

Thousand Miles Away

Back in July, 2009, I did a concert in the USA, in the Midwest. After the show, some good friends of mine introduced me to an intriguing young woman. We all went out for drinks after the show, and whenever I'd ask this lovely lady about herself, she'd reply..."if you only knew."

If I only knew...what? Was she a secret agent? A superhero? A member of a secret society that monitors alien activity on Earth? I was intrigued. On the flight back to Baltimore the next day, the phrase kept running around in my head. So the next day, I went into the studio, and I wrote this song called...

"If You Only Knew". Well, actually, it wrote itself. It was one of the easiest songs I've ever written. And I kept writing and writing. I was really inspired. In March of 2010, I had about ten songs written. And as fate would have it, my good friend Marc Antoine, the guitar-playing Frenchman in Madrid, called me. Marc has played on Selena CDs and Clint Eastwood movie soundtracks.

He told me that he had some rare free time, and that if I had any new songs, I should come over to Madrid. He offered to play guitar and record in his studio. So I caught the next plane and made the overnight trip. He picked me up at the airport at 9 am. I'd been up for more than 24 hours.

We went to the small village outside of Madrid where Marc lives, and we went right to a bar/cafe. Marc ordered two espressos, and two Licor de Hierbas, an herb liquor. What kind of herbs? I was afraid to ask. The bartender got two brandy snifters, put three ice cubes in each glass, and then poured in what looked like antifreeze.

I liked it. It tasted like nothing else I'd ever had. We had another...and maybe another. And maybe one more...

I woke up the next morning in Marc's spare bedroom. I went looking for Marc--he was in his studio. He had been up since the early morning, and had already finished the guitar parts for "If You Only Knew".

One guitar track was his signature nylon-string guitar that he's so famous for. The other guitar track was a steel-string, Eric Clapton-style blues guitar part. I'd never heard him play like that before. I don't use the word 'perfect' a lot. But his guitar parts were about as perfect as could be. I was very pleasantly surprised. Amazed is more like it. Love that Licor de Hierbas!

We continued like that for two weeks--without quite as much drinking. Marc did most of his guitar parts late at night until early in the morning--while I slept. And when I got up, I'd go down to the studio, and Marc would be finished. I wanted him to do six songs. He played on almost all the songs on "Thousand Miles Away".

I was glad he recorded while I slept, because he took some chances I might not have, and went in directions I might not have gone. We also had a chance to write two songs together, "One by One" and "One of These Days". I haven't written with anyone for a while, and it was refreshing to have Marc's creative collaboration. He wrote the music, and I wrote the melodies and lyrics. It was a blast. I didn't want to leave.

I took the tracks back to the USA. I had George Hazelrigg, the incredibly talented keyboardist, lay down some Fender Rhodes, and some Hammond B3 organ. But the thing that George did that was over-the-top was his use of the Yamaha CP70 electric grand piano, the instrument that Peter Gabriel uses a lot on his CDs.

Then we added real drums and real percussion.

And the 'Thousand Miles Away' CD felt wonderfully complete.

I finished the CD in July, 2010, one year after I started.

Hope you have as much fun listening as we did creating.

Enjoy!

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