



Many thanks to Sven Kramer for making the brilliant poster for Russ's birthday. I hope everyone received it ok. I had a bit of trouble sending it out. If your email was blank, please let me know and I will send it again.

This month we hear more from Lisbon....with thanks to Vania Marotti, who has been mentioned in the newsletter previously and from Bob Henrit, who writes brilliant journals. Bob provides us with a very entertaining read and a fascinating insight into a rock band's life!! I would like to thank him for taking the time to do this. Try the links at the end of Bob's journal for an added bonus.

Don't forget to send in your own Russ stories. They don't have to be as long as Bob's...he's an expert!!

Sue

NEWS

Very exciting news!! Nothing has been finalised yet but there is a possibility that Russ and his band will be playing some gigs in Japan in May 2014. Negotiations are underway. More details to come.



YOUR QUESTIONS

I would love to find out who Russ' favourite guitar players, singers and bands are! His influences, who he thinks is vastly underrated etc.

"My Favourite guitar players....Chet Atkins, James Burton was a big influence when I was growing up....I couldn't figure out how he could bend G strings...many people said he used a banjo string. JB played the great solos on the Ricky Nelson records - then I worked with Ricky Nelsons children when they had a record deal. They stayed with me for six weeks....they had great stories about their dad and Elvis, however, I seemed to know as much about their Father as them....Scotty Moore doesn't get the credit he deserves....he played all the wonderful Elvis tunes that changed the world. I liked Paul Kossoff, he played so simply, but the parts were very melodic."

MORE FROM LISBON...

Hey Bernadette

<http://youtu.be/1jaRnVYe2r4>

VANIA MAROTTI

I have to tell you some words about our Russ Ballard's wonderful concert in my city, here in Lisbon at the Coliseu.

It was as always a wonderful concert. Russ was fabulous as ever. He was fabulous in the guitar and the piano and his voice is fresh as ever!

After the concert I was with him and all the team and the friendship and respect filled the room. I love him and Chris Winter so much. I have such admiration and consideration.

Although it wasn't possible for me and my band to play as supportive act, unfortunately, as you know, I had a lovely time. It was mandatory to be there for the concert in my city and meet Russ.

I had a wonderful time with loving Irene and her son, and also Sven and his wife. We were the greatest fans there!

Also had the pleasure to meet Peter Ross and that was very ,very nice.

Russ and Vania on stage together in Lisbon in 2009.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kSXnF_AdFO



BOB HENRIT

Novamente Lisboa

It didn't seem too long after the first time we went to Lisbon that we were going back to do a return gig for Emanuel Goncalves and the rest of his family. I say it didn't seem too long with my tongue firmly in my cheek - it was actually four years since that last gig. Russell and I had played together on a couple of Argent tours since then and of course there was also the never to be forgotten Roulettes 50th anniversary gig - but nothing in Portugal. To be honest there had been a few false dawns since then and several dates had been written in various calendars on my kitchen wall since 2009 and subsequently scribbled out. But the entry for September 28th 2013 definitely said **RGB, Lisbon** and it had been there for quite a long time. Unless something untoward happened we were definitely going.

E-mails whizzed backwards and forwards between Russell, Stevie Smith, Chrissie Winter, Bobby Skeat and me about new and old songs which were going to be part of the repertoire and eventually with the indispensable help of Youtube we were ready for our first rehearsal. (Emanuel had suggested several songs for the show which were well known in Portugal and these were to be refined as we progressed through the rehearsals. Surprisingly the list didn't include 'Hold your head up' and it would be the first time for forty years I'd done a gig with anybody associated with the song without playing it.)

Actually it wasn't my first rehearsal because Russell and I had got together for a cup of tea and a brief run-through of those new songs some time before. This was when I was recuperating from the second (and much more stringent) operation on my bent finger and was anxious to see if I could still play! I played through the songs with some trepidance and was relieved to see I still had it. The next time we would get together was to be on a Monday shortly after -September 16th to be precise.

As usual the full-out rehearsals were to be at Russell's studio which is easy for me to get to, slightly more difficult for Skeaty because it includes the North Circular and a proper journey for the others both of whom needed to negotiate the M25 via the M4 or the M3. The other guys turned up with all their gear whereas I came equipped with only a couple of pairs of sticks. This was because, lucky me! I was using Russell's Hayman kit which is permanently set-up in the studio and to which I'm rather partial. We got on with our walk-down-memory-lane with the help of the old notes we'd had for the last gigs and the updated ones from various clips of our former performances we'd recently watched privately and critically on Youtube.

After three more rehearsals and copious amounts of beverage: tea, coffee and soup kindly provided by Denny, we were ready to go. On the Friday of our departure we were gathered at Russell's to 'top and tail' the songs one more time for luck before we set off for the airport. Russell is even better placed than me for Stansted airport but not so close to Heathrow from whence TAP were flying us direct to Portela airport in Lisbon. And, even though it was a Friday afternoon and included negotiating a large section of the M25 (London's biggest car park) we still arrived at terminal 1 with plenty of time to hurry-up-and-wait as we used to say in the Kinks. TAP were, they claimed experiencing staffing problems so they told us at check in that there would be no service on the flight. Instead we were being issued with vouchers for £7 to spend on anything edible we could find in the departure lounge. We spent our vouchers at 'Pret a manger' and the kind lady

behind the counter (who wasn't allowed to give us change or put the balance in the charity box which was sitting enticingly in front of her). She loaded each of us up with a couple of unwanted Flapjacks to go with our coffee, vegetable crisps and baguettes in lieu.

Transportes Aereos Portugueses weren't kidding about the lack of service although we did get a plastic glass (excuse the oxymoron) of water to keep us hydrated during the journey. It always slips my mind that Lisbon is on the same timeline as the UK so there was no need to change my watch on the plane and not even the remotest chance of suffering from jetlag.

We were met at the airport by Emanuel and his right hand man (who I think is his uncle) and sped off to the hotel for a late, make that very late, supper with some of his family and our handpicked German road crew: Sascha, Oli and Marcel. Pasta and red wine were both waiting for us and we made short work of them. Last time in Lisbon we'd enthusiastically drunk nicely chilled Vinho Verde but this red was fantastic and I'm disappointed that I can't remember the name of it. I'm hoping Russell will though. I'm pretty sure Emanuel's dad said there was a family connection with this wine. He also told us how much he liked Newcastle after riding his motorbike there from Lisbon in the sixties. I privately thought that anywhere he stopped would have been great after something like 1300 back-breaking miles in the saddle!

And so to bed.

The Saturday was the day of the gig and, *comme d'habitude*, Russell and I were first down for breakfast and therefore able to show-off to the others where the makings for the do-it-yourself first meal of the day were to be found. I forgot to mention that we were staying in a green 'minimalist' hotel called Inspira Santa Marta which had won awards for helping to save the planet and had been put together with Feng Shui in mind. It was so minimal that the night before I'd been unable to find the wardrobe although the shower was conspicuously placed behind sheets of armoured glass in **the centre** of the room! I discussed the fact that they'd forgotten to put a wardrobe in my room over breakfast with Russell and he offered to come up and show me where it was hiding! Sure enough I did have one and it was certainly big enough for the few belongings I had in my Ryanair-approved pull-along: drumsticks, notes on the arrangements, toiletries, t-shirts, boxers, socks and the very nice basic black shirt I always use for Russell's gigs. Unfortunately I won't be using it anymore because I left it behind soaking wet in the dressing room after the gig at the Coliseum!

Some of us hung around in our rooms waiting for the Soundcheck but I decided to go for a wander around the area of the University and military academy to get some fresh air and see what was going on locally. Unfortunately the fresh air was also full of fresh rain which was still wet even though it was warmer than we're accustomed to at home. I dodged in and out of doorways of typically interesting Portuguese shops as I negotiated the narrow streets around the hotel and tried hard not to slip on the cobbles. The recession has hit the high streets of Lisbon in the same way that it has cities in the UK and depressingly there were lots of derelict shops in the once prosperous streets surrounding the hotel. I wandered in the direction of the hotel we'd stayed in last time but before long the rain drove me back to our hotel.

We still had a few hours to kill before we were to be picked up so I settled down to watch the Travel Channel for a while which was concentrating on an English guy on a motorbike who I didn't recognise. I did though recognise the parts of America he was easy-riding through after what seems like half-a-lifetime working there with various artists. We were whisked off to the gig which had such a long steep and narrow ramp up to its entrance that I wondered how they'd managed to get scenery, stage equipment and even the audience up there before the advent of the motor car.

The last time we were in Lisbon we played in a bullring called the Campo Pequeno which, even though it was only a part-time one didn't sit too well with Russell - who is a vegan. This time though we were playing at the Coliseu de Lisboa which as far as we could ascertain had never had anything to do with the ritual goading to death of innocent beasts in front of blood-thirsty spectators. The Coliseum was well over 150 years old and was mostly used for operas (Joan Sutherland and Tito Gobbi had both sung there in their heydays) as well as circuses, ice shows and the like. Nowadays it hosts the likes of Suede, the Pixies and the Foals. Inside it was very much like a slightly smaller and less-gilded version of the Albert Hall.

But we couldn't explore the place, we had nerve-wracking stuff to do investigating the equipment we'd been provided with. I'd specified a Mapex drum set and didn't pay too much attention to it other than tweaking it a little bit. (I didn't discover until after the event that it was a Yamaha!) Marcel had worked with us before in Lisbon and miraculously remembered the exact positions and heights of the drums. Fixe, as they say in Portugal!

The Soundcheck went well and before long we'd sorted out the front-of-house sound with Oli and our individual on-stage monitor sound with one of the local crew and were speeding back through the still pouring rain to the hotel. Supper came next and we sat there discussing the programme whereupon several more songs were kicked into touch. Russell's family Denny, Karis and Emmy had arrived on TAP and like we'd been the day before were desperate for something to eat because, guess what? there was no service on their plane either. These staff shortages are beginning to sound a little suspect! They all looked drained by the experience especially little Emmy who had never seen his Poppa performing before. I suspected he was going to be a little shocked by the end of the night.

The set list of songs for the show had been fine-tuned around the table at dinner and one of us foolishly decided to leave the 'cheat sheets' for them behind because we definitely weren't doing them. Oops!

We drove up the steep ramp to the Coliseum at the time we'd normally be on our way home from a gig in the uk and waited for show time. The hugely experienced Sascha expertly and effortlessly cleared the dressing room as we all went through our pre show rituals and not long before midnight we hit the stage and launched straight into 'Rene didn't do it' followed swiftly by 'It's my life'. The crowd were ecstatic as we went into 'Dream On'. After that we just about played everything in the planned order and what seemed like just a few minutes later we'd played everything we'd intended - not I hasten to add because we played them too fast, the tempos were satisfyingly right on the money. But that wasn't enough for the several thousand Lisboans. (This is my word because there doesn't seem to be one in the Portuguese language to describe the city's inhabitants and I refused to smuttily pretend they were called Lisbians!). Whatever they're called

they'd sung their hearts out with Russell and didn't want the experience to end – neither did we. So guess what? We launched into all the songs we weren't going to play including 'Hold your Head Up' and 'On the rebound'. Even though we had been onstage for what we were told was quite a long time it all seemed to go by in a flash and eventually (after 'Little Queenie') we went to the front of the stage for the obligatory communal bow before we were lead to the elevator which took us back up to the dressing room. We hugged one another and did our best to quickly replace all the liquids we'd lost under the stage lights! The crowd were ecstatic at the end and now so were we. Several of the usual suspects like Vania came backstage to congratulate us including Peter Ross who'd flown out for the event and had interviewed first Russell, then me for his Classic Rock radio programme on Apple-fm.

Eventually we'd managed to wind down and dry ourselves off before heading back to the hotel and in my case leaving my shirt and performer pass behind in the now empty dressing room. It was well after three in the morning and I certainly wouldn't need any rocking to get to sleep.

As usual RGB and I were up in time for breakfast and able to say adeus to Denny, Karis and Emmy who were taking an early flight. We lingered over breakfast while I chatted avidly to Russell's agent Michael Bisping who I never seem to see enough of. We definitely drank way too much coffee before heading upstairs to pack before our late checkout. This had been thoughtfully requested by Sascha Gerbig before he'd left at stupid o'clock to be home in time for his son's seventh birthday.

We said adeus to the majority of the family Goncalves and Emanuel took us to the airport. Mindful of the problems with service we'd all experienced with TAP, as we checked-in we asked if there would be anything served on this flight? We were assured there most definitely would be. Honest! With that in mind we didn't avail ourselves of anything to eat to go with the rather strong gin and tonics we enjoyed airside as we happily discussed last night's gig and half-watched Portuguese football on the television.

I don't want to start any malicious rumours about airlines in trouble, but.... Once we got on the plane to discover that once again "because of staff shortages" there would be no service - we smelt a rat. Since there was what used to be called a steward and a stewardess on board I can only assume the problems were more due to the staff not wanting to be bothered. This lot didn't even come round with water.

But it would take more than a lack of service on the plane to blunt our enthusiasm and we were promptly picked up at the airport and whisked off on a somewhat deserted M25 to the bosoms of our families. Except me that is because mine were on holiday in Fuerteventura so I was going home to an empty house. Merda! (As I'm sure they say in Portugal.)

As far as the future is concerned I'm sworn to secrecy but I'm told there is a distinct possibility we'll be doing something rather exciting next year. Watch this space!

I'm afraid it's not much of a travelogue this time because all we really did was go from the airport to the hotel, then to the gig (which was very close), back to the hotel followed by a trip back to the airport - all of this in pouring rain. But I believe you can still find the more travel-orientated journal of our first trip to Lisbon on www.mikedolbear.com should you be interested. Part 1 is on: <http://>

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I checked out the programme section on the Coliseum's website and the English translation informed me that Russell Ballard would be playing: "the best rock of the 80's and 90's at the Coliseum in Lisbon on September 28th for a performance unique and unrepeatable".

I'd agree wholeheartedly with the unique word but sincerely hope the second word, unrepeatable, isn't true. We're all ready to do it again - whenever they are!

Obrigado Lisboa e ve-lo novamente!

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