

MAO Posse, May, 2012

Since we last interacted, following Todd Rungren's appearance in Houston, Tina and I have been to two great concerts situated at the widely-diverse ends of the rock and roll universe--Tish Hinojosa in a small Houston bistro two weeks ago, and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers with Regina Spektor at the Erwin Fieldhouse at UT Austin, where the Longhorns and Lady Longhorns play basketball.

Although I am always on the lookout for a Latina singer, especially one who rocks like Linda Ronstadt or Lila Downs (I know, I know, the last names, but listen to them both, especially when they rock and sing in Spanish), this is a small pool of singers. But if you stretch it to folk/country, there is Tish Hinojosa, whom I have known and loved for many years. (In our Santa Fe house, I have a great picture of me with her, and I attach a not-so-great recent one above.) She reminds me very much of Emmylou Harris, writes virtually all her own stuff, and has a sweet voice that is not as memorable as that of Linda Ronstadt, but is pure and unadorned. She plays acoustic guitar, appears alone for the most part, and is a relentless road warrior. See MundoTish.com for her killer tour--we saw her the very first night of her tour with, count them, 79 consecutive dates, including every honkytonk and coffeehouse in every city in the country. (Clayton, NM? Honestly, Tish, slow down and pace yourself.) A native of San Antonio, she lives in Europe now, and plays there regularly with regular forays to the US and Latin America. Check out "Donde Voy" at

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=qjj7WokxtWI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=qjj7WokxtWI), and if you want to just have one album, try "From Taos to Tennessee" or "Hits From the Sandia" (both with NM roots from her dozen or so years there). Tina and I used to drive to Taos each Christmas to see her play at a ski resort there, but the trips became too death-defying--especially on Tina's side of the car, so we do not slip and slide our way to the top of the mountains there any longer. She came to my attention on Spanish language FM radio, but I first saw her perform at the AALS Annual Meeting in San Antonio many years ago when she sang for the Gala event, and from there I was hooked. As for the venue, she was at the DoseyDoe, a reconstructed barn in the North Houston/Woodlands area, which is a dinner theater but with great performance schedules, almost nightly. We hope to see Percy Sledge, Arturo Sandoval, and then Janis Ian there in the Fall, and the dinner/concert deal is very reasonable. Because it is a small venue, the acoustics are perfect, especially where we were sitting:

<http://doseydoescoffeeshop.com/upload/upcoming-events.pdf> . She is more country than I usually favor, but I am always touched when singers take a break to mingle with people, pitch their cds, and have their pictures taken with the fans.

No pictures being taken with Tom Petty at the Erwin Center last Saturday in Austin, although there were so many cameras that it was like a strobe light much of the night. We drove there, about three hours, because Tom Petty has had Regina Spektor as an opening act for some, but not all his shows--so when he played Albuquerque last month (at Tingley Coliseum--decrepit back when I was a kid) and in the Woodlands/Houston this summer, she was not on the card. But she was in her full glory in Austin. Long-time Posse members know that I am completely enchanted by Regina, a Russian émigré, and I play several of her albums in my regular rotation, especially "Far" and "Begin to Hope," and recently, "Live in London." She has a new album coming out in a month, and so sprinkled several of the newest songs into the repertoire, but there is simply no other woman singer who matches her breathy gawd-I-cannot-believe-I-am-here style, her unruly hair (one of her videos online has a bunch of RS lookalikes, all with the trademark grenuda style), and her Jerry Lee Lewis pound-the-piano style. I found myself singing along with almost every song, and her live performances are as tight as the recordings. She is one of the few musicians who does not have any guitarists (Tom and the Heartbreakers, in contrast, have 4 at any time) accompanying her, although she does have a cellist in the group. Each time she finishes a song, she seems to be honestly moved and appreciative that people like her singing. She played 11 songs in 40 minutes, and left saying, as if she really believed it, "you have made this lucky girl feel very happy. I cannot believe my life." Exactly. (In contrast, Van Morrison growls to the crowd, during his great live album ["A Night in San Francisco"], "You have made a happy man very old.") I will travel to see her any time, and just hope that this exposure with Petty gets her to have a better website. It is among the worst in the business--outdated, not useful, and completely outdated.

A note about the Erwin Center in Austin on the UT campus: it accommodates 17,900 (in concert format) and 16,734 for basketball. It was, incredibly, almost completely full, even the nosebleed seats. If the stage were at noon, we were about 3:00, and up high enough so that we could see over the floor seats. (Note to self for next time: study the handy online seating chart and pick from several safe harbors where no one is standing/sitting in front of you.) There is simply no relief from the yammering that occurs at some of these concerts, and I will never understand why people go there to yap and talk throughout, which is completely distracting. Boogying, singing along, dancing badly--all these are acceptable, but simply talking the whole time is rude and distracting, increasingly fuelled by alcohol as the night wears on. Tom Petty filled the place, and it was priceless. He is an artist that I had not appreciated as much as I should have, especially from his Traveling

Wilbury days, but when I bought his “Anthology” album, a greatest hits album, I was astounded to recognize just how many classic and original songs he had. He and I are both 61, tattered around the edges. I can also see why he included Regina Spektor, both for her obvious talent and youth, but also because she plays as well live as she records, and I was just blown away at how tight the Heartbreakers were, and how clean their stadium-guitar style was. Naturally, the core of the band has been together for many years, which also accounts for the tight arrangements and obvious meshing of the many parts. As much as I love Dylan, in contrast, he is indecipherable about half the time, which is not as bad as it seems, as most people at a Dylan concert know all his playbook by heart, and, of course, many are all stoned. (Try him when Willie Nelson opens for him, and you will cure cancer or resist chemo by breathing the air, for medicinal and therapeutic purposes.) I would rate the event A- for her (not quite long enough) and A- for him.

So, in the space of two weeks, we saw Tish at the start of her 79-night tour, and Tom Petty at the end of his yearlong US tour. He said it was their last night in the States before they went overseas. She plays alone, while he has the whole retinue and about 20 roadies. DoseyDoe seats about 100, at dinner tables, while we were with almost 18,000 Heartbreaker and Regina fans shoehorned into the Erwin. But here is what these artists (that is, Tish and Tom) share: deep, glorious playbooks of their own work; long and hardworking tours so their fans can see and support them; their best work behind them, but they are still at it and according their work the respect that reveals their artistry and sheer talent; and both make me very happy. Regina is the future, and her phenomenal and prolific songwriting prowess assures her of a longstanding and adoring love affair with me.

Once again, I end by marveling at how great it is to love this music and still be able to see people who take it seriously and make it regularly. On this note, we will see the whole Beach Boys play in Sandia Casino venue in New Mexico this summer, to celebrate Brian’s return to the group. They released their first album in 1962, and so are capitalizing on a 50 year career. When we return to Houston after our summer in Santa Fe, we will return to the DoseyDoe.

Have a good summer, and go to a concert or two.

Michael  
Michael A. Olivas

PS—RIP, Levon Helm and Adam Yauch (a/k/a MCA). I was not a Beastie Boys fan, but his and their influence and talent were so evident that they were inducted

into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame this year. He was so sick with throat cancer that he could not appear. I will not write about all the rockers and music notables who die, as that is a treadmill one can never satisfy.

I also note the passing of my friend Gary Hartman, charter Posse member and Grateful Dead fan extraordinaire. After he left UHLC as the head of technology, he ramped up his music booking agency, Tapir, and brought dozens of his favorite bands to town at a Houston dive. The last contact we had was when he called me to scold me a few weeks ago for going to a Todd Rundgren concert: “Todd fuckin’ Rundgren??!! He hasn’t been shit since he left the Nazz, and House of Blues sucks. And what is that skunk hair thing he has going?” Now *that* is whom I write for, and ask you all to step it up a bit, now that Gary has passed.