

# Las Vegas 2001

Maarten Ornstein en Tony Overwater in Sin City



## 5th of January 2001

### Starbucks, grande chai latte, 10 to 8 PM, Las Vegas.

I got up at five this morning in Blaricum. Rain. Marieke drove me to the airport where I met up with Maarten Ornstein, my all time music buddy. flew 8 hours to Detroit, landed in snow changed planes and landed another four hours later in 25 degrees Celsius Las Vegas. 3 PM, 19 hours later. And, guess what, no luggage, no bass. Probably lost somewhere between Detroit and Vegas. I'm getting used to the routine at the lost luggage department.

Our suite at the Carriage House is just fine. Kitchen and all. 2 minute walk from the Strip, the street where all the big hotels and casino's are. Just walked the Strip at night. Neon paradise..... or hell.

Now I'm in Starbucks, drinking my favourite Chai Latte, the smallest one, which they still call large. Large, grande or venti, those are the choices. Listening to John Coltrane playing 'in a sentimental mood'. Does put me in that mood while 2 guys, sitting next to me at the streetside window seats, discuss their most recent girlfriends.

I wonder why my head is spinning.





### Friday 5th of January 2001

Now I finally understand why Americans are the way they are. They should be really happy there are still some people that didn't completely go insane. There is not a minute in this country, not a meter out in the street that you are not bombarded with information. Useless information most of the time. I know Vegas is a little extreme even for Americans but the TV channels are not any better than the streets of Vegas. Without exaggeration I'll try to describe one minute on the Strip.

first of all, every ten meters there is someone trying to push you a flyer in your hand with advertisements for naughty teens, spicy orientals or stiff studs. every

square meter in sight is used for advertising. Posters are out, neonlight ads are old fashioned, you need at least an LCD screen the size of an average house to advertise at least 10 different items within one minute. The best steak in town, magician of the year, comedy act of the year, best show ever, biggest triple fudge chocolate cake in the world, just to name a few of the descriptions you see in one minute.

Hotel entertainment: an erupting volcano, a live sea ship battle with real actors, dancing fountains, a half size Eiffel tower, a double sized Roman temple, a 5 stores high Coca Cola bottle. And than I didn't even describe all the sounds that jump on you all in that one minute.

There is no sane person that could survive such an overdose of information without shutting off all their senses. And that is probably what happens. This is the city where you forget to be a human being. You're made into a waste basket where people can throw in all the junk you can imagine. And still you feel empty. Sin city. Win city. skin city, tin city. wastebin city.

Please remove all items from the trash.

Are you sure?

YES!!!!!!

### Sunday 7th of January

Yesterday we had our concert at the dinner party of Avalon. The main purpose of this trip. Avalon is a high end speaker company that is associated with Turtle Records, our record company. Turtle uses their speaker system to monitor their recordings and they have a lively interaction discussing possible improvements in both the speakers and the recordings. Both Avalon and Turtle took care of our trip to Vegas.

We got the full star treatment and not only by the organisers. Most guests now us. They know every recording we did and now every detail of our music. It's quite an experience for us to be so far away from home and meet people that are completely into our music. They ask questions and give opinions and ideas that really make sense. it's heartwarming. Sometimes we musicians don't believe that their are people that actually listen to what we do and love it! Sometimes the struggle to actually do, what you feel you have to do, is so hard that you think you only do it for yourself. But here we meet people, real music freaks, that have heard so much music in their lives and are professionally dedicated to the music business and they really know and love what we do!!



The dinnerparty that Avalon organised is during the CES, a huge customer electronics show annually in Vegas. Large congress centres in Vegas are filled with stands from all possible companies dealing in electronics, hifi, computers, car electronics, video. You name it, it's there. Avalon decided to do a different approach this year. No stand in an overcrowded hall but instead a dinnerparty for all their distributors, suppliers, colleagues and press. No big show showing of their incredible speaker systems (a pair of those speakers cost as much as a small house or apartment) no folder with specs that make technicians drool. Instead of that an acoustic, unplugged concert by Maarten and I and a dinner at one of Vegas renowned Italian restaurants. The effect was overwhelming. People that walked around at theCES all day being bombarded with electronics, facts, statistics and flashy commercials are set back to what it's all about, the music, in it's purest form and human contact with the people you work with. I like this statement. Promoting speakers by not showing them but instead show the reason why you want to have those speakers in the first

place, to listen to great music. And if you want to hear it as you hear it here, at an unplugged concert, just a few feet away from the artists you just know which speakers to buy,..... if you can afford them, that is.



### **Route 66**

Maarten left this morning, back to Holland. I booked a few extra days to get change to drive around. I rented a car and am now heading for the Grand Canyon. I'm on Route 66, having lunch in a restaurant in the Hualapai Indian reservation. It's strange to do this trip alone. The views are so spectacular that it's too bad I can't share it with someone. I don't know who I miss more, Maarten, Marieke or Lisa, my Canadian cousin who would join me on this trip.



It was really nice to travel and spend time with Maarten again. Reminded me of the time we studied together at the Conservatory in The Hague. We spent a lot of time hanging out at my house, we went on holidays together in France, hiking and playing. We somehow have a groove together that makes things go smooth and easy. Not just musicwise but also in travelling and other things. I'm looking forward to touring with our trio with Wim again. I hope to set up some nice tours this year.

### **Grand Canyon**



Considering the habit of exaggeration in the country the name Grand Canyon is a HUGE understatement. I arrive at 5 pm at the Bright Angel Lodge where I rented a cabin for the night. Harry, from Turtle records, convinced me to take a lodge at the rim of the Canyon. He even offered to pay it! Being out of money, as is customary for jazzmusicians, I wouldn't have done it myself, but it's definitely worth it. A priceless experience. As I hurry to my cabin to drop of my luggage I rum into some deer. Accustomed to people here, I guess. I drop my things get my video camera out and run to see the last sparks of light over the Grand Canyon. It's the most incredible thing I have ever seen. I'm speechless and tears fill my eyes. I can just gasp at the sight. The deer I just came across at my cabin slowly and carefully make their way down back into the canyon. I can't wait until tomorrow to see the sun come up over the canyon.

### 'mr Basie and I went to the Grand Canyon and it was closed.....'(Sinatra at the Sands)

No sun coming up. I look out the window and all I see is snow. 20 cm of snow has fallen overnight. I walk to the rim of the canyon and all I see is white clouds, mist everywhere I look. Where is the canyon!?! After an early breakfast I decide to hike down. I'm the first on the Bright Angel Trail that morning the footpath is full of fresh snow. Except for some deer tracks the path hasn't been touched. I walk for two hours in a big mist, I brought enough water and food for a day. Only my shoes aren't really fit for the hike. My old runners have no profile making walking slippery and they are not waterproof. Just as I decide to go back because I can't see a thing anyway and things are not clearing up overhead of me I see the world below me become more clear. 10 minutes later I am under the cloud and for the first time I am really confronted with the Canyon by daylight. I will not describe this, no point, either you've been there and you know it or you haven't and than it doesn't mean anything to you anyway. It's the difference between heard about having sex and actually having it.



The only thing spoiling the view is my bursting headache. I have them quite often lately. Must be the dry climate. 2 Advils a Coke and a Powerbar seem to ease it down a little. I stop halfway down the canyon. It is not possible to go down all the way and come back up the same day. I had a 8 mile hike (12 km), quite enough for my condition( I need to get operated next week for a small hernia in the thigh). Anyway, ever walked 6 km down the stairs and than 6 up again? It's a picknick compared with the canyon hike.

### Tuba city

After the hike in the Grand Canyon I head on further east. More spectacular views. The space in this part of the world is unimaginable, especially for a Dutch guy. I haven't seen so much space in my life! This place is not of this world. Driving my rental car along the highways I scan the radio for local stations. Soul stations, Country stations, public news stations, I love them all. I run across a native American station and listen to a discussion about 'taxation in the reservation' (Americans seem to love those kind of oneliners), should or should not all businesses in the Indian reservations be taxed with reservation tax. Many non-Indian businesses think not. We're talking 1.5 % here, not 19% like in Europe! Money is used for social improvements and things like that. As I'm listening to the show I realise that I am in fact now driving through these reservations. I never gave it any thought and I didn't know what to expect. The map indicates many different reservations in this area. I had sat my mind on Tuba city to spend the night. I had no idea if I could find a hotel or anything like that. I didn't realise that Native Americans, Indians, Indian Americans, first people, red brothers ( to name a few of the names I picked up at



the radio station) didn't have cities as I know it. Tuba city is a trade post with some houses, mobile houses and caravans gathered around it. some buildings, like a school and city house have a permanent look the rest of the people seem to be ready to leave any moment. I guess that is the main difference with the other Americans. The core of their existence is travelling, wandering. Being used to have your neighbour on a respectable distance. Lucky enough for me a hotel just opened some months ago so I can stay here as planned.

The next day I drive around the streets a bit, to get some idea and feel of the city. As I continue my scenic drive through the reservation I listen to the Native American Channel again. The announcer speaks in a native language and all I understand are numbers and songtitles. Country, rock, and Native American music nicely mixed as if it was the most natural thing in the world. Great driving music. The day started out as the prior two days: cloudy. But than, just as the clouds started to influence my mood, the sky opens up and I'm looking at some of those typical canyon mountains, like driving through a Western movie. I stop the car every ten minutes and shoot some pictures and video. One view even more spectacular than the other. I'm sure I'll bore my family and friends to death with all these rock formations. 2D is really much less impressive than 3D. I really should get my viewmaster out again.



At noon I stop in another settlement with a trade post in yet another reservation. Looking for something to eat and just out of curiosity. I take a look at the general store and buy some fried chicken and a corndog (sort of a hotdog in cornbread on a stick). Outside the shop there is a truck which is a sort of mobile shop. I go and look to see what they have. I start a little conversation with the two man of the van and I ask them for some cd's or tapes of native American music. I try to get something like I heard in the car. They can't play the tapes but another customer starts singing to me to make clear what style it is. Huba huba Huhuba huba.... I buy a tape. When I tell them I'm a musician myself the youngest guy of the two owners asks me if I have a cd with me. I do and in good, both Indian and Dutch, tradition we trade my cd with an

Indian cd. The music of this cd accompanies me for the rest of the trip making the scenery even more stunning.



At one moment I stop my car at the beginning of a riverbed. All these canyons are formed by the erosion of water and wind. The rivers coming from the mountains form hundreds of meters deep cliffs in the landscape as they meander down until they meet the main river, sometimes 1500 meters under the surface of the land. I start walking down the riverbed. It's dry season and there is no water in the river. Where I parked the car the river was about 2 meters deep but within a 30 minutes walk I am surrounded by eroded rock until 50 meters above me. It's probably the most intense hiking experience I've ever had. This is just too beautiful. At one moment I can't go further because the river drops about 25 meters. I stay a few minutes talking to the rocks (a habit I picked up fom a Dutch princess who likes to talk to trees. they are such

good listeners! Always agree.) and than I retrace my footsteps I had left in the soft riverbed.



## Fredonia



From Indians to cowboys. Here in Fredonia real man don't take their hats off for dinner. I eat at Nedra's cafe, Mexican food. According to the menu I am sitting in a place where many movie stars ate, the environment of Fredonia is the most popular spot for shooting westerns. Sidney Pichet is still ordering his spicy taco sauce from Nedra's cafe. It is indeed the best meal I had in days, although that says more about the other places I ate than anything else. Still the best Mexican food I ate so far.

### **Singing in the rain**

Probably the last thing I expected for a trip through the desert back to Sin City. Rain from morning till afternoon.

Anyway, with the radiostations around Las Vegas playing all the evergreens I know, songs by Sinatra, Streisand, O'Sullivan to name a few, I have my own karaoke session in the car. It's fun,... when nobody hears you. In Vegas I do the only thing Maarten and I hadn't done yet (besides the stripshows, but that seems to be a sad thing to do as a man alone). To go where no man has gone before, except for a few million tourists, Star Trek, The experience! Quite a trip, I'm almost tempted to buy a Star Trek suit for me and Kaili. Oh, what if money wasn't an issue! I'm flat broke now. it's time to go back home. Back to reality. Resistance is futile!

