

Fascination Chat - March 2004

On a wonderful Sunday evening in March, BJ, the drummer on tour with Quidam, once again took a few moments out of his busy schedule to chat with Cirque du Soleil fans via the Internet. Like last time, BJ joined about 10 Cirque fans from across the globe on the IRC (Internet Relay Chat) network. He spoke with us about Japan, his current feelings about the tour, projects he's working on and various opinions about where he is in life. The chat was not without its hiccups, however, as the broadband provider compromised Internet service two or three times. Regardless of the intermittent problems with the network, the chat was a success and I hope everyone who attended had a great time! For those who could not make the online chat, don't fear, as before we've taken minutes to present for your enjoyment. Thus, once again, take it away BJ!

BJ: Ohio gozaimasu!

Richasi: Ohayo Gozaimasu! (Good Morning) How is the morning?

BJ: The morning is cold and slightly cloudy. Yet also extremely hung over from last night's sumo party. We had our final Goodbye-Japan-Party yesterday night. It involved a lot of Sake and a (fake but entertaining) sumo fight.

Richasi: So when do you leave Japan?

BJ: We leave in exactly two weeks. I fly out on April, 5th in the morning. Not even 12 hours after tearing down.

Richasi: How has your week been, to start out?

BJ: Well, our week - my week - has been extremely busy. I have played ten shows, done a lot of final shopping for the folks at home and also worked on Craigs album for the last time before it goes into the mixing stage.

Richasi: Have you figured out the art of Japanese gift giving?

BJ: Well, have the Japanese even figured that out? It's complicated. But I guess that I have learned a little.

Richasi: And, a Q from the stage (from Quidamgrl): When will you update your site?

BJ: Uhh, my site. I know. I feel extremely bad about that. I am working so much and the guys in Germany who deal with the design and the actual updates are constantly bothering me. I guess soon is the time to update it. In fact, there are massive updates on the way.

Richasi: Cool! So we can expect some goodies from your site soon, ne?

BJ: Yes, in fact you can expect quite some goodies.

Richasi: Q from Treb -- How are you and Craig coordinating the project now that he's over at Varekai?

BJ: There will be more music, some videos and some conversations with fellow artists and other musicians - not only from Quidam. The coordination of this project is not very easy. I work on a Pro Tools system that I tour. Craig has a Logic Audio system on his side and our producer, i.e. Michael Picton who was our keyboardist in Europe, also works with Logic. We send tracks back and forth on burned DVDs and try to have everything as seamless as possible.

Richasi: As a review for those who weren't here last time, can you explain the project?

BJ: The project is simple. Craig has written an album. The idea and the musical style are a cross mix of rock, pop and trance, with very deep lyrics and the whole thing is sort of a concept album.

Richasi: Q from Treb & Quidamgrl: When do we get it in our hot little hands? :)

BJ: Almost two years ago we started recording it in Ohio but because of the "other" job that we have, it takes a long time to finish it. But we're close. The final mixing will start in April. I personally hope to have a result in the late summer. Maybe August. So far it sounds pretty cool.

Richasi: Will the album be commercially available via Amazon or other online retailer or direct from the source?

BJ: As of now Craig does not have a record label for it but we are working on options. One of them is Cirques new music division, another is to create our own label but the easiest way would be to just sell it to a big label. I hope that works. The album really grew on me. I love the music and I feel incredibly blessed that I was allowed to play such a big part in it. So far we have a lot of bits and pieces and I think that I am safe when I tell you that it's quite good.

Richasi: You said in one of your communications that you were exhausted... circusboy wants to know what your average day is like now?

BJ: My average day is busy. I get up in the morning (depending on what time the first show is), shower and fight my way through one million Japanese to work. Then I will have a meal, a sound check and two shows. After that I might return straight to the hotel or stay to make some alterations or discuss some ideas with other artists or technicians. The evenings vary from going to a sushi bar to going straight to bed.

Richasi: Rod_digga wants to know if you're enjoying Japan and whether or not you're ready to leave?

BJ: That's a difficult question. I am very ready to leave. In fact, I want to leave as soon as possible. But that has nothing to do with Japan. I love Japan and most every thing I have seen here. But with our relentless schedule I have almost no time to see Japan and explore it. So I am not tired of Japan. I guess I am just tired of our schedule and of the fact that it is extremely difficult to communicate here and that many things within the Japanese culture will always remain a riddle for which I never had the time.

Richasi: Have you found the Japanese people to be patient with you? Have you attempted communicating with any Japanese?

BJ: Japan is beautiful. Above all I love Kyoto but also Nara, Hakone or Nikko. Everybody should go there and learn that there is a different world on this planet. I have communicated with many Japanese and just because I am an entertainer their

patience is almost unlimited. But it is unthinkable not to be patient in Japan. You cannot push anybody! Patience is politeness and that means a lot here.

Richasi: Q from Quidamgrl: Have you learned to read/speak much Japanese?

BJ: Unfortunately I have not had the time to learn much Japanese. I guess I have picked up some words and phrases but I have to admit that my Japanese has remained poor. I think that we all are excited to go back to a territory where we can understand and comprehend and where our schedule is less demanding.

{Editor's Note: The chat barely got started when we were rudely interrupted. It took about 15 minutes or more but we all hung in there and before long the chat started up again. The rest of the chat time from here on out was open forum, which meant any of the fans could ask their question directly to BJ. While this can turn chaotic, it can be quite fun. This section has been edited to remove comments and/or questions not for BJ.}

Q: Will Richard Price be performing with the show in Vancouver?

BJ: No, he will leave us in two weeks. He just came back to help Andree, the new singer. But trust me: Andree is quite up to the job. You will be pleased. The show sounds excellent at the moment. We have a new sound guy since Fukuoka and he really knows his job. We have also started to do multi-track recordings of every single show. There might be a Quidam live album ahead. I am serious. There might be a live album. THERE MIGHT!!! Don't quote me on that one.

Richasi: BJ, what did you get to see out in Kyoto, Hakone?

BJ: I saw the Gion quarter in Kyoto and I actually saw a Geisha. Other than that I saw many shrines and temples and other sites in Kyoto. I went there several times. It's just beautiful. My favorite place in Japan so far.

Richasi: Did you happen to see the movie "Lost in Translation" and if so, can you relate to it?

BJ: I have not seen it. It's banned in Japan for its racist content. Some of my colleagues saw it and they did not actually appreciate it for its unbalanced view. The Japanese are strict with that stuff.

Richasi: Reading any manga or watching any anime while there?

BJ: Well, there are no translated mangas and I can't really read Japanese. But most everybody here reads them.

Q: Did ya make it up Fuji-san?

BJ: Fuji was on the agenda a couple of weeks ago. Went there with Laetitia, our young singer.

Q: BJ, are you going home or on vacation after Japan or are you going straight to Vancouver?

BJ: Home! There is no food like moms food. I will have about three weeks with friends and family and no drums. Home for me is a small city by the name of Aachen about one hour west of Cologne. But I will not spend my entire time in Germany. Just

after flying into Germany I will pack a small bag again and fly to London and do a short bike tour with Richard Price. Just for fun among really good friends.

Q: Does Andre sound completely different than Craig/Richard?

BJ: Yes, he does. But he has his own beauty. I am quite happy about the fresh air he brought to Quidam. And trust me. Quidam is nothing like the DVD anymore.

Q: Do you think it'll be weird adjusting to a smaller big top after getting out of Japan?

BJ: Quidam has changed and evolved. It might be weird for a short while but I know that old big top so well. It will probably feel like coming home. Just bare with me. I don't play like Raynald who is on the DVD. I sound quite different.

Q: BJ, any new equipment upgrades since our last chat?

BJ: New overhead microphones, new mixing desk for me, new room microphones different snare drum and new socks for my costume.

Q: Are the crowds picking back up for the show? I know you mentioned somewhere along the line they were thinning out.

BJ: At the moment we are sold out straight. The Japanese take the end of a run very seriously. I hear that there are tickets for the very last show in the black market for over \$1000.

Q: How would you compare Marina Trouchina's handbalancing to Olga's?

BJ: Marina is more straightforward with her act. She does a couple of things that Olga would never have been able to do but she is a craftswoman. Olga was more poetic. Both have their beauty. I can't decide whom I prefer. But the music for the act is stronger than ever.

Q: Same music I assume, that Elena Lev performed to when she was contracted?

BJ: Elena was great to work with. What a nice girl. I think she preferred Alegría as a show because she could smile more but she loved Quidam for the friends backstage. Over all I think she misses Quidam a little more. At least, that's what she told me.

Q: Has the music for the Aerial Hops changed any?

BJ: Aerial Hoops sounds the same. The funny thing is that you will hear Craig Jennings on that. Richard always used to play didgeridoo on that and Craig did an impression of a monk voice. Andree had trouble with that so we sampled Craig's voice and in the very beginning and end you will hear Craig's voice for some seconds.

Q: What's the name to the Handbalancing song again? (Quidam)

BJ: I have no idea what the name of the handbalancing song is. We don't use the commercial names of the record. We just call the tunes by the names of the act.

Q: BJ, you ever work with Jutras on Quidam's music?

BJ: Of course I worked with Benoit.

Q: How is he to work with?

BJ: He is very specific with certain things. But I guess that after 3 and a half years and after being the longest serving drummer on Quidam we know each other well enough. He trusts me quite a bit and I have a lot of leeway. If he feels that you give your best he is very easy to work with. He sat with me in the drum booth and I had no comments from him other than that he loved to be there. After that we got pretty drunk with Irish beer. So what can I say?

Q: Does Benoit visit the show regularly to see how things are kept up?

BJ: Benoit is currently busy with MGM so he does not have a lot of time. But he likes to check on things every once in a while. The band at the moment is pretty good. So Benoit feels safe not to show up.

Q: Any clue what Audrey's doing now?

BJ: I have no idea what Audrey is doing. Unfortunately! But I'll let you know as soon as I know.

Q: What other show would like to play in?

BJ: I could see myself playing Alegría and La Nouba.

Q: How are Gerome and Asa doing with the show?

BJ: Gerome and Asa are doing really well.

Q: We heard Roman got injured. Is he doing ok?

BJ: Romans right foot is broken so he is out of the show until late in Vancouver. Dima fell on it when the big tower in Banquine collapsed. Very unfortunate incident.

Q: How is everyone taking the fact that Guy is now on the list of billionaires? Does anyone care? :)

BJ: As long as Guy drinks Guinness with me, I'm fine. I think that most people are happy about it. In the end it indicates how successful we are. I personally don't care about how much someone earns. But he is a nice guy and still knows his vision. That's worth much more.

Q: What genre/style will Richard Price's solo project be?

BJ: Do you know Steely Dan? That would be the style of music for Richard. Just VERY intelligent Pop with lots of influences from Jazz, Rock and various other styles.

Moments after the chat came to a close. He did have 4 suitcases to pack he said, and to call his mother. And, even though we were sad to see him go we understood. Before he left, however, we advised him how much we looked forward to hearing him play on our pending CirqueCon 2004 trip to Vancouver. To that he replied, "I will be there, on stage, dressed in blue, drumming like never before."

BJ: Mesdames et Messieurs: Bonsior!

**Hai, arigato gozaimasu, BJ!
Thank You!**

Our heartfelt gratitude and respect goes out to Ricky Russo and the entire "Fascination!"-team for their support and courtesy. You guys make it happen. Check on <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CirqueFascination/> for updates and news.