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## IMAGINE PERFORMING WITH JOHNNY CASH AT THE BRIXTON ACADEMY? NEW INTERVIEW WITH EXPOSED VOCALS

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Feb 18 2014 at 02:29pm



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How did you hear about Exposed Vocals? What made you decide to sign up?

First of all, thank you very much for this opportunity and patience! As much as I remember it was Exposed Vocals contacting me through Twitter...? Maybe I heard of it before on Reverbnation or something like that...Could that be? This year I'm going to move to the States because, as you might know, there isn't really a music industry in Switzerland. That means that nobody needs a musician on a Monday morning... It's a feeling like as it's raining soup and everybody has a spoon, only you, you have a fork. Therefor I thought it's not a bad idea to hook up with some industry people in the States and focus on that market before take-off.

So tell us your story. Where did you grow up? What made you decide to become an artist?

Oh, okay, I'll try to tighten it up a bit. I was born on the 3rd of January 1984 in Zug, Switzerland. I and my older brother were raised by our Mother; our Dad left the family as I was too young to even realize it. My Mom was a pretty talented piano player, my grandpa played the upright bass and my uncle used to play the violin and started playing guitar as he was a teenager... That's pretty funny 'cause I did exactly the same thing. At the age of 4 I told my mother that I want to become a violinist and so she asked her brother if that old fiddle was still somewhere and if it'd be possible to borrow it for me. At the age of 5 I was finally old enough to have my first lessons and I became a pretty good soloist playing dozens of concerts all around Switzerland and Italy.

At the age of 13, as I visited my grandma in Cham near Zug, I found my uncle's western guitar in the very back of an over packed garage. That was the day I stopped playing the violin and started teaching myself to play guitar... I don't really remember how exactly that happened; guess it all seemed pretty obvious since the guitars as well as the violin are stringed instruments. That guitar I found that day still is my favorite... Today I own 12 western and arch top guitars and 9 electric guitars but not one of them has been played for such a long time as the handcrafted Cimar Hummingbird I started with. Anyway, as said, those were the days I started writing songs and play in several bands, of course as rhythm guitarist and lead singer. Just so you know, I always had a soft weakness for astronomies and physics, but I just couldn't imagine sitting on a hill in Chile or somewhere, looking at the space through a huge telescope naming stars and observing objects we're never going to reach anyway, for the rest of my life. Music always was my passion, my best friend and my deepest love... It's the only thing that gives me everything I need and also it is the most precise language I know to express myself and let other people know how I feel, no matter of which origin they are.

How did you come up with that name? What was your inspiration behind it?

Well, that's my name... My real name is Roberto A. Spring.

What do you think about online music sharing? Do you ever give your music away for free? Why?

Man that is a complicated thing, it is nearly impossible to find a solution that manages and respects the rights of the owner of the content but doesn't harm the right of privacy at the same time. There are a few solutions that could work... you know it's a matter of the device or even the whole internet. People can copy every protected media as long as they can play it... worst case they'll do it by simply recording the whole thing with a microphone in front of a speaker. What I am really concerned about are "services" like Spotify! These "platforms" really ruin the industry and seriously miss educate the whole society and its sense for the worth of music itself. Many of my friends have Spotify installed on their smart phones and when I ask them why they support such a "pain in the ass" company they look at me in a way that reveals to me that they don't even know what I'm talking about. They ask me things like "lsn't it good for you to be available on such a big platform?" or "But hey, you got that publicity through such a big brand..." ... BULLSHIT! Spotify gives away my music at the rate of 0,06 \$ per 260 streams! Look at their front pages and adds all over the internet, did you ever see any newcomer featured? No, they feature the same 9 releases that are featured on Google Play, iTunes, Nokia and so on... Why? 'Cause they have their deals with the major companies which are not interested in featuring quality but much more to make as much money as quickly as possible disregarding the damage it causes by that loss of worthiness of music in society. Services like Spotify should be prohibited and banned from the net. They came to the plan as we were pretty close to solutions that work for the users, the providers, the interpreters and of course the authors. Another thing that complicates the whole internet law is the fact that many artists don't act responsible when they publish their music on "God-knows-where" all over the internet AND want their authors rights to be respected. I don't think that a majority of

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Since everyone was a start-up once, can you give any smaller or local bands or artists looking to get gigs and airplay some tips?

Yes, get yourself a MANAGER! Lächelnd You know, personally I think that the whole "today the bands have to multitask their careers" is bullshit... What do you think of an artist saying that he's one of a unique talent? — Arrogant. And what would you think of an artist saying he's nothing special? ... Why should you believe in someone when it's not even the artist himself who believes in his career? To self-promote is an illusion. Why do you think most of the middle sized and big record companies do not accept material that is not recommended by one of their A&Rs, pitchers or scouts? Lächelnd

Do you ever make mistakes during performances? How do you handle that?

Of course I do but they never get noticed by the crowd... People who know my style and visit my concerts are fascinated by my authenticity and really don't give a shit about it if I spontaneously change the arrangement a little bit if I fell like have to 'cause it might fit better within the whole dynamic of the song. My backup band (The Calling Sirens) is a bunch of highly professional musicians that "feel" where I'm musically heading to... You know, I think playing with other musicians, no matter if it's a gig or just a basement jam, has much to do with LISTENING... If you listen, each to the other and join the entity with the sensitivity that is required, you really need to sucker-punch a band member or so to turn a mistake into one that gets noticed by the crowd.

Do you tour? Anything interesting happen on tour that you think our readers would enjoy hearing about?

Of course I do... Touring is what I like most. On my last USA Tour in summer 2012 I had a lot of spontaneous jams with musicians all over the country and made some real good friends. We drove from New York to Nashville by car, it took us about three days and we had a hell of a good time. As we finally arrived in Nashville we realized that there was a Music Club right in front of our motel at Brick Church Pike... The name of the club was Gabe's Lounge and it didn't look like there was anything going on in the first. But then, later in the eve we heard some music coming from the club and decided to just go over and have a look at it. On stage there was a man with an acoustic guitar and something like a stomp box on his feet accompanied by a harper and another guitarist, dancing people all over the floor. The atmosphere was great and it didn't take long 'till someone said; "Hey guys, you look like musicians, go up there and play us a tune!" And so we did. The whole club was going crazy and we kept on playing and jamming along with the band that was there before. Their front man, Hayden James became a very good friend; we're still in touch a lot with each other. He's probably going to be the first place I'm going to crash at when I move to Nashville this summer. It's always good to know people all over the world Lächelnd

Where do you usually gather songwriting inspiration? What is your usual songwriting process?

Oh well, you know, I don't really write songs like sitting down, paper and pen and start writing something... I usually just turn on my computer, press record, grab my guitar and jamming. I found out that the songs arrangements as well as the lyrics are much more authentic when I do them without too much thinking. Lächelnd The inspiration for the overall mood and of course for the words comes from life itself... Sometimes I think that I wouldn't even want to let anybody know about how I feel and so I probably wouldn't write it down if I sat down with the intension to "write a song". You know, my songs aren't really musically complicated; they come to life and become touchy because of their bareness and authenticity. It's not unusual that I find myself bringing the lyrics of a song to paper by listening to it when it's finished Lächelnd.

Do you have a band website? Do you have a Facebook or Twitter? Do you use Bandcamp, Spotify, ExposedVocals or SoundCloud to share your music?

Sure! That is the "good" side of the internet. Imagine how much it would cost if you had to do all the promotion stuff you do on the web by print media and so on... You know, I think that having an own website is still very important for the bands and musicians to grow their fan base... All the social networks are surely helping a lot but you have no guarantee that they're still online in a few years... I mean, look at Myspace for example. Once it was the biggest social media network and must-have for every band and it is absolutely useless. That was a whole lot of work you did setting up the player, growing your connections and so on that is now worthless. That could happen to every social media network, even Facebook. The thing is; you have no rights on those connections you make through such networks, so once they're down it'd be almost impossible to claim them friends. So I think it is pretty important to lead all those social network contacts to your website and let them sign up to your personal newsletter. But, as I already said, the internet is the best promotion tool you have to let people know and listen to your music all over the world. I don't think I could have ever played at the Whisky a go-go if there was no internet. The possibility the booker listened to what I do just wouldn't have existed. So, bless the internet in some ways and damn it in another! Haha!

What are some really embarrassing songs that we might find on your mp3 player?

Ok that's a good question! Lächelnd Well, I think that might be Drake's "Forever" ... I must admit I love the part Lil' Wayne does. Ah, just discovered another one: MIA's "Paper planes" ... It has a cutting irony with those gun shots in the chorus... It is a good soundtrack to a certain kind of days.

If you were given half a million dollars and a year off, what would you do? How would you spend it?

First I would really have a month off on a Caribbean Island, just to come down and do some healthy stuff like diving, walk the land and so on... Then I would probably master all of my recorded tracks (+- 390 songs!) and release them! If there's some money left I'd probably build up an independent label focusing on long term quality! I mean, I know a whole lot of artists that are top-notch and probably will still be in 10 years. Sure it'd take a lot of promo work and money to establish them to the public but that'd be a good investment for good! You know, many labels sign artists that are "like Amy McDonald" or "like this n' that" and try to shape them the way they think it's the most viable. I'd rather invest in what's unique in said artists, what makes them special and innovative. Let them be who they are and try to find a way to market them without forcing them with any expectations or own visions of how and who they should be.

Any planned studio upgrades? What are you working with now?

Actually I'm working with a pretty simple set up: An old MOTU 828 Fire Wire interface, an older Mackie Micro Series 1202 Mic / Line mixer, an AKG C3000 microphone as all-rounder and a T-Bone Tube microphone if more crisp is required. I still use this old equipment 'because I haven't found any newer devices that have such a clear and full sound. There are of course a few devices left to try... UAD's Apollo is surely one of them as well as TOFT's smaller 4 or 8 Chn. Analogue recording mixers.

The next upgrade would certainly be a top pre-amp! That would be the thing I need to record top tracks at my home studio. You know, I've been at so many studios with my ex-band Backwash (kick ass rock 'n' roll with a sleaze punch) and we did 2 records which were distributed internationally through a major distributor. The first record was a five track EP recorded on tape for approximately 20'000 \$, the second one was a 12 song LP recorded at the best studio you could get in Switzerland and produced by Coroner's lead guitarist and producer Tommy Vetterli for 50'000 \$. If you ask me the first one really kicks ass and the second one's way too clean and controlled. I mean, it is hard enough to go to a studio and simulate a raw, wild, rock 'n' roll feeling repeating it take after take... In most cases the better a studio gets the cleaner its atmosphere and the bigger the financial pressure. Both aren't really featuring a comfortable and creative environment that, so my opinion, is one of the most important factors of a good recording process. The good thing is that you don't really need to always book a studio since the technical evolution brought us to a point where we can record pretty good material at home or rehearsal room. At least good enough to send 'em to a pro that then does the mix. A drum recording still is a hell of a task and surely requires a good sounding room and an experienced engineer... What I'm talking about is recording vocal tracks or even some acoustic or electric guitars.

How do you find ways to promote your music? What works best for you?

Well, that is something I still try to improve... I really don't know how unknown bands and artists get hundreds of thousands of YouTube plays... I really don't know! Obviously it's not done with just uploading a video and invite all of your Facebook friends,

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Reverbnation fans and so on to watch it...

Guess it has to do with the flood of information and invitations they get through such platforms.

I will try your services as well and see if it improves the whole thing. I guess a good promotion plan and a person who takes care of it still is the best way... Just like it's been done back in the good old days of the music industry. In my case the cold fact is that I get sold out of CDs at every single gig I play while the online sales aren't really exciting. I did a handmade, numbered and signed limited edition CD that has a handwritten lyric sheet as its "booklet" and I sell it for 50.00 Swiss Francs each and you wouldn't believe it; it sells much better than my official debut album that has been recorded at a high-end studio and costs 20.00 Francs! Somehow it proves that people don't really care or even hear the difference from a high-end recording and a home recording. Lächelnd

If you could perform anywhere and with any artists (Dead or Alive) where and who would it be with? Why?

That'd be a few... A cool thing would be performing with Hank Williams Sr. or Johnny Cash at the Brixton Academy or at the Hammersmith Odeon, both in London. I had the honor to be performing one of my favorite songs together with one of my favorite acts last winter... Madison Violet had a show at the Parterre in Basel, Switzerland, and somehow they knew I did a cover version of "The Woodshop" and asked me, without any warning, if I wanted to perform that song with them... Damn, I did like 400 shows in my life and hell, I WAS NEVER THAT NERVOUS before!!! You know, these two women are both AWESOME singers!

So, what's next? Any new upcoming projects that you want to talk about?

Yes, I got a few things coming up! I'm going to release TWO new records in spring 2014! The first one is a home recorded LP and the second one's an LP I record with my new live band "The Calling Sirens" ... We'll record that one in a big house near Zurich and most of the instruments will be recorded live, the only overdubs we'll do are vocals and maybe some lead guitars. Since the Calling Sirens are a band on their own the record will be released under the name "Bob Spring & The Calling Sirens". Further there's a huge change for my life coming up; I'll move to Nashville this summer! There still are a lot of things to fix concerning this matter such as an affordable accommodation for example... And of course there's the question how I'm going to make enough money to make a living... If you have any idea or contacts I should hook up with feel free to send them my way Lächelnd I used to have several office jobs... so that wouldn't be a big deal for me... I learn pretty quickly! Lächelnd

If you weren't making music, what would you be doing?

Hmmm, guess I would have studied Astronomy or Physics... I am pretty addicted to fancy and well done Graphics as well... You know, there are a lot of things I'm interested in and I LOVE to learn, no matter what. I think that a day you haven't learned anything new, isn't a day lived. Further I think that, no matter what you do, important is that you do it with all of your heart and passion!

Do you remember buying your first album? Who was it? What was going through your head?

Sure I remember! I wanted to buy "Use your illusion II" of Guns 'n' Roses but they didn't have it in stock so I bought "The Spaghetti Incident"... I couldn't recall the band's name at the counter 'cause I was a very shy boy and so I tried to describe the music I was looking for which sounded more or less like: "Ahm, excuse me, I'm looking for a band that sounds like razor blade somehow and has wet evil vocals screaming for riot..." and; "There are guns and a blood stain in their band logo..." Haha! Damn, I was like 7 or something and that record just changed my whole life! It represented everything I wanted, everything I hated and everything I loved! Still GnR are one of my favorite bands ever... That band wasn't a re-make of a revolutionary attitude or wannabe-bad-motherfuckers... Damn, they really didn't give a shit! No band before or after them combined such a good songwriting and performance with such an authentic Rock 'n' Fuckin' Roll attitude. I love 'em.

How do you juggle the rest of your responsibilities while trying to stay ahead in your music life?

Don't ask! (My girlfriend is helping me a damn lot regarding that kind of matter...)

What should fans look forward too for the rest of 2014 and beyond?

Well, as I said, the two records coming up this spring and of course I'm going to do more shows in the States since that'd be my primary focus this year.



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