

**Smokie: "We are basically a Rock 'n' Roll band. And Rock 'n' Roll never dies!"**

Written by Administrator

Friday, 19 December 2008 03:14 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 December 2008 03:25

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***Well known rock'n' roll band Smokie gets back to Romania on December 19, at Sala Polivalenta, in an impressive show called "Christmas with Smokie & 101 Violins". During the event, Smokie, accompanied by 101 Violins Orchestra, will sing famous melodies like "Living Next Door to Alice", "Don't Play Your Rock'n'Roll to Me", "If You Think You Know How to Love Me", or, "I'll Meet You At Midnight". Right before the show Mike Craft and Martin Bullard, two of the loved band's members gave an exclusive interview to Bucharest Herald about the Bucharest concert and about other aspects of band's life as well.***

**BH :** In the past years you had many concerts in Romania, which proved to be really successful. How do you perceive Romanian's audience attachment to your songs and to you?

**Martin Bullard:** I believe that the Romanians, in common with many other nationalities, have found that the melodies and story lines in Smokie songs say something to which they can relate. The theme is, after all, the universal subject of love and relationships. The audience becomes further attached to the band during the live show because there is so much contact between us which makes the audience feel totally involved.

**Mike Craft:** It is the same as anywhere in the world. The songs are easy to recognize. The melodies are easy to sing for the audience and so we can all sing them together. It is something we encourage our audiences to do ...to all sing together.

**BH :** What are the differences between the Romanian audience and the international audience ?

**Martin Bullard:** Actually there is no difference. The show follows the same pattern throughout the world, regardless of language and location. Only in China was this not the case, due to the fact that both the language and the songs were unfamiliar.

**Mike Craft:** None. The audience is the same everywhere we go in the world. It is a 'Smokie' audience. We don't make a difference between countries. The Romanian audience is probably a little more fun from the start of the concert. Sometimes an audience will need time to 'warm

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up'. Not so in Romania. They are 'up' from the very first song.

**BH:** Although you have been performing for 34 years, your songs remain up to date and are listened by both your contemporary audience and many young people. How would you explain the success of these songs?

**Martin Bullard:** I think the simplicity of our songs has made them enduring. Listeners find two areas of appeal - the melody and the lyrics. Both of these are memorable in Smokie songs and keeps them in the minds of those who have heard them. The hard work of this touring band keeps the memory of those songs alive and gives audiences another chance to hear them performed live.

**Mike Craft:** The style of our music is not easy to label like say....'Heavy metal, Rap, Soul, Blues' and so on. You can't really put our music into a category so it doesn't go out of fashion. We are basically a Rock 'n' Roll band. And Rock 'n' Roll never dies!

**BH :** In the concert on December 19th in Bucharest you will play in a new formula, accompanied by 101 Violins Orchestra, including artists selected from all over the country . How did you prepare for this show, considering the importance of the event?

**Martin Bullard:** We will spend time rehearsing with the orchestra during the day of the performance. Smokie's show will be largely unchanged, merely enhanced by the presence and performance of the string players.

**Mike Craft:** The Orchestra have been rehearsing with our music for some time now. We, as a band will do exactly the same. The Orchestra will fit around what we already do. We will have time to rehearse with them and prepare the list of songs in order. We are all very excited about this concert. It will be very different for us. There are normally just 5 on stage. Now there will be 106! So the backstage area will be very crowded and busy. Hope we can all fit!

**BH :** Will you have a special scenography, since the stage will be modified to support the presence of all the artists?

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**Martin Bullard:** If this is the case it will be prepared by International Artists, our promoter in this country. We will see it for the first time during our rehearsals. I understand there will be some radical stage building in order to accommodate all the orchestral players. I am sure that the inside of Sala Polivalenta, will look a little different to how it appeared last time we played it.

**Mike Craft:** Obviously there will need to be space for everyone. Our technicians will be at the concert venue long before us to make any special arrangements. We, as a band have been working on using 'in ear monitors' specially for this concert. We will have no amplifiers on stage and the drums will have a screen around them so that our mixing technician has 'clean' sound to mix. We will hear our sounds in our headphones. There will be no speakers on stage.

**BH:** Will you have the same type of concert in other cities of Romania as well?

**Martin Bullard:** This is always possible and is a matter entirely for our promoter. If we are invited we will be there.

**Mike Craft:** I don't know. It would be difficult to transport all these people and accommodate them in the same hotel. However, if we have a fantastic success we could maybe ask local orchestras to join us when we play in their city. We will assess the situation after the concert

**BH:** Could the event in Bucharest be compared to the show in Paris in 1982 when you played with the Paris Opera Orchestra?

**Martin Bullard:** I cannot comment personally since I joined the band in 1988.

**Mike Craft:** Of course, yes. The amplification and technology is better now so the mixing of the music should be better.

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**BH:** At that time the show included approximately 60 artists, while in Bucharest the number will be almost double. How will you coordinate to offer the Bucharest audience an unforgettable concert?

**Martin Bullard:** We always try to make the experience unforgettable. On this occasion I think the atmosphere will make the event hard to forget

**Mike Craft:** As mentioned before, the orchestra have been rehearsing with our tapes and DVD concert footage so they should be prepared. 60 or 101....still many people so it will be no different. We, as a band have made our preparations and so have the orchestra. When we come together to rehearse it will all fit into place.

**BH:** Could the show in Bucharest be considered one of the most important challenges of your concert career?

**Martin Bullard:** Not so much a challenge as a great deal of fun for the band as we enjoy a new dimension in entertainment, presenting not only ourselves but also the many players behind us.

**Mike Craft:** As musicians we are always looking for new and different challenges. A lot of artists at our stage of life would be happy to retire or just keep doing the same show week in, week out. We are always wanting to make new songs, albums, always hungry for something to challenge us. This will be one of the biggest challenges we have faced for some time but it's exactly what we thrive on. The buzz of making it all work is something you could never replace. We care so much about what we do and so Friday will be the very thing that makes us 'tick' as a band. We are very much looking forward to it.

**BH:** I know that during the tour in Romania you would have wished to visit more sights, but the lack of time did not allow you to do so. What places would you have wished to visit?

**Martin Bullar :** I particularly like castles and would love to see more of those fantastic gothic Romanian castles.

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**Mike Craft:** I, personally, have a passion for photography so I would have liked more time to photograph the architecture which is unique and beautiful. Also the villages and their seemingly easy, laid back way of life. I have seen so many things I would have liked to have captured on camera but I have only seen them through the window of the tour bus as we speed past at 100km an hour to get to the next hotel or concert. I would also like a personal photograph together with Count Dracula but he wasn't at home when we went to Transylvania.

**BH :** What message would you like to send to Bucharest Herald readers, the only English language media partner of the event?

**Martin Bullard:** It is a great pleasure to be in your country. If you are able to come to the show we will be happy to spend some time together. If not, I hope you can keep Smokie in your hearts and see us next time we visit. Our music is our only gift to you, and we hope you continue to enjoy it.

**Mike Craft:** My message is simple: just thank God for everyday you wake up! It's a good start to the day! Live life to the full. Enjoy being here. Be nice to everyone and they will be the same with you. I'm sure I can speak for everyone in the band when I say thank you to everyone here who has supported Smokie over the years and our heartfelt gratitude that we can still keep coming back to play our music and have fun with the good people in Romania.