



Simon interviewing: Maddi O'Brien, singer-songwriter

Simon: So I'm here in the studio with Maddi O'Brien, who has actually just recorded an album here. Umm, we've had great fun with that. But tell me, Maddi, why you're in Brittany because you're from ...

Maddi: Australia.

Simon: Right, And so tell us what you're doing in Brittany please

Maddi: Umm, god, that's a long story, don't know where to start.

Simon: Well you have been playing, haven't you, you've been playing concerts

Maddi: I've been playing concerts, yes, I've been touring all over Europe playing my original music I guess. I had a, I have a friend who lives in Belle Isle en Mer, he invited me to come and play some concerts there so I spent some time there and then

Simon: So you did some concerts in Belle Isle, but you also told me that I mean you were shooting all over the place. When we spoke I think you were on your way to Barcelona?

Maddi: Yeah

Simon: And you played in Spain, yeah?

Maddi: Yeah, I played 3 concerts in Spain, I was in Lille playing

Simon: In Northern France?

Maddi: Yeah, I have been playing all over Germany, a few festivals in Italy, the U.K. yeah I was running around

Simon: So you've really had a kind of a European tour, over the past how many months?

Maddi: Er, since the beginning of June I've played 30, about 30 shows .

Simon: That's fantastic. So tell us a little bit obviously we'll be playing a track at the end of this interview, umm, and we're gonna play one of your new songs I think, is that right?

Maddi: Yeah, sure.

Simon: Great which means that it's a song that no-one else will have heard yet, it hasn't been released. But tell us a little bit about your musical background, how you came to be where you are now in music, and touring and all that.

Maddi: So I, I was really not a performer I would say. I couldn't sing in front of other people and then when I was travelling at some point I ran out of money

Simon: Right. That's always a good motivator.

Maddi: Let's start a little bit before that so when I first started travelling I met people who were singing all the time and they really encouraged me and I was learning guitar at that time and those people just brought it out of me. I mean I have other members of my family do play and sing but it wasn't, yeah I just couldn't in front of other people and then through meeting encouraging people they kind of brought that out of me and then finally I but I wouldn't have performed, like I mean I did start writing songs as soon as I started singing with the guitar like it was an instantaneous thing, but I don't think I ever would have performed if it wasn't for the fact that many years ago I ran out of money while on the road and then started playing in the street.

Simon: That's great, it's really interesting to hear because I've also played on the streets, way way back right at the beginning. So tell us about where you first busked and tell us about the experience because it's an interesting way to learn your craft, isn't it on the streets?

Maddi: It's really really interesting. So I was kind of it was maybe 7, maybe 6 years ago let's say, I'd just gotten back from Morocco, I was in Cadiz in South Spain and I'd met a few French people who were busking and they kind of encouraged me to go and play on the street, and I started when I first stowed I started sitting down on the ground on a quiet strip facing the ground but I was making money like I was you know, like I was living on the beach there in a kind of with a lot of homeless people yeah it was a

Simon: A community

Maddi: Yeah, let's call it. It was very um, it was interesting kind of community, I mean it was like howling in the middle of the night, it was an experience let's say. And so I started and I was sitting down looking at the ground and slowly I rose, I rose, I rose up, and then in the end it's the craft of busking that you learn which is you need to engage with other people, and then I, yeah I wanted to continue so I started doing that all over Europe, and I was doing that for 2 years or something like that, amongst other things, Every now and then I would go and pick grapes or something, but yeah I did it for a while. I mean, I think in the



end I was using it as a job, it got boring like anything does but in the beginning it was really fun and exciting.

Simon: And so at what point did you realise that this was something you not only wanted to do but you needed to do actually and make the transition from playing in the streets to playing hopefully to a paying public?

Maddi: Well I think that when I was playing on the street I couldn't really sing many of my own songs cos they're quite intimate. I mean I was playing some of my songs on the street but then you know actually during the pandemic I went in the beginning just before it started I went home to Australia and I did have like a bunch of songs they were kind of intimate bedroom songs I couldn't play that like on the street and in any case it had gotten boring so then my sister actually invited me to come and be the opening act for one of her shows and then I got my first taste of the the first gig that I ever played it was the perfect scenario. I mean it was 50 people sitting down quiet in a room like it was magical and that was my first taste and then of course

Simon: That's quite an encouragement, isn't it?

Maddi: It was, yeah it was, yeah

Simon: So, and then, so you already have one album out don't you which is available on Spotify, iTunes, all the downloading streaming sites. When did you do that album and how did that album come about?

Maddi: So I think because I'd been travelling and playing on the street that I was feeling like I really wanted to create something tangible I think anyone kind of does. You kind of wanna prove it or something, I don't know. You wanna have something to show for it, and you also want to have an artefact like you want to have a CD I did anyway. So then when I went back I approached a friend and asked if he would produce it, not knowing how big of a job that was going to be because it was massive I mean and then we did it in our own studio I invited people that I knew from all over the world like that traditional violin from Macedonia is on it, another cellist from Timbuktu, whatever, so that I approached people that I liked and so we did it and then we were living in the countryside and that producer then moved to he moved to the city to Melbourne and after spending one year on it he moved there and he got robbed and the laptop was stolen, all of his hard drives were stolen, and the whole thing was gone .

Simon: That's your first work of art and it's got all these other people collaborating, you spent weeks and weeks recording and I hate to use the word back-up but let's



leave that aside and all that data gets stolen and so it's not just that you've lost the album, you've lost all that work, all that love and everything

Maddi: All the time

Simon: So then you started again you re-recorded the album yeah?

Maddi: I was quite beside myself and so I moved actually to another place because I was only staying there to make that so then I moved to another place and I just thought like I just I know what to do now, so I just did it quickly. I mean I went into a studio I paid for some studio time, I asked all the same people like if they would do it again of course no-one could emulate what they did last time but we created something different, I think it was actually better in the end anyway cos it's the second time around but yeah it was hard.

Simon: It was quite intense. Yeah after that was when you came and started doing the touring in Europe or this year. So the album came out when? 2 years ago?

Maddi: Er maybe a year and a half ago.

Simon: A year and a half

Maddi: Yeah, probably yeah

Simon: So you're heading back to Australia in a couple of weeks?

Maddi: Yeah in one month yeah

Simon: And then when do you think we will see you back in Brittany?

Maddi: Umm I will be back next summer I hope, yeah I guess next August maybe, July or August

Simon: Great, well when you do come back obviously you'll get in touch and we will announce it and if you have any shows that will be great to know about. And I know you haven't decided yet exactly what's happening with the album, the new album, but we're very privileged that you've allowed us to do one of those songs one of those brand new songs on this broadcast and so we'll wait and see when and how that album comes out with great interest. But in the meantime it's been great talking to you and thanks for coming into the studio

Maddi: Thanks for having me.