



Grant James and 'Rusty Mary'

Elaine: Grant, first of all what brought you to Brittany and when did you arrive here?

Grant: Well, good morning. I came to Brittany, oh, actually many years ago then I was a young man, probably 15, 16 years old and have been coming back and forward on holiday ever since. 5 years we had the opportunity to buy an old house that needed renovating. It basically had no electricity, no water, no roof, just four walls. We bought it with no idea how we were gonna build it, what we were gonna do, but over a four year period managed to use as many French artisans as we can and we built a house and 'hey presto' we decided to move in full time July last year.

Elaine: Excellent.

Grant: And here we are!

Elaine: And you're enjoying it?

Grant: Oh, it's a great place. Yes, I love the fact there's no traffic, I love the fact it's wonderful open countryside, the weather's nice, there's a lovely warm wind, which you don't get in England. It's great.

Elaine: Yes. Importantly the thing is your Band now isn't it? Or if you, or band, I gather it's largely you?

Grant: It's largely me, yes, last year I recorded an album, it took me a year to record an album in England before I got here full time in July. Basically, I've been wanting to do that for many, many years, but I had a full time job in England. I've now come to Brittany. I'm classed as a professor du musique, um, so I'm a professional musician now, auto entrepreneur, and so I'm promoting my new album and also trying to get some, concerts going, some home concerts going, home concerts are growing quite interesting in parts of Brittany now it's catching on where you're playing in somebodys' front room, it's very intimate and the music comes across a lot better and also start to play at a few barbeques, as well as the normal wine bars, concerts and festivals, all that sort of thing. So slowly, slowly, slowly it's building.

Elaine: You're building up your network?

Grant: Building up my network, yes. Need more but building up my network.

Elaine: As I said, it's largely you; and you play?

Grant: I play Slide Guitar. I play a very old, very, very old, 88 year old, National Guitar, which is a, a steel resonator. It was made in Chicago. It must have bumped around Chicago for many years before it landed in London. I saw it in London about 20 years ago and then it went off Paris and then it came back to London and I managed to afford it, for some strange reason, when I was forty, and so now in my fifties. So I started playing 'Rusty Mary,' as I call her. I started playing her about 2 years ago and, and she's been my companion ever since.

Elaine: Well, you were obviously destined to be together, you see.

Grant: Yes, I'm the custodian for a short period of time until I pass her on to the next person.

Elaine: How would you describe the style of music that you play?

Grant: Well, the Slide Guitar, 'Rusty Mary,' tends to be toward a type of blues sound. It's the old resonating sound of Slide Guitar which, which developed in 1920s and 1930s. There're still many artists today, like Eric Clapton and Chris Rea are playing Slide Guitar. My type of Slide Guitar is like a 'Bluesy' folk with a little bit of Americana in there, it's a few things mixed up, the influences over many years. And, and my writing style is probably got 'Folky Blues Americano,' a little bit of 'pop' with some 'tune' in there as well so I'm hoping that all that combination will just push it forward and people will like the album.

Elaine: Do you compose all your, all that you play?

Grant: Yes, I compose and I do all the words and all the music. I find the music very easy on the guitar. I find words difficult. It takes me a good while to put songs together and, and master that craft of putting the words and actually meaning something in telling stories. I started writing when I was 16 years old, very, very badly and it was only until I got to my 30s and 40s that I started, to me, writing actually decent words to go with the music I could play. So the album, to me, has got probably two or three great songs on it, in my opinion, and the rest, I, I think, are good, but there're just two great, two or three great ones.

Elaine: So there's room for improvement?

Grant: There's room for improvement, and I'm still improving.

Elaine: Yes, absolutely. Well, it is a learning curve isn't it?

Grant: It is a learning curve, and the thing about a guitar, and also the craft of writing songs, you can learn until you're 80, 90 or 100 if you can still keep going. It's a great instrument to play.

Elaine: Where do you get the ideas from though? What actually inspires you? Is it event in your life?

Grant: Events in my life, our children, we've travelled a lot, experiences with people and different friends and, and people you meet on your travels.

Elaine: How do you see the way forward with your band now, or with you, with what you're playing? Do you... are you going to bring in more people or.....?

Grant: Well, when I'm playing, when I'm playing concerts I tend to sort of have guest appearances, harmonica player, maybe saxophone player, base player, drums, sometimes they come in, sometimes just me, all depends on the venue, depends what we can do and how we can do it.

The way forward is I, I love playing the festivals, I would love to get some more festivals in the book and also some more home concerts, 'cause I think the home concerts is an interesting one. That can build. It's a new thing. We can even do outside barbecues, that sort of thing, so I'm looking forward to doing a few more of those and then I want to see if I can promote my music a bit more and also probably look at a second album end of this year.

Elaine: Excellent. So it's a good, good forth going project I think, you can see it going forward?

Grant: See it going forward, yeah.

Elaine: So again, how can you be contacted?

Grant: Right. My web site is www.gslidejames.com, my email's hello@gslidejames.com, so that's the easiest way to get hold of me. I'm also on Facebook if you just look up gslidejames and they're the best, best forms of getting hold of me.

Elaine: Well, I think also one of the best things is just to hear you play something, so.....

Grant: Right, better get 'Rusty Mary.'

