

Inspiring Individuals Following Their Bliss

As explained in my previous post I am a huge fan of the work of Joseph Campbell and the idea that if we don't 'follow our own bliss', we are somehow doing ourselves and others a disservice. With that in mind I want to embark on a journey learning from others who have managed to do this, and hope we can all glean some inspiration from their stories.

I am therefore delighted to feature Atila Huseyin as my first interviewee. Atila is a fabulously talented and sartorially stylish British/Turkish Jazz singer who I first heard sing at Basoon Bar at the Corinthia Hotel in London. Atila's interpretations of the American Songbook are internationally renowned, and take their influence from early Frank Sinatra.

As a huge Sinatra fan I was blown away by how uncannily similar Atila's voice was to the maestro's, although what I loved even more was that Atila made the songs his own, no copycat or karaoke versions here. I have since seen Atila perform many times and we have also become friends. Not only is he supremely talented, but he has retained a sense of humility which I think no doubt comes from his faith and family. Atila regularly performs throughout the UK, has been on several TV shows and recorded advertisements for many international companies including Emirates airline in 2012. I am thrilled he took some time out of his very busy schedule to share his story with me and WD readers.

WD : When did you first discover your passion for singing?

Atila : I began music professionally when I was 12 with a local big band 'Young Jazz' run by Phil Reven's. I started by playing the saxophone but I had always been a fan of the American song book and really loved the lyrics of the songs, I don't know how a 14 year old could connect with a lyric in this way, but something just ticked inside when I would listen to these songs. Anyway we were performing at a private garden party and everyone had gone inside to eat, so I decided to try to sing with the rhythm section behind me after the gig had finished. I didn't even know if I could sing, but I just got up and did it – at the time I was really into Chet Baker's rendition of Time after Time and so that was the song I sang. And as I sang, people stopped eating and trickled out, and suddenly the whole garden became full, and I realised that my voice

must have some appeal and that was when I discovered the passion I have for singing.

WD: When did you get your big break?

Atila : With all the successes and opportunities I have been presented I am always striving for more and other ways of how I can better myself, so I believe I'm yet to receive my big break however am very grateful and humbled for all the steps that have brought me up to this point in my career.

WD: What were the main obstacles you faced?

Atila : I discovered early on I was the odd one out at school. I was hugely into the music and culture of the 50s (people just don't write songs like this anymore) whilst my contemporaries were into the popular music of the 90's. It is hard as a young kid to be different, but looking back, I am now glad that I was and stuck to my true self, as it helped me develop my own individual style.

WD: Talking of which you have a very distinct fashion style. Where did that originate?

Atila : The fashion aspect plays a big part in the overall performance, if you look your best you are going to feel and sound your best. But I have always had a love for elegant dressing and this job allows me to indulge in a passion for looking sartorially stylish. Well I try ..

WD: Are you familiar with the concept of Follow your Bliss and how has that played a part in your life?

Atila : Well I guess following one's bliss is ultimately to attain complete happiness. I always think of it like this... if one is grateful for both the good and bad things that life throws their way, then will one never be less than happy. Therefore I believe following your bliss is really showing gratitude in all that life throws your way.

WD: How did you stay motivated and deal with discouragement?

Atila : Being a jobbing singer – I do a lot of live performances and that can take its toll emotionally and physically and I don't get to see my family as much as I would like to. On the other hand I am doing this for my family so it takes the edge off the pain when I remind myself of that.

WD: What would you say was the highlight of your career?

Atila : Meeting and touring with the legendary Buddy Greco who as you know was a

contemporary of Sinatra's. We were in Cyprus doing a gig for a Russian billionaire and I was getting frustrated that no-one was really listening to me sing and expressed my frustration to Buddy who gave me some advice which I have never forgotten. He said early in his career he was performing to an audience who eventually started throwing darts at him, but he hid behind the double bass. He very jestingly said that he could hear the darts sticking into the bass whilst hiding behind it. He mentioned to me that he worked through it by reminding himself that he was 'just paying his dues', and that's what I think about now, when I am tired and feel dejected, that 'I am paying my dues' and that my big break will come.

WD: Love that idea, about accepting the process, it being about the journey as much as the destination. Would you agree?

Atila : Yes, success is a journey and not so much the outcome, after all the doing is more important than the outcome and just like the earth undergoes a vigorous process to carve the most perfect diamond, the difficulties found in the journey through life, coupled with humility, often has a way of carving the most perfect of characters.

WD: And finally, what is the ultimate dream?

Atila : The goal would be to get a recording contract and to get my albums out to a wider audience. But even if that doesn't happen, I am still very content – I do what I love every day and am looking after my family in the process. That is the ultimate goal, so in that respect I have already made it.

I loved interviewing Atila and wish him all the success in the world.

You can find out more about Atila including his performance schedule at www.atila.co.uk.

With love
Sangeeta x

