

The City Of Rain

Peter Hammill visited Russia several times. He played in Moscow and St. Petersburg in April 1998, he was invited to play in Kaliningrad in the middle of December 1999, but his first solo performance did not take place in any of these big cities... On May 12, 1995 Barnaul, a city in Siberia 3400 km to South-East from Moscow, became the destination point for all those Pilgrims from Siberia and the rest of Russia who was hoping for good for a long-long time. This concert was followed by two performances in Novosibirsk, and only then Peter Hammill Quartet played in Moscow.

Alas, the Siberian shows were almost forgotten, one step to become a myth... But few people who attended those concerts shared their memoirs and memorabilia with the rest of the world.

Here is the review of three PH 1995 Siberian shows in Barnaul, Novosibirsk, and Novosibirsk-Mayovka. The author is Irina Mirzuitova (pangaea@aghartanet). Thanks to Irina who has kindly permitted me to share it with those who are interested.

"I attended the Shows when they were in Siberia, as far as I remember in 1995.

We went in Barnaul with a company and then attended the show in Novosibirsk. We moved to Barnaul just because there was a rumour that Hammill was invited especially to play in Barnaul (and it turned out truth) and the Novosibirsk shows were organized just to improve the image of their organizers so they then will be canceled for some reason. Where did such a rumour came from - we didn't know but we believed in it, because the organizer was the Organization



Committee of Interweek - an organization registered by some legal address in a department in KGB and we were so naive to believe that normal people won't deal with such organizations.

But the concerts were played here, there, and even on Mayovka itself, although the atmosphere was absolutely different.

Barnaul show was attended by all connoisseurs and fans from Siberia (the rumour about the next two concerts being fiction spread very well around). They all were very glad about canceling of the first part of the show – the warming-up band "Mission-Anticyclon" (I – have never heard it); they called Hammill for encore twice (Nic Hobbs – a guy from an English band, who often visits our rockers – induced him for the second encore). The second encore was "Ophelia"...

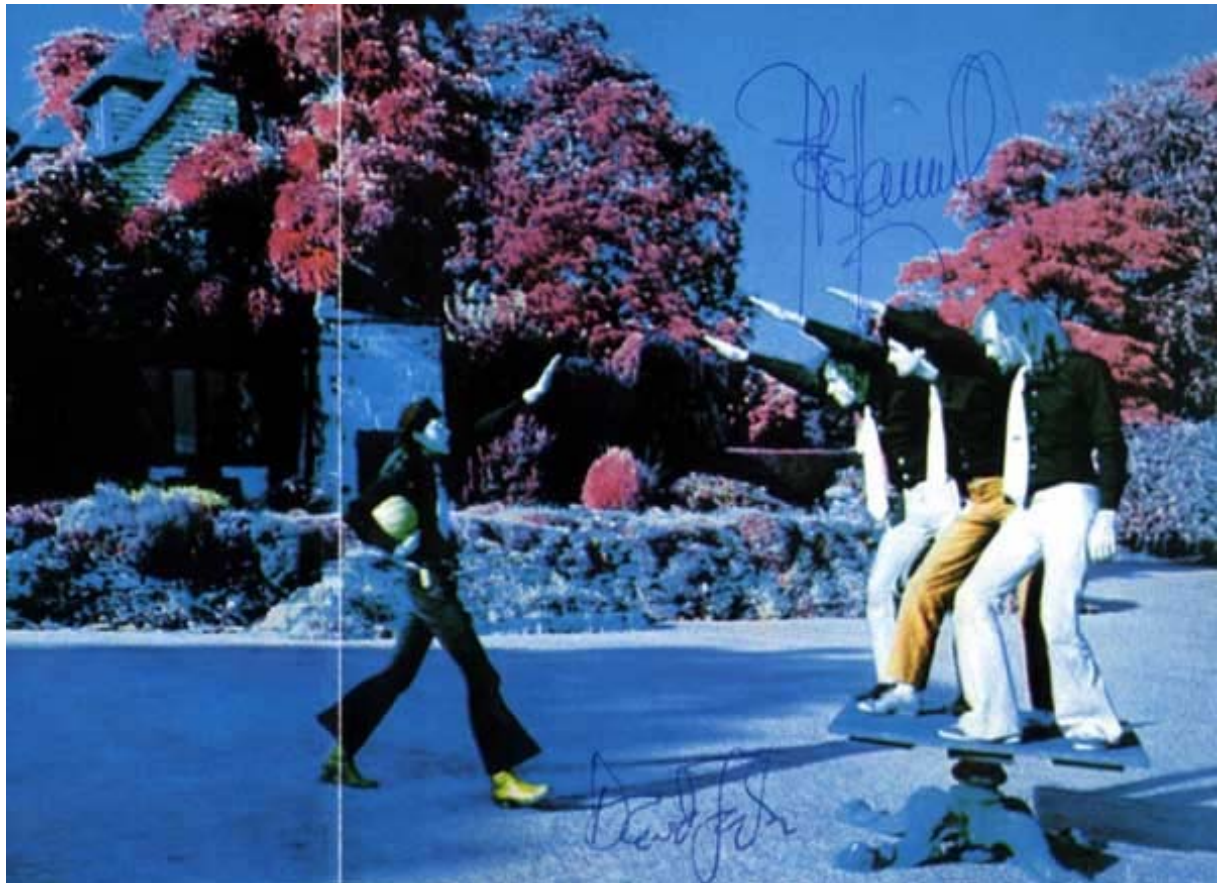
However, in Novosibirsk Hammill participated in some combined concert and was No.3: the first one was faceless hard-rock band, the second - false folkers with pseudo Eskimo or Chukchi image. The acoustics of the venue was awful and didn't allow it to be called 'a hall' – a soviet-time cinema building as it is. Most of listeners were painty girls who didn't care about who is there on stage and about the language he sings – broken Russian, the Chukchi language or English – it didn't impede them to sort out their relationships. Plus there was seven or eight dozens of listeners who stand right in front of the stage to be able to see and to hear anything. Of course, there were no "Ophelia" for them. The secrecy level was on the extremely highest level: none (except for the personnel) was allowed to get closer to PH, although Jackson was walking calmly in the corridor after the concert because no one knew him!!! So we had no concurrent and talked for a while with him and with Stuart Gordon (in Barnaul we spoke with Hammill only, other musicians didn't came out to people).

I didn't attend the third Siberian show because couldn't imagine that Hammill & Co would play for the same people during the even more combined concert, plus it should take place in the open air. How did it last under rain I don't know.

The most impressive thing after the first concert was the emotional fullness. It seems to You 'Where are those Mike and Suzy? Twenty five years passed!' But he sings as if they said goodbye to each other only yesterday. Although some "practicized and memorized" performances hurt a little...

I would attend his show anyway if he would arrive here again. But it didn't happen. Sponsors didn't invest money to those KGB-organizers. Cannot reproach or blame them."

Pawn Hearts signed by Peter and David for Dmitry Saveknov.



12
МАЯ

ТЕАТР
ДРАМЫ

19
ЧАСОВ

**ВПЕРВЫЕ В РОССИИ
ТОЛЬКО ОДИН КОНЦЕРТ**

ЗВЕЗДЫ ПРОГРЕССИВНОГО РОКА И ПОСТ-ПАНКА



Питера Хэммила

(ЭКС "Van Der Graaf Generator", Англии)

и группы в составе:

Стюарт Гордон, Стив Джексон, Манни Элиас

в концерте принимает участие группа

"МИССИЯ-АНТИЦИКЛОН"

Билеты продаются в кассе театра Драмы

тел. 25-28-54

Here is what the Poster says (with some comments from my side *in italic*):

May 12 Drama Theatre 19:00

**FIRST TIME IN RUSSIA
ONLY ONE CONCERT**

PROGRESSIVE ROCK AND POST-PUNK STARS

[photo]

PETER HAMMILL

**(Ex "Van Der Graaf Generator", England)
and the band with:**

Stewart Gordon, Steve Jackson, Manny Elias

**with participation of
"MISSION-ANTICYCLON"**

**Buy tickets in Drama Theatre
tel.25-28-54**

Cool!

*Who is that lucky guy
Steve who played with PH
that night, ha? ☺*

A fragment of the poster with autographs of Peter, David, Stuart, and Manny.



Extracts from Q/A session with Irina Mirzuitova

(my comments are *in italic*)

1) Regarding tracklists:

I've been at two shows, in Barnaul and at the first Novosibirsk (*further it is mentioned as Nsk*) show. I didn't attend the second Nsk show because nobody really believed Peter would play a two-or-three-song set among other musicians under a falling rain. It turned out that he did play though...

As far as I remember, both shows featured the same list of songs, though the second encore, "Ophelia", was omitted in Nsk. The audience in Barnaul was much more intelligent and Peter decided to give them some more...

2) Was Barnaul show a part of some festival or a separate concert?

It was a separate concert, advertised widely. Group from Magadan called "Mission: Anticyclone" was planned for opening the concert but they did not manage to arrive in time, so the show was all Hammill's. The audience was happy as mad about that fact. Rather decent band, though. No comments like those about "Africa" opening for "21st Century Schizoid Band" recently in Petersburg.

3) Both Nsk shows were parts of some festival, weren't they?

Yes, but the first show was a concert anyway, and the second one was just gathering of many artists. The first one was set in a movie theater called "Yunost" (*Youth*). There were two bands before Hammill, the first one I have no memory at all (probably some heavy metal) and the second one being pop-ethnic band from Tywa. Main part of the audience liked their furry clothes and their big tambourines more than Hammill songs and went rather disappointed. Hammill didn't look very happy, too.

We've been told that autograph session was planned after the show, but nothing happened (unlike Barnaul). The only person we could catch in the hall was David Jackson, and we've had a brief conversation with him.

4) So, the second Nsk show was under pouring rain?

It was set at the open stage before Nsk University. This gathering is happening every year, many local bands and some outside artists play this stage at one evening in May. "Neschastny Sluchai" (*Accident*) is a frequent visitor, for example. Nobody could believe that Peter Hammill would participate. Perhaps, he was obliged by his contract. There was a rain so we've all met at my place to decide whether we're going there or not. Usually, it's rather uncomfortable place, with few thousands of people in a small patio and bad sound quality, so we don't visit it mainly. And since there was rain, we'd decided not to go there. The rain was coming and going but haven't finished until the next morning.

5) Do You have any info about St.Petersbourg show and PH's contact with Sergey Kuryokhin (a famous russian avant-garde, prog, jazz musician)?

No, no info on this

In The End

The whole concert in Barnaul was filmed by ATN Company and aired several times.

Sergey Petrushanko offered his help in finding this material (www.hammill.ru) through his site and soon we received a message from Yuri Korolev asking if the tape is still of our interest. The recording was kindly accepted, transferred into digital form and now everything that survived from those days is shared with the rest of the world.

Once again I wish to thank Yuri Korolev, Sergey Petrushanko, Dmitry Savenkov and Yevgenia Polovnikova, Sergey Manucharyan.

Special Thanks to Francis Tamarit for inspiration and making me believe that this is possible!

All pictures from Barnaul are kindly provided by Dmitry Savenkov (deemas@rambler.ru) and Yevgenia Polovnikova (info@archidom.ru) (the picture below).



P.S.

The second encore 'Ophelia' was not aired (or maybe was not filmed at all). Who knows, maybe another decade must pass until it arrives?

Best regards and good luck
Mikayel Abazyan