

Helen Marketti's Music Corner *Rock Atlas USA*

Rock Atlas USA written by rock author, David Roberts is a book that every music fan will want in their collection. It is a very fascinating read with hundreds of stops along the way covering all fifty states. It includes interesting stories of where some of our most favorite music legends have stopped, played, wrote or met their demise. If you ever wondered where an iconic album cover photograph was taken or where the childhood home is of your music heroes, Rock Atlas will show you the way. David lives in the UK and our interview was conducted via email. In the following "Q and A", he describes in detail his idea for the book as well as a few of his favorite locations. There is also a UK version and he is already working on Volume II!

Who were some of the music artists that you enjoyed listening to while you were growing up? What was it about their music that appealed to you?

I was exceedingly lucky. I was a teenager in the sixties and was privileged to listen to the Beatles as they first came on the scene and developed into what is still the best band in the world. The excitement of waiting for each new release was amazing. And, how they changed in eight short years: incredible what they achieved. Listen to 'She Loves You' then listen to 'A Day In The Life.' How did they change popular music so quickly?

Where was the first rock and roll destination that you visited?

Even before I came up with the idea for the Rock Atlas book I had visited London's Abbey Road Studios, and that famous zebra crossing, and just felt a weird feeling about how many of my heroes had walked through those doors. In the U.S., my first destina-

tion was personal. I headed for the East Coast and made for Manassas, Virginia. Unremarkable probably for most people but special for me was the fact that my favorite album cover was shot at the Manassas railroad station. Stephen Stills Manassas is still my all-time favorite.

What sparked the idea to write the book (and the UK version)? How long did the process take to complete?

I was editor of the annual Guinness Books of British Hit Singles and Albums in the UK where, like most music reference books we worked with facts about music, people and songs. I just thought that there should be a decent book about music places. After all, so many places are mentioned in songs for a start. But, more than that, what most fascinated me were the places immortalized in album cover photos, statues of music legends, great venues, music museums, childhood homes, and that kind of thing.

The book had great contributors and references. I enjoyed reading the history and anecdotal notes about the locations.

Yes, I think the anecdotes and stories by people about iconic places where something special in music has happened are the best bits. Those give the best insight into why places are important or even worth a pilgrimage to visit. I love stories like the one where Bruce Springsteen climbs over the wall to visit Elvis's Graceland on an after hours visit.

I particularly enjoyed reading about the California and New York locations; however, there were so many great happenings in all 50 states! I also enjoyed the history of Johnny Cash and Folsom Prison.

Yes, California and New York are the states with the biggest number of Rock Atlas locations. L.A. probably has the highest concentration of great locations. When I visited Laurel Canyon, I realized that within a couple of square miles I was standing in a place where half of my record collection had been created! Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Jim Morrison, Frank Zappa, the Eagles, Fleetwood Mac and many, many more all had homes there at one time or another.

It seems there is as much interest in the 60s, the artists and music of that era today as it was during that time. Why do you think that is?

You're right. I think there were so many new genres developing out of Rock and Folk in that decade and so much change. A lot of the music still seems so fresh. I have witnessed a lot of great music since but the rate of change has gradually slowed down to a point where actually nobody really expects to hear anything new anymore. Most music these days, and there is still a lot that's great, is re-cycling the good stuff from long ago. Having said that, most of the British sixties bands were recycling American blues or soul and heavily influenced by Motown!

I too am interested in where the famous are taking their final rest. I know some people find that to be weird. What are your thoughts on fans leaving mementos or paying respects to their music heroes resting places?

I must be weird, as I don't really find it weird at all! Fans of legendary musicians are entitled to feel that they should get as close to their heroes as possible. If you follow a great musician all your life, it's like a family member going when



they die. I'm sure the music greats like Muddy Waters, Elvis, Hank Williams, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, etc..., would appreciate the fact that people travel huge distances to visit their grave.

David, is there anything more you would like to mention or discuss that I did not ask you?

Only that Rock Atlas has been a real labor of love. In addition, if anyone wants to suggest new entries / locations for a future second edition or give me feedback on the first I would be delighted to hear from them. My email is poppublishing@gmail.com

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