremony. He was clattering about wearing wooden soled flip-flops balanced precariously on a chunk of inch-square timber affixed sideways to their bottom directly underneath where the sole of his foot rested. It looked extremely difficult and I suspected it must have been a penance for something he'd transgressed – maybe in a previous life. The other unusual sight that day was a contradiction in terms: an obese Japanese woman. (I saw another a little later but to be honest it may well have been the same person!)

We renegotiated our way through the crowds back to the haven of our hotel and while we were on the train Tetsuya told me 30,000 unfortunate Japanese commit suicide every year, many under the wheels of the very train we were travelling on.

Our broadcaster and entrepreneur pal Peter Ross had joined us on the pilgrimage to the shrine. He had come to Tokyo with us for the hell of it; to have a look around and do a little merchandising: t-shirts, plectrums and a slack handful of copies of my book, 'Banging On!'.

In a previous life I'd had had a pretty good look around Tokyo every trip and was both entranced and amazed by Ripongi Park and was hoping we could get there so I could show the guys the extraordinary spectacle of the exclusively Japanese rock musicians playing there. A road runs through the park and bands set up immediately next-to and facing one another on both sides of it. They all have proper PA systems, sound men, back-line guys and, for all I know wardrobe, hair, make-up and lighting

people! Anyhow they get started and believe it or not, blast their music at one another! It's a peculiar phenomenon you won't be surprised to hear I haven't experienced anywhere else in the world and I seriously wondered how much it would be improved if they all played the same song – say 'Mustang Sally', or better still 'God gave rock and roll to you'!

Tetsuya took us out for supper that evening in another restaurant just around the corner from the hotel and not far from his record shop. The route went under the railway bridge I could see from my window with no less than 10 tracks running over it but unfortunately though I did a certain amount of train-spotting I didn't sight any bullet trains. We squeezed through Golden Gai a narrow alleyway with ramshackle eating and drinking places on each side as seen in Ridley Scott's 'Blade Runner'. Nowadays it's much more of a tourist attraction with food prices commensurate with its fame! We went close to Tokyo's own version of London's Gherkin on the way to the restaurant we were eating in that night, which was above a shopping mall which we took a lift up to. For reasons which weren't explained but possibly were to do with religion and cleanliness, we were obliged to take our shoes off before entering. Our table top was about a foot above the level of the floor we were sitting on with our feet sunk into a pit below it. Izumi, Tetsuya's wife ordered all the food from a heavy-duty version of an I-pad on the table and before long we were eating and drinking to our stomach's content. We retraced our steps through the Blade Runner street and because we had a gig the next day wisely decided we'd have an early night.

And so to bed. To sleep, perchance to dream – or so I thought!

At around 5am I was woken by a very strange and (to me) alien sensation – the whole room was moving! Much like the movement you feel on an aeroplane when you hit bad turbulence. I lay there trying to work out what was happening as I watched the end of my bed bucking up and down. Could it possibly be an 'Earthquake'? Eventually it subsided slightly and I walked to the window to check what was going on outside, the answer was nothing. Taxis were still moving smoothly 23 floors below me as if nothing had happened. Was I dreaming? I walked into the bathroom

and the floor was undulating beneath my feet so if it was a dream it was a rather realistic one. Being that high up I realised Russell and I certainly weren't in the best position to escape if it got worse. He was a couple of rooms down the corridor and evidently putting his clothes on just in case he had to jump! Anyhow the whole thing went away and believe it or not, I went back to bed. (I was obviously a little more sanguine, or fatalistic, about the possible outcome than RGB and if anything more serious happened I was going to land on the pavement in my bed – and with my duvet pulled up over my head!)

On the way to breakfast to meet the guys I enquired at the front desk as to whether anything had happened? They were slow in admitting that there had been an earthquake mainly I guessed because to them it was a regular occurrence. They have them at least once a month although the one we had experienced and survived measured 6.2 on the Richter scale (those are two words I've never written before) was quite a bit more serious than usual. (Tetsuya told me Tokyo suffers a really big one every three years!

I'd looked everywhere around the room for information on evacuating myself from the 23rd floor but found none and since all my limited knowledge on earthquakes was acquired from hotels in California, which outside of LA were frequently just two stories high, so it wasn't difficult to follow orders and stand under a lintel in a doorway to survive. I had no idea how to apply this wisdom to a skyscraper and there wasn't anything to help me. Even the front desk people were vague on the subject and told me they would have let me know when to get out, but they didn't mention how. Curious!

Once we sat down to breakfast it became obvious that it wasn't just me taking part in an earthquake, we'd all had one. I also began to think that Jet Lag was setting in because I wasn't feeling quite right. Still the first gig was that night so onwards and upwards, regardless.

Having sat at a boozy lunch in deepest Hertfordshire with a Japanese guy the weekend before we left, I was reliably informed that each of the two

days we were playing on were in fact national holidays! So neither he, nor I were sure how this would impact on the gigs. In the end it didn't make any difference.

I calculated this was my 5th visit to Japan and I was acutely aware that Tokyo at least had become more westernised – or should I perhaps say Americanised? Just about all the music we heard appeared to be Japanese approximations of well-known western songs and even the curved corners of buildings were wired for sound and vision and mostly seemed to play US Modern Jazz along with a great deal of R & B. The sounds coming from these very buildings were so strong I found myself looking for the live band responsible for producing them.

I don't know about the others but I had either misread the weather reports for the time we were to be in Japan, or had been somehow misled. By our standards it was summer time and I could only really be over-dressed for spring. It was pleasantly hot and a very good thing I had a suitcase full of t-shirts with me. It seems to me these days young people all over the world share a uniform: Converse Hi-tops, jeans, hats like Trilbies, and T-shirts from Superdry. It's really strange but the only difference between what people dress themselves in between London and Tokyo - is that a lot of Japanese wear smog masks. (Hold the presses though, a couple of days after we got back I was doing a gig with John Verity at Sound Control in Manchester and saw a guy wearing a smog mask and, guess what ? He was Japanese!) I'm not sure whether these masks are to protect themselves from others, or others from themselves?

Ok that's enough of the plot-laying - hopefully everybody reading this by now knows exactly where we were. It's time to get around to the reason **why** we were all gathered together there in the first place.

The cab picked us up to go to the gig at 2.30 (Chinese dentist, LOL) the day after the sight-seeing to whisk us to a busy suburb called Hattosai and the venue itself called 'The Doors'. It was on two levels with a balcony and very much like many of the large clubs we'd played in on the continent - or possibly like the old Marquee without the balcony and without the

sticky floors! We were there for the Soundcheck but our first concern was for the hired gear which, sometimes has the annoying propensity to be spectacularly wrong. In the event this didn't happen in Tokyo and the instruments were AOK, albeit they weren't quite as expected. I had a large-sized Pearl MX kit which appeared to have seen a lot of action and had, like the greater majority of hire kits I'd seen round the world, extra-deep power toms. The cymbals were a strange mixture of the good, the bad and the ugly but once all the elements were put together it sounded rather good! Stewie had wisely brought his own bass with him and even after half a day in the hold of a plane at 8 miles high it was still in tune! Steve had a bit of work to do because one of the keyboards he usually uses wasn't available in Tokyo so, since he couldn't load his settings directly into the next-best hired one, he had to re-programme it in his room with Russ' sounds – not a task for the faint-hearted. RGB had the same sort of Marshall 4 x 12 cabinet and amp he uses at home and a Fender 'Strat' and Gibson Les Paul so he was in good shape. Chris had brought his tenor sax with him and was also provided with his own (at least for the moment) Fender Strat and his favourite keyboard. As the Americans frequently say, we were good to go.



(Bob in Tokyo)

We finally got the gear sounding as we wanted it and after a necessarily longer than usual sound check we were ready to rock! At 19.15 we advised each other to 'break a leg' and marched to the stage to a great reception and launched into 'Rene didn't do it' then 'It's my life', 'Dream on' and 'Can't hear you no more', almost without pausing for breath. We deviated from the set list a little then and the audience loved it. They either sang along lustily or politely mouthed the words to everything. All too soon for us and the audience we arrived at 'Little Queenie' which has traditionally been the last number. But, we didn't stop there, we played on through 'Playing with fire' (my favourite shuffle), 'I don't believe in miracles' and eventually 'You've got me running' a blues song which I'm pretty sure Stewie had never heard before but not to worry, he nailed it and we sounded just great!



(In Tokyo)

Five minutes after we'd shouted 'Sayonara' and 'Kanpei' and left the enthusiastic audience behind we were back in the dressing room in the recovery position – ie with a beer in our hands! Before long we left the building and were bound for an Indian restaurant run by a guy who was straight out of Bollywood! We didn't need any help in ordering our national dish and having eaten our fill hoped we hadn't insulted Tetsuya by bypassing his choice of restaurant.

The timing of food has always been problematic because whereas in the rest of the world the band would eat before the gig with curtain-up at around 9pm, in Japan it was impossible because the shows started so much earlier. So because feeding the band is the promoter's responsibility in Japan we always ate after the gig - at exactly 10 o'clock. When I'd been on my own in Tokyo the Yamaha guys would take me out to supper and I may be doing them a disservice but suspect they were trying to see how far they could push this gaijin (me), by bringing more and more potentially off-putting foods. One of these was thinly sliced tongue which was cooked on a raclette in front of me and I don't think they expected me to eat it. I also ate the Kobe milk-fed beef but I drew the line at the snake I was once offered – even though I'd been told that like frogs legs and possibly dog, it all tasted like chicken. (The poor snake was being unzipped in front of me while the guy stood on its tail, held its head and stretched it upwards as his knife went downwards). I'm also not big at acting as judge and jury by pointing accusingly at an innocent fish (or octopus) quietly and obliviously swimming around in a tank before being fished out and beaten over the head at my insistence and cooked for my delectation.

Often when I'd been in Japan before there'd been a ritual involved with eating where one found oneself squatting on one's haunches for a couple of hours while sharing one's food with almost everybody else in the restaurant. (When I was in the Kinks we'd disgracefully head for 'Hard Rock' to avoid this.) Fortunately this never happened with Tetsuya and Izumi and after supper we walked back to the Prince hotel and, since its

bar was already closed at 11 o'clock (!) we once again gave in to an early night.

“Tomorrow would be another day” as Scarlett O’Hara sort of once said.

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