

...Six year passed since the day when my first essay – “The City of Rain” – had been uploaded on this site. There I tried to reconstruct what happened one decade ago since then and to present all the materials I could find about Peter Hammill Quartet (pHQ) concerts in Siberia, based strictly on the information provided by a few of the eyewitnesses. I have never received any additional information or materials about those days, and the events described in my essay were still covered with some veil (at least for me).

However, in the evening of November 5, 2011, when I decided to check my mailbox, this history found its continuation. I received an email from the man who was directly involved in the organization of the Russian portion of pHQ 1995 tour, and who was now offering me to improve the old version of my essay. This offer was reinforced with a very interesting documents, and due to that information the mentioned veil fell down (at least for me), which actually was my original goal. The effect of the (Hammill's) birthday gift was so astonishing, that I even started thinking about a special page dedicated to this Siberian tour. However, having estimated the combination of my strengths/abilities, integrated by free time slot, I decided to go for a new essay in the first place. It calls simply

## A Serious Tour

*“East was dawn, coming alive in the golden Sun....”*

*P.Hammill, «Refugees»*

I am not sure about the exact starting date of Peter Hammill's visits to Russia chronology. The first official allusion of the possibility of such an undertaking found by me is in the Sofa Sound Newsletter from September 1989 (see [Newsletter Archive](#)). Alas, distressing mood it had.

*In fact I was (once again) thoroughly exhausted by the end of tour and, to my regret, wwas forced to pull out of two concerts in Moscow which I had been eagerly anticipating. I hope that there will be a next time, and resolve...sands of time trickling away as they are... to attempt to take things slightly easier in future.*

Such opportunity was offered more than once. Pilgrims Fanzine recalls another lost chance in Issue #30 (Spring 1995). Initially planned to happen in December 1994, it was later shifted to January next year, but only in May 1995 it materialized.

### «Hammill – who is he?», «Akademgorodok – where is this?»

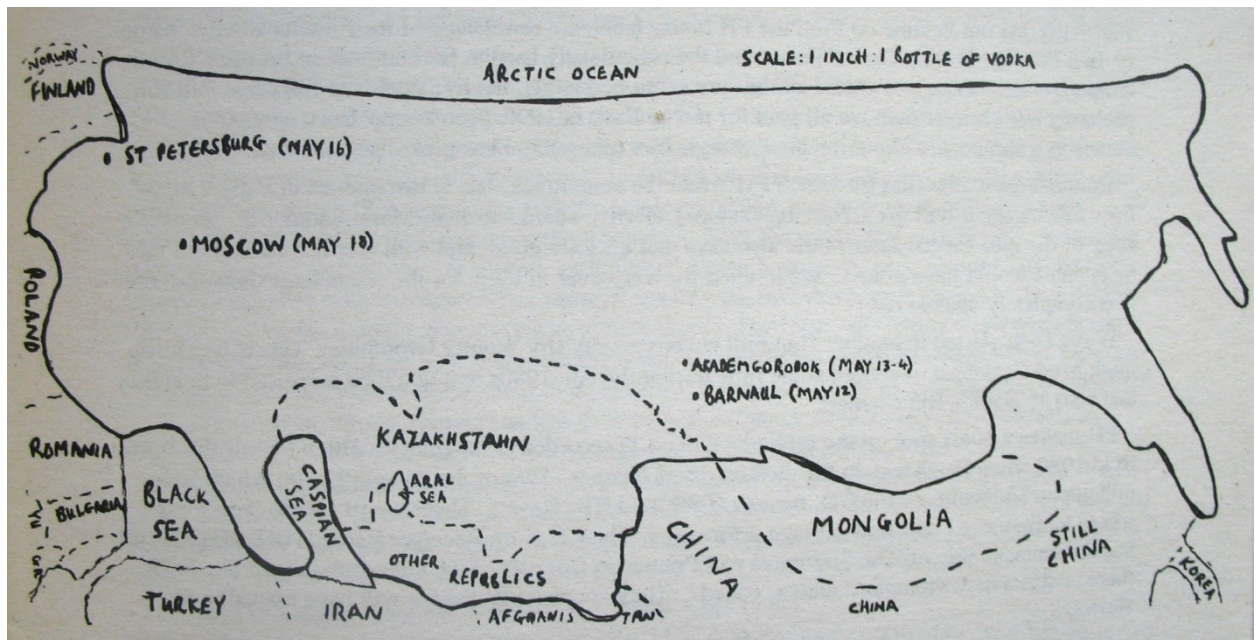
There is a [webpage](#) on Wiki dedicated to the Novosibirsk's Akademgorodok<sup>1</sup>. The page is not that big, but it provides information enough to gain attention of a person ignorant of this point on the Globe. Being populated by too many “soviet intellectuals” who keep tradition of listening to interesting music, this town deserved to rank with London, Paris, Helsinki and Dresden in the given context. Anticipating the tour, in March 1995 Newsletter Hammill wrote:

*.... one mini-tour is already booked in, but rather far outside the orbit of 99% of recipients of this newsletter: finally, we will be doing three shows in Siberia and one each in Moscow and St. Petersburg in May. As a tour I suspect this will be pretty wild.*

Indeed, most from the Hammill's audience were probably not able to show the destination point on the map, even approximately. In the above-mentioned issue of Pilgrims a kind of a geographic map was provided in the scope of “campaign against illiteracy”. It showed the former Soviet Union territory with its neighbours.

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<sup>1</sup> Akademgorodok – come from “academic” and gorodok, i.e. small town (gorod = town or city)



Such a map was no longer required for Peter Hammill.

## History

In 1985 a group of first-year physics students (some of them to become the organizers of the pHQ concerts) was infected by the first-year post-graduate physics students with the music of “generators”. As time went by, the crazy ideas progressed, impossible became possible. And so, in 1991 the first non-communist Interweek<sup>2</sup> took place in the University. It was the first time here when the British musicians also participated (“The Shamen” and “Mecca”). The idea of bringing interesting musicians was materialized, and so the future perspectives started showing legible shapes. Peter Hammill’s name was also included in the lists of longed-for guests.

In 1992 the producer of the festival Sergey Safonov, Konstantin Obil’ny (later to be the producer of pHQ tour), and Nicholas Hobbs visited [British Council](#) office in London. They met with Julia Rose to express their gratitude for sponsoring musician’s trips to Russia for Interweek 1991 and 1992. Also they offered to finance the planned tours of Peter Hammill, Marc Almond, Mike Oldfield, Robert Plant and more. During their conversation they had to make it clear for Julia who is Peter Hammill (she knew the rest of the names), and Nic took active part in that discussion.

In the end, they got funds enough to organize the Hammill’s gigs, including royalties, international air tickets prices (to Moscow), and even for covering any overhead expenses. Having such a ground under their feet, guys offered Peter Hammill to visit Siberia (with any compact line-up he’d choose) and also to participate in Student Music Festival “Interweek” in Novosibirsk State University, and to play a few more gigs in Russia.

Nicholas Hobbs – a British singer, lyricist and avant-garde theatre actor, concert producer and manager of several prog-bands and musicians (Henry Cow, Pere Ubu, Laibach among them). He created Charmenco Production Company, and he appears to be an outstanding specialist in the field of rock-culture and counter-culture of Eastern Europe and its achievements in music. Being an active performer in the projects he managed, he also took vocal parts singing his lyrics. Nic thought then that Hammill was well-forgotten, and was not sure that this tour may be interesting for the Russian music lovers society. Nevertheless, he decided not to betray his strategy and experience that proved to work fine in all cases with the British musicians who was brought by him. He offered to all potentially able organizers of local

<sup>2</sup> Student Festival. [This](#) page provides more information on Interweek.

concerts to take this opportunity and to compile one complex tour over Russia. It was not necessary to explain the evidence of this good luck to the local promoters of live underground concerts.



*May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK YUNOST. pHQ soundcheck. From Left to Right (or is it from Bottom to Top): Danila Yershov (Novosibirsk) – sound man, Nic Hobbs (UK) – pHQ tour manager 1995, Andrey Tsuranov (Novosibirsk) – light man, Konstantin Chuvashov (Moscow) – pHQ 1995 tour light engineer.*

And so, due to persevering consistent work of Interweek Committee, British Charmenco production company and finance support from British Council, Peter Hammill was invited to take place in Interweek in Novosibirsk. Yevgeni Kolbashev used this opportunity to make pHQ concert in Barnaul, Vsevolod Gakkel organized another concert in St. Petersburg, and FEE LEE organized the Moscow gig in DK<sup>3</sup> after Gorbunov.

In general, the schedule of Peter Hammill gigs in Russia in 1995 was final and looked as follows:

May 12, 1995, Barnaul, Drama Theatre  
May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, Dvorets Kultury "Yunost"  
May 14, 1995, Novosibirsk, State University, "Mayovka"  
May 16, 1995, St. Petersburg, Baltic House  
May 18, 1995, Moscow, Dom Kultury aft. Gorbunov

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<sup>3</sup> DK stands for Dom Kultury in Moscow case (House of Culture), while in Novosibirsk it should be read Dvorets Kultury that is Palace of Culture.

Let's go over those dates and sum up what we can.

**Friday, May 12, 1995, Barnaul, Drama Theatre**

Chronologically this is the first performance of Peter Hammill in Russia. Earlier planned supporting act by "Mission-Anticyclon" band from Magadan was cancelled, so only pHQ played that night. The following songs were performed:

Easy to Slip Away  
The Siren Song  
The Unconscious Life  
Autumn  
Comfortable  
Shingle Song  
Sign  
Primo on the Parapet  
Planet Coventry  
A Way Out  
A Headlong Stretch  
Your Tall Ship

*+ encore*  
Traintime  
Ophelia



**12**  
МАЯ

ТЕАТР  
ДРАМЫ

**19**  
ЧАСОВ

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*Peter Hammill Barnaul gig poster.*

The concert was taped by the local ATH<sup>4</sup> TV company in full (except for the last encore). Aired several times. Currently amateur DVDs with decent tape transfer are circulating among the collectors.

**Saturday, May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK "Yunost"**

"Yat-Kha" from Kyzyl, Tyva opened the program (Line-up included [Albert Kuvezin](#) (guitar) and Vrezh Meloyan (cello) from "Biosynthesis" – both on pictures below), "Ay-Tal" ("Aytal") from Yakutsk concluded. pHQ were second in line. I do not own the exact tracklist played on that night, but I've heard it had lot of similarities with the previous one. Photographs prove that this gig was also filmed on video.

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<sup>4</sup> Russian "H" letter is used here, hence should be read "ATN".



*May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK YUNOST. Yat-Kha. Albert Kuvezin*



*May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK YUNOST. Yat-Kha. Vrezh Meloyan*





*May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK YUNOST. Peter Hammill Quartet. Peter Hammill*



*May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK YUNOST. Peter Hammill Quartet. Peter Hammill; in the background you can see cameras; on the left is Albert Pomortsev, it was he who "infected" the future organizers of pHQ tour with the music of "Generators" many years ago*





*May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK YUNOST. Peter Hammill Quartet. Stuart Gordon and Peter Hammill*





*May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK YUNOST. Peter Hammill Quartet. Stuart Gordon and Manny Elias*

**Sunday, May 14, 1995, Novosibirsk, State University, "Mayovka"**

The courtyard of the Novosibirsk State University turned into a concert venue during "Interweek" for the last gala day. pHQ performed a shorten guitar set in the twilight time. They played five or six songs, "Sign" being one of them.



*May 14, 1995, Novosibirsk, NSU courtyard. Peter Hammill Quartet. Playing Mayovka on gala.*

In my opinion, this photograph shows the best "That" what I am trying to tell you about with my essay. We can see everything on it: the band, the audience, the black jacket, the video cameras (sic!) prepared for bad weather, and that double-edged enthusiasm, cutting off all those doubts and (at least for me) taking that veil of mystery away.

I would like to specially mention here about Hammill's attitude towards the performance on Mayovka. Knowing that this was going to be an open-air gig for students, he agreed to play for free as far back as before he took-off from Britain.

**Tuesday, May 16, 1995, St.Peterburg, Baltic House**

Unfortunately, the smallest portion of all the materials related to the pHQ gigs in Russia in 1995 that I possess contains the documents from the gigs in the Northern Capital. Those are two fragments from Vsevolod Gakkel's book "Aquarium as a way of care of a tennis-court"<sup>5</sup>, which can be read [here](#) (in Russian only). As it was mentioned earlier, Vsevolod organized St.Petersburg part of the tour. Further Hammill and even VdGG concerts in St.Petersbutg were also reviewed, probably, in local mass media only.

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<sup>5</sup> The original of the book is in Russian and I am not heard about any foreign language translation existing, so this is just my translation of the book title.

**Thursday, May 18, 1995, Moscow, DK aft.Gorbunov**

All is simple here.

Easy to Slip Away  
The Siren Song  
The Unconscious Life  
Autumn  
Comfortable  
Shingle Song  
Sign  
Primo on the Parapet  
Planet Coventry  
Ophelia  
A Way Out  
A Headlong Stretch

*+ encore*

Your Tall Ship

This gig was reported in mass media as a significant event in the musical life of Moscow.

### **Siberia and Russia**

These are the two components Hammill used to divide into his experience of playing in Russia in 1995. Probably, there is some definite difference, implicit but perceptible. Let's consider, for instance, the informational aspect. For the world society it was the Moscow gig that absorbed terms "Peter Hammill", "Russia", and "1995" because of one simple reason. The whole concert was filmed, like in Barnaul, and that material was professionally edited and prepared for release on video. Although this project was never released officially, Sergey Antipov's [«Программа А»](#)<sup>6</sup> on the state TV channel (PTP<sup>7</sup>) aired the shortened version of Gorbushka<sup>8</sup> gig in a month or so. Several interview clips were pasted in between the songs. This 58-minute broadcast was recorded on VHS, and was the only document circulating all over the world during one decade. Siberian part of the tour was never ever mentioned. [Artemy Troitsky](#) hosted the [press-conference](#), during which he introduced the group, took part in answering the questions, and later invited Peter for shooting in his TV program «Café «Oblomov», later broadcasted by HTB<sup>9</sup>. The shooting took place before the Moscow gig, presumably on May 17.

The absence of foreign reporters in Siberia at "Interweek" also affected the result. In 1991 British reporter from The Face reported on the participation of [The Shamen](#) in "Interweek". In 1992 those were "Q" and "Melody Maker" magazines where [Nitzer Ebb](#)'s visit was reviewed. Unfortunately, in 1995 none of the British reporters were in Siberia during "Interweek". One of the few local competent periodicals

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6 "A" Program.

7 Here it should be read as RTR.

8 People prefer to say "Gorbushka" rather than official "Dom Kultury after Gorbunov".

9 This one is NTV.



was Alexey Belikov's "HCK"<sup>10</sup> rock-paper. Multiple radio stations and periodicals provided their support in Barnaul. Alas, this was not enough to present the pHQ concerts to the world at the decent level.

Probably this was all that warp and weft of the veil of mystery that has been covering this tour during all these years (at least for me).

#### «...We were at peace, and we cheered»

Let's get back to Siberia, where having played the gigs, musicians went off the stage not only with the feeling of obligations kept, but carrying the warmth of the Moment. This IS the moment Peter talks about when discussing the essence of live performances: everything makes sense in "this specific place" at "this specific time" for "this specific audience"; all this creates something which is later being transmitted to each participant of the Event. Having personal experience in this, I am sure that the lack of any kind of audio- photo- video material can lesser the value of those days in no way for those who were waiting for them for quite a long time.

*"The whole project of "bringing Hammill" – from the initial idea through to its realization – became one of my first bright "dream come true" for me, and its success inspired for new fulfillments", – says Konstantin Obilny, who produced the pHQ 1995 tour. "When talking to Peter he is vivid and modest at the same time. From meeting him for the first time in "Tolmachevo" airport under the first rays of morning sun of May through to the farewell hugs on the board of the charter airbus in the same airport – all those moments will be remembered the best...."*

Having spoken to the people, Hammill was impressed by the difference between the development of the musical industry in Europe and in Siberia, and was touched by the sincerity and passion of the Siberian music lovers. He was moved by seeing the Van Der Graaf Generator vinyl records brought in for the autographs hermetically packed in plastic covers (and then being carefully took out for signing) and by listening how people explained the significance of possessing such a treasure in the times of Soviet regime of 80-90's. There are lots of photographs of Novosibirsk people with Peter in his dressing room, during the soundcheck, in the lobby, and even in the cabinet of the director of DK "Yunost" A.S.Logutenko. Some of them (some with autographs) are kindly presented below.



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10 NSK.

May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK "Yunost". In Peter's dressing room (behind him on the right – Yevgeni Kargaplov, legendary Siberian rock-guitarist)

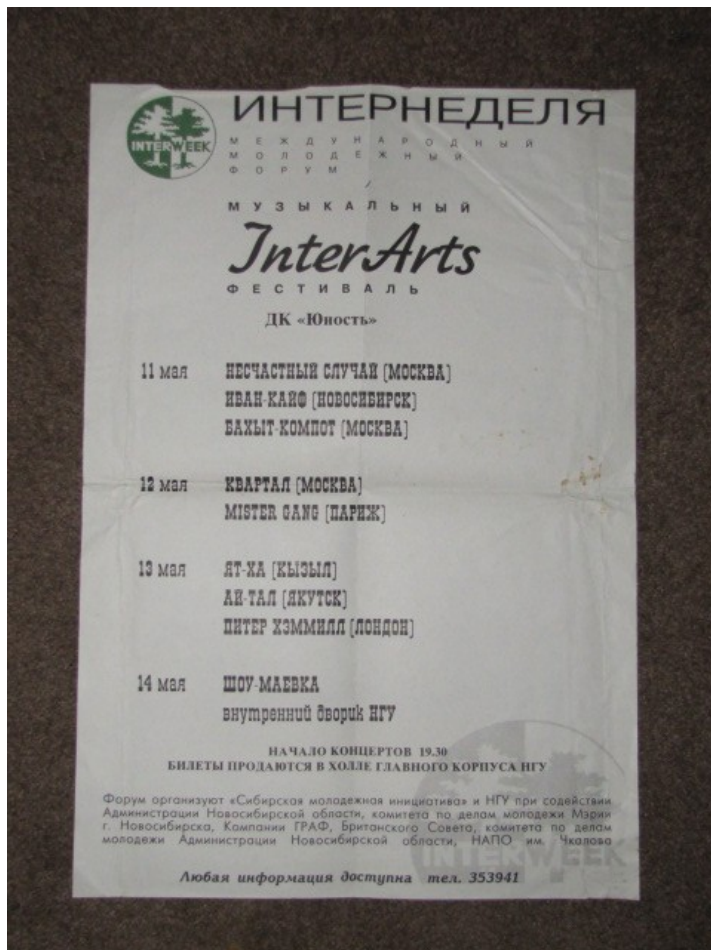


May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk. Autograph says: «Peter Hammill in Akademgorodok»



May 13, 1995, Novosibirsk, DK "Yunost". Peter Hammill Quartet. Once shown above, now this photograph is signed by Peter.





*INTERWEEK 1995, InterArts Festival bill, with all the participants mentioned*



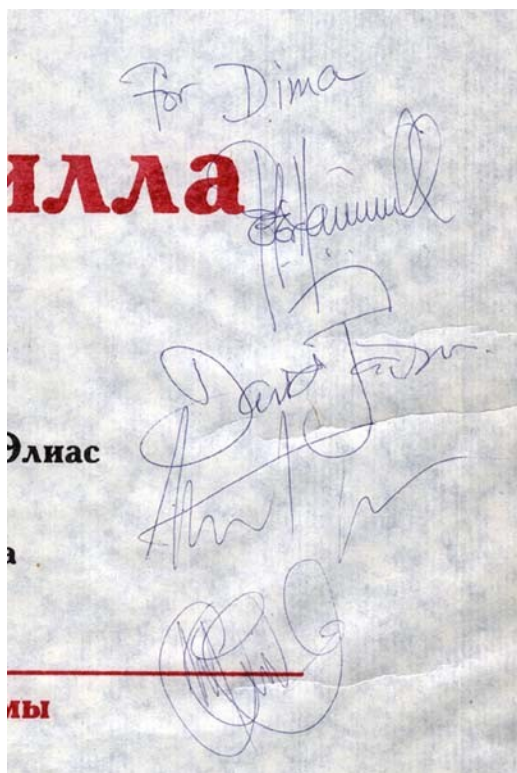
*May 13, 1995. Novosibirsk, DK "Yunost", pHQ soundcheck. From Left to Right: Danila Yershov (Novosibirsk) – soundman, Albert Pomortsev (Novosibirsk) – sound engineer freelancer, Dr. Judith Herd*



(Tokyo) – professor, the president of UNIC-Japan, specialized in cultural exchange. In Front: Larisa Myshko (Asanova) (Novosibirsk) – TV reporter, Pilot program, Novosibirsk TV



May 14, 1995, Novosibirsk, NSU courtyard. "9<sup>th</sup> District" (Krasnoyarsk) on stage during open-air Mayovka gala concert, where later (approximately in one hour) pHQ will be performing

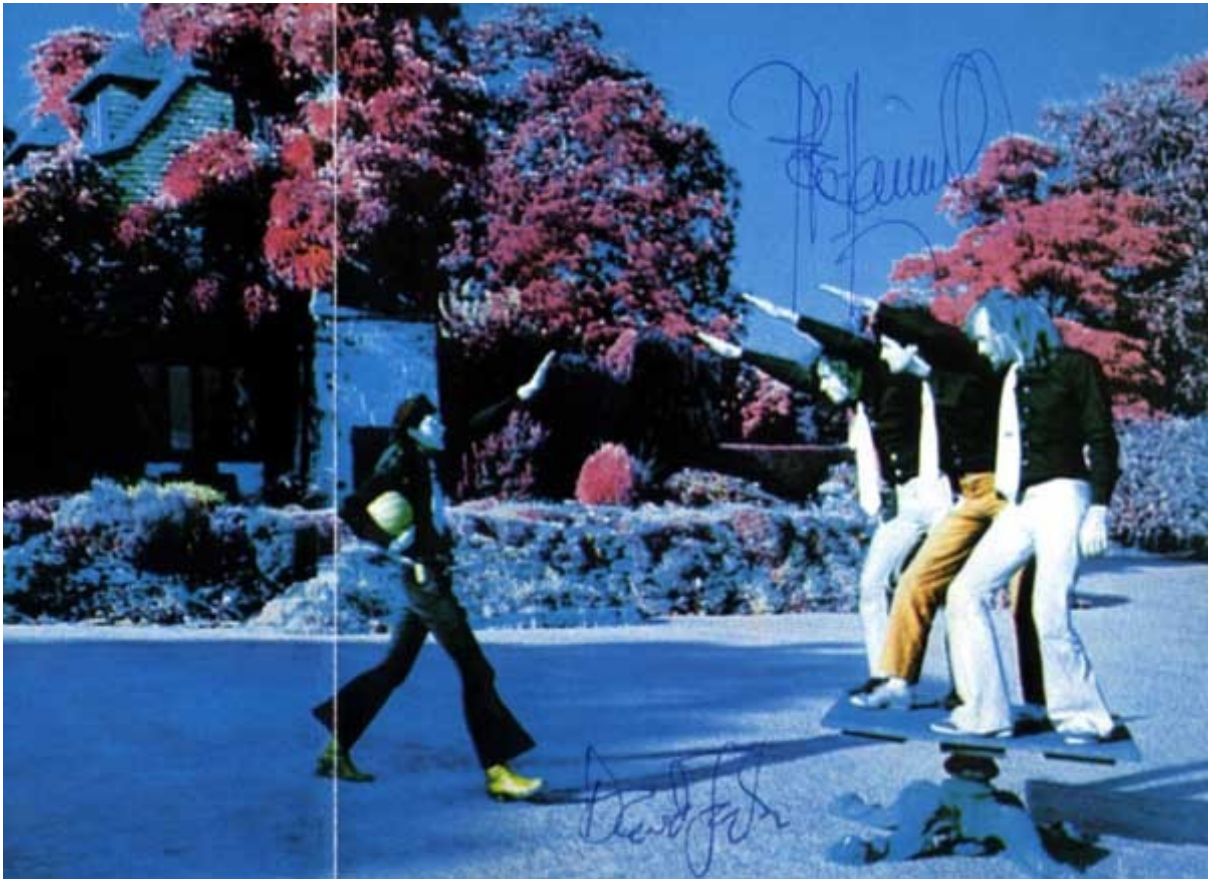


Fragment of the poster from pHQ concert in Barnaul kindly signed by all the musicians for Dmitry Savenkov on May 12, 1995





*May 12, 1995, Barnaul, Drama Theatre. With the audience. Polaroid gives a chance to take a picture and have it signed almost immediately on the spot. From Left to Right: Yevgeniya Polovnikova, Peter Hammill, Dmitry Savenkov*



One more artefact: Signed Hearts, i.e. Pawn Hearts signed by Hammill and Jackson inside the gatefold cover

### Out of time and space

By the end of the year, in the November Sofa Sound newsletter Hammill recalled:

*Siberia and Russia were extraordinary experiences. For both economic and practical reasons we travelled as a small team (this being a pHQ tour) and it was definitely an Event for Touring Grown-ups. Even with the minimum of equipment that we took with us the logistics of moving through a Russian airport, for example, were of a mountaineering expedition standard.*

*In Siberia, particularly, we all felt a Long Way Away and it took a matter of weeks rather than days to gather what impressions remained from the trip into some kind of cohesive order...although in truth I'm still left with a jumble of images rather than a narrative whole: Stuart going through the entire history of his violin to a Customs official in order to be allowed to bring it into the country (or more importantly, in order to be able to take it out!); a nasty belt of voltage from the main vocal microphone at the second gig (possible curtains there, chaps!); the coldest outdoor gig in my experience with all the instruments freezing up and whammying out of tune throughout; trains and planes and diesel-reeking coaches; silver birch woods and shanty truck-stops. Tiredness. Vodka. (These things are not necessarily unconnected!)*

*In some cases that we managed to play at all was a triumph of commitment and enthusiasm; but the audience responses and the sheer enthusiasm and kindness of the people we met certainly demanded that.*

*It was a Serious Tour; I hope to return. If that comes about, perhaps I'll be better prepared- it took me at least two or three weeks to fully recover.*

*Incidentally, much of the stuff was filmed...so maybe footage will eventually make its way out!*



Time shows that such materials often do not show up soon after. We have to wait for many years before they somehow appear, but when we find them we feel they were worth waiting!

**P.S.**

Dear reader, if you somehow happen to possess more materials on the Peter Hammill performances in Russia, please share them. Based on them we can recreate the pictures of the past. And although we are looking into the future – somehow it is interesting to know more about the past. And it is necessary. Agree?

**Thanks**

I would like to thank Alexander Goryachev, Yuri Korolyov, Sergey Manucharyan, Irina Mirzuitova, Konstantin Obilny, Sergey Petrushanko, Yevgenia Polovnikova and Dmitry Savenkov for their good will and help.

Special thanks to Francis Tamarit for inspiration and for convicting me that “it is possible”!

All the materials are kindly provided by Konstantin Obilny, Yevgenia Polovnikova and Dmitry Savenkov.