

Interview with

Simon Broughton - Director Songlines magazine

Simon Broughton is editor in chief of Songlines Magazine, freelance journalist, filmmaker, expert and explorer of the diverse musical cultures of the world. He has co-edited the Rough Guide to World Music, since 1994. He has made also many documentaries on world music for the BBC and Channel 4, including films on the music of Afghanistan, Sufi music, and Portuguese fado. Simon Broughton's travels have taken him to discover the music and musicians from many countries in the world. Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, India, Mali, Portugal and the Baltikum countries are few of them.

WM Oasis - What is the definition of world music according to you?

S.B - For me and for Songlines it is music that has its roots in an indigenous culture - and that can include the purest cuatro music from Venezuela, Bengali Baul music or Transylvanian string band, to contemporary dance bands or rap in West Africa or fusions of these things. As far as I'm concerned, it's the most stimulating music in the world.

WM Oasis -You are a well known name in the world music with long experience with your interesting documentary about music from other parts of the world. Your name is missing in the list from the meeting in the Empress of Russia. Why you haven't taken part in the meeting 1987.

S.B - I simply didn't hear about the Empress of Russia meeting. There was no email in those days. I was working for BBC radio at the time and would have been interested to attend, but for whatever reasons my name was not on the circulation list, a shame perhaps.

WM Oasis -What do you think about the name world music that have been decided and chosen that time in the Empress of Russia?

S.B - Many people don't like the name 'World Music' and I can understand why, but I think it has helped much more than hinder the music.

WM Oasis -You have been making numbers of documentaries on music from around the world and discovered new music and musicians from Afghanistan, Iran Turkey, India Hungary, Bulgaria, and Rumania etc, but you have never produced artists. Wasn't it a good idea to start a label with music from Asia when it was difficult to find music from that part of the world that time?

S.B - I've never been in a position to start a label and my strength is as a journalist, although in recent years Songlines has been able to organise the Songlines Encounters concerts so at least we've been able to bring artists we're enthusiastic about and introduce them to new audiences I'm particularly pleased to have been able to do this with Carminho, who has become very successful in Portugal now, Sondorgo, from Hungary, who are appearing at Womad UK this year, and this year Oana Catalina Chitu from Romania.

WM Oasis -You have made many documentaries on world music for the BBC and Channel 4, including films on the music of Afghanistan, Sufi music, and Portuguese fado. Is there any plan for a trip to Algeria, a country with music diversity, or Egypt, the country of Oum Kaltoum?

S.B - I've been very lucky to be able to make TV documentaries from time to time, but only when I've been lucky enough to get them commissioned by Channel 4 or the BBC. Sadly this is getting more and more difficult to do, but I do keep proposing ideas although none are currently getting anywhere.

WM Oasis -You are co-editor of the Rough Guide to World Music, have you visited all those countries you have write about? And have you visited Oran and Tammanrasset, two interesting towns with Raï and Touareg music?

S.B - I did once visit Algeria several years ago when I was invited to a festival in Tamanrasset. I had a very good time there, but the festival didn't seem to continue. I haven't yet been able to do anything in these areas for TV although there maybe a possibility in Tunisia later this year.

WM Oasis -You have just returned from Morocco, a country with a long musical tradition. What is your impression about the development of the music in those countries?

S.B -The Fes festival is always a little bit chaotic, but I am always hugely impressed by what they manage to achieve. There is nowhere else in the Arab world where Jewish and Israeli artists can perform, for example. I did a blog this year on the opening concert in Fes and was hugely impressed by the Israeli-born Mor Karbasi performing in Fes on Wed last week. We will be doing a Songlines story on her in issue 103.

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