

# SAS BAND AUTUMN NEWSLETTER '08

## It's that time of year again.... No this isn't spam!

Dear Friends of The SAS Band,

I'm starting to compose this newsletter sitting in the fabulous Ritz Carlton Hotel in the centre of Berlin, Germany. In itself, this statement may not seem so remarkable, as I could be in any hotel, anywhere in Europe with my laptop, communicating with you. What makes this particular event so notable is that 20 years ago, this hotel didn't exist and I would have been on the edge of no man's land between the then East and West Berlins, minus my laptop of course and probably being shot at by the itchy trigger fingered, East German guards (back then they were not known for their sense of humour, as it happens!). I visited both Berlins on several occasions back in the day and the transformation that this city has undergone since re-unification is mind blowing.

This beautiful Hotel with its air of refined opulence is slap bang in the middle of Potsdamer Platz, which was desolate and derelict. East Berlin was a dour, grey, depressing city, now reborn with huge sparkling glass buildings, full of light and an array of shops and restaurants that would make those old citizens gasp with disbelief.

We took a city tour bus trip around the area to visit "Checkpoint Charlie," which is a replica (the original being safely on display in the nearby museum) and is now a tourist trap with actors in soldiers uniforms, posing for photos and stamping passports with the old official visa stamps. Down the road, you can stroll through the

Brandenburg Gate, once a major symbol of the divided country and also marvel at the restored Reichstag, reborn from the ruins of 1945 and sporting a magnificent central glass Dome from where one can see across the rebuilt city. The best way to see this imposing and beautiful city is to take the open top tourist bus ride. It's easy, quick, very informative and always great value.



# Queen + Paul Rodgers Tour

## From Moscow to Rio....

Berlin is just one of the many stops on The Queen + Paul Rodgers tour of Europe. Jamie Moses and I started rehearsals back in mid August. It seems like a lifetime ago now. First, we were out in the leafy Surrey countryside at a secret location hideaway. A week later we relocated to a grim industrial estate in an even grimmer part of central Bermondsey. Finally, we polished our set to near perfection at Elstree Film studios, where, on the famous “George Lucas” stage, we used the magnificent, massive production for the first time.

This tour showcases many fabulous, established Queen songs, major hits and firm favourites. It also debuts some of the great new songs from the brand spanking new studio album, called “The Cosmos Rocks”. One interesting fact is that the first single release is a song called “C’lebrity” and its subject matter is the phenomenon of reality TV producing all these wannabe nonentities that infest our screens and newspapers today. As we finished playing on our final day of rehearsal, we could look out of the dressing room window and watch the finale of “Big Brother” taking place before our very eyes! How ironic!?! The skies opened and it pisted down on all the contestants past and current, plus presenter Davina McCall, turning the set into something like a muddy, sodden World War 1 battlefield.



It gave me some smug satisfaction to think that the Gods hate “BB” nearly as much as I do.

This tour has been a catalogue of great moments. The first show, traditionally called a “warm up” was a live TV broadcast to some 20 million viewers in the Ukranian town of Kharkiv. The audience was estimated at 300,000 plus.

Photos courtesy of Brad Gregory

For some great views and footage of the event go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isGSPj5ZF4g&feature=related>



The next day there was a crisis in the Government and the parliament was suspended. We, in the meantime flew on to Moscow, where we had a private tour of The Kremlin and played Queen's first ever concerts in Russia to ecstatic crowds. The next day the financial crisis hit and the Russian stock exchange stopped all trading and closed down. From there we went to Riga in Latvia where the Prime Minister turned up at the gig and promptly took over from Roger on the drums to accompany us during "All Right Now". We assume he's still in power!

The tour will take us throughout Europe and the UK, Dubai and South America. I'll do my best to keep you informed of the interesting bits and post some diary type photos on the web.

## Christmas 2008

### The SAS Band to appear at indigoO<sub>2</sub>

The Q+PR tour will run into December, so it will be impossible for me to organize our regular Christmas bash gigs, so unfortunately there will be NO BISLEY SHOWS this year folks! However, do not despair just yet, as we are going to try something a bit different and adventurous. The SAS Band is now confirmed to appear at the prestigious **indigoO<sub>2</sub>**, the intimate live music venue located at The O2 Arena in Greenwich, London. It's a fabulous space with cool bars and restaurants and very good transport connections - it only takes 15-20 minutes to get there from central London via tube and the Thames Clipper's fast and frequent boat service from Embankment Pier. We are all really looking forward to seeing you there.

The date will be Sat, 24th January, with a warm up gig at The Brook, Southampton on Fri the 23rd. Tickets will go on sale early November and details will be emailed to you and posted on the website at the end of October. So keep an eye peeled and book your tickets early!

We will all miss Bisley, but hope to make it back there in the summer, for a weekend of SAS Band festivities!

indigo<sub>2</sub>

# Happy birthday Dear Nelson.....

A small intimate affair - Hyde Park I seem to recall

You may or may not have noticed that it was Nelson Mandela's 90th Birthday Bash in London back at the end of June. A right knees-up it was too ! As usual The SAS Band was honoured (lumbered more like) with the task of accompanying a couple of dozen different artists from every continent and musical genre. Anything from the Armenian Duduk (wooden flute) to the glorious Soweto Gospel Choir and of course Amy Winehouse. I did more TV interviews than you could shake a stick at and all any one wanted to know was "How's Amy?" I'm glad to report that Amy was just fine. She turned up, she rehearsed, she sang what I asked her to and she delivered on the gig. The girl's alright with me. It was a 2 week rehearsal overload then a 4 hour show on the day along with the likes of The Sugababes, Simple Minds, Annie Lennox, Josh Groban, Jamelia and a whole slew of fabulous African artists who had a wonderful diversity of music. It was broadcast live on ITV but they managed to cock it up by having some idiot interviewing even bigger idiots about their thoughts on the day and they blathered all over the music. Whoever dreamt up that editorial policy and thought it was suitable entertainment, needs a stiff wire brush up the jaxi!! Hopefully, the full glorious concert will be available for your viewing pleasure in the near future (with idiot filter on FULL!)



photo: 46664 Foundation

## New SAS DVD "Motown to Memphis"

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**SAS BAND**  
SPIKE'S ALL STAR BAND

Presents An Evening Of  
**Motown, Stax & Soul**

Friday 7th, December 2007

Bisley Pavilion, National Shooting Centre,  
Queens Road, Brookwood, Surrey, GU24 0NY

Doors 7.30pm £27.50  
+44 (0)1883 432270 (incl. VMC)

STEVIE WONDER THE J.B.'s Wilson Pickett  
ARTHUR CONLEY  
FOUR TOPS

Some other news is that our hardly-trained technical crew are assembling the video footage taken at last years Christmas Bisley shows. We had two great nights of Tamla, Stax and classic soul songs. What a party it was! Our plan is to hopefully have the live DVD, working title "Motown to Memphis" ready and available at the indigO2 show. Fingers crossed, we'll keep you posted.

## ...and finally...

I'm finishing this letter whilst recovering from our visit to Munich's legendary Oktoberfest. Can't say that I remember too much about it but apparently footage exists of us all in strange Bavarian headgear grasping huge steins of beer and waving battery operated chickens whilst singing "The Birdie Song". Personally, I don't believe a word of it.



One thing I do remember is that at last night's gig, there was an über fan right up against the front barrier in front of Brian, giving it the full Jack Black, rock school, head-banging, nose-bleeding idiot dancing treatment. Wearing a T shirt sporting the slogan

“Quo  
Rock  
Like  
F\*ck!

(at least it started with 'Q'). He was a sweating, frenzy of enthusiasm until the final dying moments of "We are the Champions" when he whipped off the T shirt to reveal, written in black felt marker, across his chest, the legend "BRAIN RULEZ"  
To think he'd gone to all that trouble ..... Bless!

One last thought. On Aug 18th, when we started our rehearsals it occurred to me that on the same date in 1984 I was rehearsing for my first gig with Queen for the start of "The Works" tour. It's 24 years later and I'm still playing "Radio Gaga". Ah well ..... onward and upward!

More stuff later...

cheers,  
Spike