

MONICA'S BLOG part 1

Monica and The Explosion - 10 years of frenetic strumming

About the blog:

This year 2015 is the 10 year anniversary of Monica and The Explosion as an artist.

So I decided to write a blog about how it all started and about some highlights from my career.

How did it all start?

Monica and The Explosion's first 3 track demo 'Wrong place-Wrong time' was recorded at Truckland Music in Stockholm in 2005 with Johan Stenström, a friend and music producer.

It was just after I split from my first rock band who were called 'Lots of Pilots', for which I was singer and the main songwriter. In fact this band were originally named 'Monica'!

'Lots of Pilots' had been playing together for a couple of years (2003-2005) and were a driven 5-piece, based in Kalmar, Sweden, where we were all studying. We released 3 demo CDs and played a lot around the local scene, but we also jumped into a car to drive mad distances to gigs, like surf festivals in Norway, the Ski resort Åre, and over to the Finnish Island Åland. The band split up when we were all starting to move out of Kalmar.

I moved to Stockholm and was enthusiastic to begin something new, and something of my own.

I was still enthused with that 'rock band energy' which I think was reflected in the high energy and explosive songs I wrote. Previously, I had never been singing and playing guitar standing upright at the same time, so my struggle with learning all that probably gave the whole thing a sort of aggressive look. This rough home made demo recording of 'Wrong place-Wrong time' is a good example of the early sound.

Listen to it here: <https://soundcloud.com/monica-and-the-e.../demowrongplaceshort>

I started writing songs when I was around 16 years, with the basic guitar chords I learnt earlier in school and with a teenager's thoughts and reality.

The songwriting has always been a big part of my life and the main core of my work.

MONICA 2/2/2015



Here is the second of Monica's Blogs...

Blog 2 "Getting Stuff done"

I came up with the 'stage name' after a bit of thinking I suppose. It kind of reflected my music and stage appearance. And I liked the punky letters in "explosion".

The first "Monica and The Explosion" 3-track demo was recorded at Truckland Studios by music producer Johan Stenström, an old friend of mine. We also did some band rehearsals with bass player Thomas Lee and various drummers. However, I only spent about 6 months in Stockholm before I moved back to Kalmar, so we only got to do one gig, my first as "Monica and The Explosion", at Mondo in Stockholm 2005.

In Kalmar, and for some time in the nearby town of Växjö, I started practising and performing solo. I knew from my time with "Lots of Pilots" that living in a smaller town, I would have a lot more possibilities as a new band/artist. In Stockholm, it had been too difficult to actually find time when everybody could meet for band rehearsals, but in Kalmar I could just focus on my music. It was easy to meet other musicians to play with and easy to find great rehearsal and recording studios with 24 hour access and low prices.

It was in Kalmar that I was contacted by Daniel Rundkvist Satari (Daniel Larsson), a music video producer, who had seen me perform and wanted to make a music video for me. I needed a decent recording for the video and that started the work on my first single "Hollywood" and the first album "Monica and The Explosion" at Monokrom Studios. I had already started playing with drummer Per-Ola "Peppe" Risenberg and he introduced bass player David Persson to our duo and suddenly we were a band.

Check out the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zklm2R2Jpa8>

or

<http://monicaandtheexplosion.com/eng/video.html>

I set up my own record label "Hands Up Music" and was now a full time working musician, music producer, artist and booking agent. (I still am by the way...)



It was great fun to make that first album and those first videos. I had never done anything like it

before and learned new things every day, really getting to challenge myself. Daniel Rundkvist Satari has continued to make great videos for great bands, and he is still busy producing all sorts of films: check him out: <http://danielsatari.se/musikvideo.html>.

The debut album generated a lot of good things. It received great reviews in Swedish music magazines and I had tracks featured on various compilation albums. My videos were shown on local TV, and I got to play at one of the biggest Swedish festivals back then; Peace and Love Festival in 2008. But most important for me was the fact that I had something decent to use for promotion and to help me further my artistic progress. I still see recording proper albums as the best way to present yourself as a band or artist. It shows that you treat your music, your work and your fans with respect, that you are dedicated to your profession.

Monica's third Blog...

Blog 3 Going International

After the release of "Monica and The Explosion" in 2007 things started to really happen and the first show outside of Sweden was in Wismar, in Germany - a town twinned with Kalmar. We were a couple of Kalmar bands who got the opportunity to perform at a local music festival and be part of an exchange with Wismar bands. I really enjoyed getting out of Sweden and checking out a new place. So, later that year I went on my own to Dublin, Ireland to do some gigs I had arranged myself through some friends, which started the ball rolling for the touring life of Monica and The Explosion. In 4 days I did at least 5 gigs as well as one radio show called "On the Verge" with Brendan Hickey, and you can check out his shows here: <http://www.ontheverge.ie/joomla/>

It really felt like I was in the right place doing the right thing, I was hooked on touring and gigging!

The following summer – 2008 – saw me selected to go as one of the Swedish participants for the 'World Championships of Performing Arts' in Hollywood, Los Angeles, USA. The WCOPA was an international talent contest in which contestants of all genres from all around the world compete, a big thing - like everything else in America... It was an unforgettable experience as you can imagine; I certainly got to see a bit of what the American entertainment industry was like. The WCOPA was mainly about talent scouting, and even though I did pretty well in my classes - I got home with a couple of medals and an offer from an American music company - it was not really my kind of thing. I had no wish to sign and pay for a "deal" with a company that would take control over my music and me as an artist; record and produce me 'their' way, without me having any say.

So instead, a few months later in December, I went to Australia for the first time where I have family, to see what the music scene was like down under. There was plenty for me to do there... I loved it! I stayed in Sydney with my brother for a couple of months and played gigs and open mic nights all around the city and its surroundings most nights of the week.

You can see my gig listings from these times in order to follow my whole tour route at:

<http://monicaandtheexplosion.com/eng/gigs.html>

So I made lots of friends and connections, most of whom I still see. I absolutely loved it, and I have been going back to spend my summers there ever after. I've also had the opportunity to play many

great old music venues that are unfortunately not around anymore, for example the Sandringham Hotel in Newtown and the Hopetoun Hotel and The Excelsior in Surrey Hills.

Monica's fourth Blog...

Blog 4 Around The World

When I got back to Sweden after my first visit to Australia I felt very lost. Sweden seemed strange to me, I'd been somewhere else, seen something else, found myself in a new location with a different culture and now I could see Sweden from an outside perspective. What I wanted wasn't really there anymore; I wrote the song 'Shut Up!' and went to the UK for the first time.

And my story from there to where I am now, can be found in the gigs I have done, places I have visited, people I have met on the way, my albums and the songs I have written. Of course there are a lot of stories, since I love touring and have played in all sorts of strange places and locations.

During the time Paul Slack toured with me from 2010 until 2012 he covered a lot of what we did in the blog he wrote back then.

One of the 'highlights' - maybe forgotten? - from the early years, would be the tour that I did solo in India in 2009. I went as part of a package tour promoted by WOA, an Indian music company that works with and presents 'western' rock and pop acts/bands' music to the Indian market. I got to see India from a different perspective I believe; 'from the stage', I got to see the Indian way of organising gigs and to meet Indian crowds.



The gigs were in 5 different cities and we travelled in various types of vehicles, for example; in moped rickshaws between hotel and gig, in our small band van with guitars on top of the roof, as well as by air.

What I enjoyed most - and probably my best memory of India - was a journey we did in a real Indian sleeper coach on mud roads through the Indian night on our way to the next gig. I was probably awake all night, looking out in the darkness, listening to the sounds of the night wondering 'what the hell did that come from? '

I still keep in touch with some of the other acts from that memorable tour, and WOA still promotes gigs in India, and to be honest, I'm quite keen on going there again.

There are lots of tales to tell... I will - in the next blog - show some photos from my 10 years. And if you want to know more, well, check out my gig listings and songs - the stories really are there!

To finish up for now, the following video link is from my first spring in the UK 2009.

It's from an All-dayer at the Sawyers venue in Kettering.

A great place where I did a few gigs promoted by the guys from the band Eastfield.

Unfortunately the venue is closed down now.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1KSQySOKAM>

Blog 5 Photos

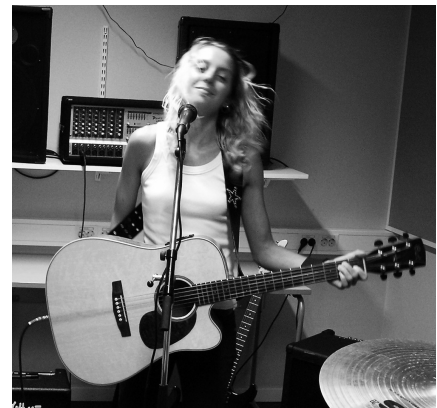
So, I wanted to tell you about the background and the beginning of my 10 years of 'Monica and the Explosion' but for this post I will just show some old photos.

The first two photos are from Kalmar, where it all started, me on my bike 'Hornskuken' - don't ask me what that means...! - on my way to Monokrom rehearsal and recording studios.

At Monokrom I practised most days of the week, sometimes even twice a day.

The second photo is me in my rehearsal studio 'The Lime Room' - the walls were lime coloured!

Monokrom (I believe it's now at a different location and called 'Unik') was a great place for me as a new artist, and I really got some great use from their facilities; here I could practice, grow and get more confident, record my stuff and play live gigs, solo or with my band members.



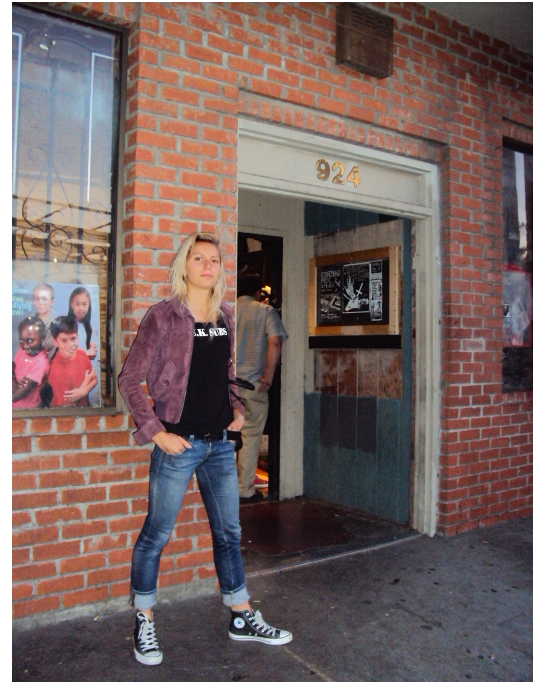
I'd also like to share with you a music track: a very early demo recording of a previously unreleased track: 'One Last Glass' from 2006 recorded in Växjö where I studied music for a few months. The producer of this track was my classmate at that time; Kricke Eriksson, and it was part of a school project.

Check it out here: http://monicaandtheexplosion.com/one_last_glass.mp3



The demo EP cover to 'Save Your Whispers' is from the same time, I remember taking the photo myself from my student flat. For that demo I had a different producer: Peter Bayer, and another class mate of mine played drums: Dennis Nilsson.

Then a big time jump to the only US tour I have actually done myself, in 2010 when I had shows in California (some of them with the great acoustic Ska artist Chris Murray, and some gigs were in Minnesota with members of the Blue grass band Loudray. The photo is from a classic San Fransisco punk venue 924 Gilman - host of Green Day amongst others. It was also through Chris Murray that I met another brilliant ska artist: Moisty Atsushi from Auckland, whom I've done a few tours with around New Zealand.



Then me on the balcony in Dublin where Balcony TV filmed the two videos I did for them.

The photo is from the second video: the one of 'Shut Up' filmed in 2010, with Paul Slack on bass. We were on our first tour with drummer JP Morer, and had an afternoon off to shoot this clip.



And finally the front cover of the 3 Track DVD single (featuring 'Wanna go Home', 'Friday Night' and 'Take It Or Leave Me') filmed in Bournemouth 2010. This was a limited edition produced by Radar Proof Recordings.

