



(Header by Sven)

Official Russ Ballard Tour Blog Wings of AOR Festival, Norrköping, Sweden, April 2026

Thursday 23rd April

As usual, we are meeting at Russ's house before being driven to LHR. It's an early one, meeting at 6.15am. John, PJ and myself stay nearby overnight. My alarm goes off at 5am.

The van is loaded and we seem to have a lot more equipment, especially for an overseas trip. The newest travel accessory is Paul's guitar case that holds multiple guitars. It's shaped like a coffin on wheels🤪...maybe it previously belonged to Alice Cooper....👁️

We encounter rush hour traffic on route to Heathrow and then check in everything at the desk. We then head to the BA Lounge for breakfast. Huge place but we can't find many seats and we are spread all over.

On board they serve us non vegans cottage pie. Paul and Marc are using the time to remind themselves of the new songs...it's been a challenging exercise learning so many new songs, most with plentiful and complicated lyrics.

(Russ will be performing his "Voices" album and "The Fire Still Burns" in their entirety for the first time ever. A lot of these songs haven't even been performed on stage before.)

Sitting in front of us is Kelly Griffiths from Edinburgh who is a RB Facebook page contributor. She is a regular visitor to Sweden and Europe for AOR festivals.

Our cabin manager is “Alan” and he is a real character and provides brilliant service, in fact all the staff on the BA flight are amazing. Alan is very generous with his champagne top ups too (oh, did I mention that? 🍷🍷).

We have a long wait in passport control but the people are very friendly. We get the carousel to start unloading our gear and Alan from BA goes past us. Russ asks to have a picture with him.....(ok it’s a fair cop, I may have engineered it).



We land in Stockholm and we meet Peter from Wings of AOR for the first time who is driving us to Norrköping. Van loaded and we are on the way. I ask him how long it will take....two hours he says, it’s in the middle of the day.....if only.....



We all get settled in the van and we hear a buzzing noise coming from someone’s case.....a device has somehow been activated.....what device I hear

you say....it turns out it's Russ's electric shaver (well, what else did you think it was? 🤔🤔). PJ is pleased to report that Russ's shaver has a long battery life as it's buzzing in his ear for most of the journey 🤔😞😓. (We couldn't unload all the gear to switch it off as all the luggage was jam packed in there 😬). A major accident on the motorway means it's nearer 5 hours before we get to the hotel. I call Ron Dahlgren the tour promoter and lovely man, he's stuck on the motorway too. Ron and his wife Nina are joining us for dinner tonight, I inform him I'm going to put it back an hour.

The boys check in and go straight out but Russ and myself decide we need a change of clothes after a long journey. We walk across the bridge from the hotel to the restaurant and I take some fabulous pictures of the local landscape.

We manage to just about meet in the Red Lion for 7.30 and retire to the Indian restaurant just after 8.

The discussion around the table is about Milan next week (Frontiers Rock Festival) and the logistics of getting there. Russ has been invited to perform at short notice due to the cancellation of an artist. It's not been announced yet but some of the fans we met in the pub seem to already know!

Eight of us have a great meal and we walk back to the hotel. It's still daylight and we are told that it's a rare thing in Sweden after a "dark," light starved winter. Consequently, everyone is out and about albeit in the chilly evening air. Despite the long day, a nightcap is in order at our hotel and Russ is kept busy signing albums and CDs that keep appearing from guests rooms.



Big day ahead tomorrow.....bed time.

Friday 24th April

I wake up well in time for our designated meeting time for breakfast at 9am. I first have to call my wife Karen as it's her birthday but we are one hour ahead and waiting for her to wake up!

I start to brush my teeth and it tastes funny....well it would do because it was cortisone cream and not toothpaste! 🤢 Well it is the same colourI rinse my mouth and throw my (new) toothbrush away. I need to buy a new one.

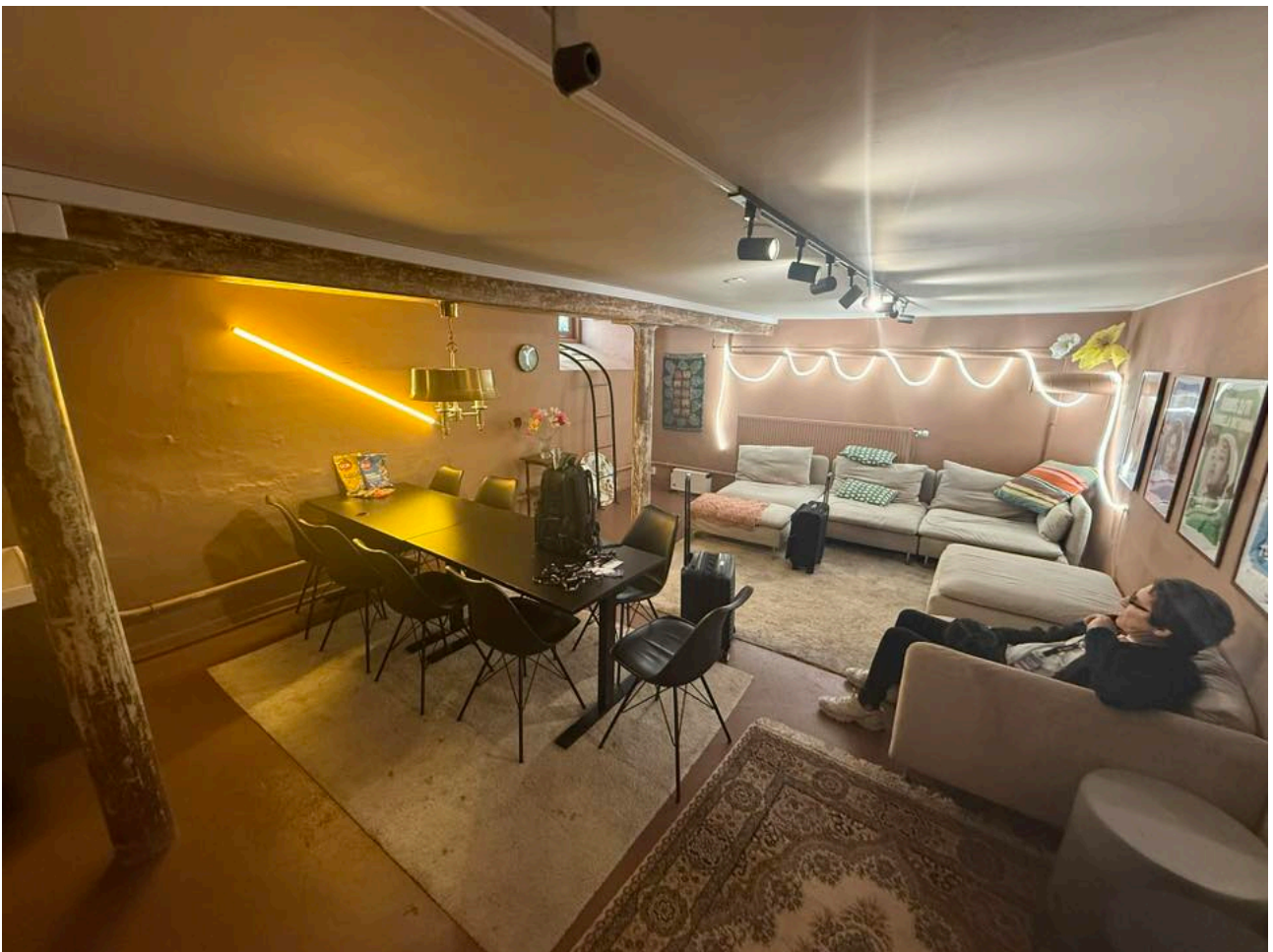
Russ is down first and we drink some coffee. Marc and John soon join us. After breakfast Russ informs me he has forgotten his comb and will need one to get ready for the show. He goes to reception and asks if they can help....they can't. Oh well, that's a toothbrush and a comb on the shopping list now. But perhaps not....Russ asks a lady called Jelina in the lobby (jokingly) if she has a brush he can borrow.....and to his delight, she does. It's gold and it has wings !! (Wings of

AOR of course Ron). Picture of the brush, Russ and Jelina. (Russ still has it !!..... watch this space!!!).



It's time to get the shuttle to the venue for sound check and outside the hotel Russ meets Therés Enström for the first time. Therés sings in the Swedish band "Emotional Fire" and she is guesting on two tracks written by Russ for Frida and Agnetha of ABBA, "I Know There's Something Going On" and "Can't Shake Loose". She is therefore joining us for the sound check.

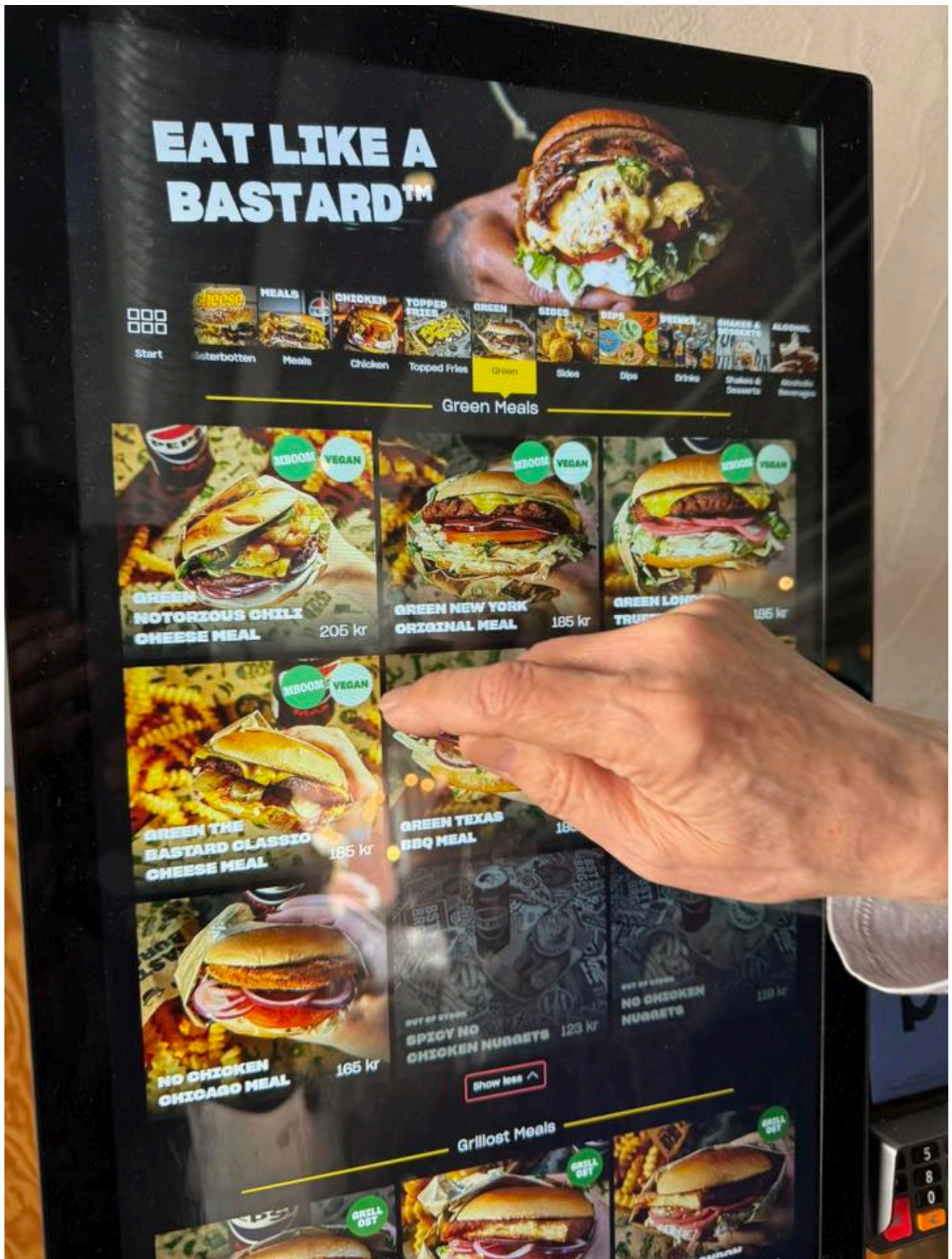
We arrive at the venue and it's beautiful. Over 100 years old with lots of character. We are greeted by Ita and Petter who are brilliant throughout and nothing is too much trouble. The dressing room area is lovely and spacious and Russ even has his own labelled drinks fridge.



The sound check goes without any hitches and the sound is fantastic. Therés does a run through of her two songs and her voice and stage presence blows us away.

We go back to the hotel after soundcheck and Russ and I decide to take a walk into town. There must be a pharmacy that sells combs and toothbrushes....It's a beautiful day for a walk and we decide that we'll have lunch in town. We can't find anything suitable until suddenly.....we see it.....the perfect solution.....a

“Bastard Burger” !!!! Yes you heard it right!! See the photo evidence. Even the menu says “eat like a bastard” 🤔😬😬😬 And it’s very nice too, both of us really enjoy it.



We eventually find a pharmacy and a toothbrush and comb 🪄 is purchased (god knows what the lady who served me thought 😊). The question is, will the Golden Wings Brush now be redundant? Time will tell....

Back at the hotel, we see our old friend Brian Spence who is also on the bill tonight. He's had terrible luck with his instruments which didn't arrive at the baggage reclaim. The airline are chasing it up but they are unlikely to be received before show time. Russ offers to lend him his Gibson Les Paul and Brian is very grateful. I go to the venue with Brian to make sure everything goes smoothly and Russ is going to have a well deserved rest until it's time to go to the venue.

Brian loves the guitar and his band go down well. He even likes to have the guitar at the same height as Russ so no strap adjustment is required.

It's time to get over to the venue and Russ and the band make their final preparations.

Russ and the band take the stage about 20 mins late (22.20). I do the usual intro having been introduced by the festival MC. Russ gets a warm welcome from a fantastic crowd who really appreciate their music. He's playing the two famous 1980's albums in their entirety sandwiched by the ABBA girl songs and then finally "Since You Been Gone " and "God Gave Rock and Roll To You". A two hour show and our weary musicians are off stage just before 12.30.

Effie Trikili from Wings of AOR has asked if she can take a stage photo with the crowd in the background and she takes some great photos. Thanks Effie and Russ enjoyed talking to you.



Russ is doing a post gig Merch stand signing and has enough time to catch his breath before meeting the fans. He always has time for them. We say goodbye to Marc and John who are leaving early tomorrow.

We get back to the hotel just before 2am and the hotel bar is full of people drinking....Russ wants a nightcap (not to be as the barman tells me alcohol is not served after 1am 🙄). It's probably 2.30 before I managed to lead our maestro to the lift having satisfied the numerous selfies on the way.

Paul tells me the Holey Guitar has suffered a slight injury and needs a minor repair and he needs to take a part off the Gibson to sort it. He is leaving early the next morning and Russ, PJ and I are staying on for Russ's guest appearance the next night (more on that later). Paul very kindly offers to fix it in his room and it will be ready the next morning. He very kindly brings it to my room at 7am and we say goodbye. Thanks again Paul, I know I wasn't a pretty sight. 🙄

Saturday 26th April/Sunday 27th April

As usual Russ is the first one down to breakfast and he's soon joined by myself and PJ.

Joe Lynn Turner (of Deep Purple and Rainbow fame) is headlining tonight and Russ is coming on during "I Surrender" (the song he wrote) to jam with him. Russ and Joe have never met before and that's about to change.

As usual the Vegan options at breakfast are not plentiful for Russ...so it's the usual plate of baked beans then (see pic). Now I know why Russ is always "full of beans" ... 🍲😄



Before we leave for Joe's soundcheck and a quick run through of "I Surrender", Russ sees Jelina in reception (the lady who lent him the Golden Wings brush) ...

he promises to give it back but she's busy doing some work and tells him not to worry.....

We leave the hotel and say goodbye to Kee Marcello who is leaving for the airport. A lovely man and a phenomenal guitar player. We also say goodbye to Brian Spence and his band.

Upon arrival at the venue, we are not there long before Joe's tour manager, Thomas, asks me if Russ wants to do the run through so we can get off. Appreciated Thomas, thank you. Russ climbs onto the stage and it's not long before Russ and Joe are embracing and exchanging banter. It's captured on video (see Russ's Facebook page) and is below...well worth a look. JLT "after the success of the song I bet you bought yourself an Aston Martin".....Russ "No, a Ferrari". 🤔🤔



Russ, PJ and I decide it's lunchtime and we find a small Italian restaurant where we have a great meal. Afterwards, Russ wants to watch Spurs v. Wolves and it ends well after a few scares. We then decide it's time to try and get some shut eye as it's 9pm before the shuttle picks us up later.

We have some food at the venue and it's not long now before Russ is on. Joe goes on stage and Russ goes to the side of the stage to watch him....he loves his voice and the vibe during "Endlessly".

The time comes for Russ to be introduced and Joe does a great job (check out the video coming up in the May newsletter)....the monitor and microphone are brought on stage and Russ is nearly tripped up in the process! 😬😞

As expected, the song goes down a storm....and it's time to retire to the dressing room. Brian Spence and his band are there and we say another goodbye to them (that's four and counting 😏). A drink or two and it's time for me to organise a shuttle to get us back. Russ is tired....and no wonder!

It's time to get to bed and after satisfying some autograph hunters and selfie requests, Russ gets to his room at last....an early night.....1.30am!

It's now Sunday morning and we are leaving at 8.30am for the airport. Therés is coming with us on the shuttle.

Brian Spence and his band are outside too and we say another goodbye (number five). Then we discover that their flights have been switched and they are now joining us in our shuttle.

Great.....another chance to say goodbye! 🙌

The journey is just over two hours to the airport, much better than the way here.... 🤔

It's time to say goodbye to Therés and of course Brian Spence and the boys (yet again 😞).....we are finally homeward bound. Ron Dahlgren and his wife Nina call us in the lounge to say goodbye. I think they are happy 😊.

On that note, on behalf of Russ and all his team a big thank you to Ron for his help, support and professionalism. It's a well oiled machine and we are very grateful to all the team at Wings of AOR who supported us.

Until the next time... 🙌

P.S. Russ still has the Golden Wings Brush ... 🤔 😊 🤔

P.P.S. Brian Spence texts us to say goodbye 🙋 🤔 😊 🤔