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By Melody Oei, MSN, 01/11/2011

Violin maestro David Garrett: I'm not a phenomenon

MSN Entertainment headed up North to Bangkok, Thailand to speak with and watch David Garrett rock his bow at the David Garrett "Rock Symphonies" showcase.



Universal Music Malaysia

The hall Royal Grand Theatre in Siam Paragon fills up gradually; everyone is here to watch 31-year-old German-American violinist **David Garrett** perform his rock symphonies. The audience rise to their feet at the sound of the Thai National Anthem, "Phleng Chat," and the crowd goes crazy when the over 6-foot violinist appears on stage shortly after.

David Garrett graduated from Julliard School in New York City and has been playing the violin since the tender age of four. His "Rock Symphonies" album features tracks like "Smells like Teen Spirit," "Vivaldi vs. Vertigo" (Antonio Vivaldi's "Winter" Concerto for Violin and Orchestra from The Four Seasons and U2's "Vertigo") and "November Rain" amongst others.

David Garrett performs with guitarist Marcus Wolf on stage and their chemistry is impeccable; both musicians feed off each other's energy and make both string instruments sound like they have complimented each other since centuries ago. David doesn't stop for anything except to pull off the broken hairs off his bow from vigorous bowing; a split second later and his bow is back on the strings of his violin - his fingers and shifting quick.

The crowd calls an encore after David leaves the stage and he comes back on, playing the theme song to "Pirates of the Caribbean" as he walks through the crowd. David is then awarded the Gold Status in Thailand by Universal Music Thailand and this marks the end of the private David Garrett "Rock Symphonies" showcase.

We spoke to David and got to know him and his music a little better. Read on to find out more about this Van Halen loving violinist.



Courtesy of Universal Music

Is this your first time in Bangkok?

"First time yeah, first time in Thailand. Of course I haven't really seen anything yet, but hopefully tonight I'll go sightseeing, walking around."

Tell us about your symphonies. What do you like most about it?

"It's hard to say what I like most about it, because I wouldn't have put it out if I didn't like it. I grew up with classical music and everything I hear in rock is always a little bit influenced by classical music and when it came to putting rock symphonies together, I did what I do best and that's how the record kind of make perfect sense to me because every time I hear something on radio which is classical, I immediately hear it from a different direction."

Do you play any other instruments?

"I play the piano but not often and not in front of other people."



Courtesy of Universal Music

When you sit down at the piano, do you compose and then play it on the violin? Does that cross over for you?

"Most of the stuff happens up here [head] so if I hear something yes I can sit on the piano and figure out the chords or hear something that plays on the violin and see if I still like it. So really, music writing or arranging just really happens more in the brain more than any other."

Could you tell us about your efforts in achieving a Guinness World Record for being the world's fastest violinist?

"It was certainly something spontaneous which happened. I've always played a lot since quite early in my career. Well I always had good technique and then I was asked to play for a children's show. They asked me to showcase possibilities of techniques on the violin and bring it to the kids and we then came up with that idea. We made sure we went through every possible recording of 'Flight of the Bumblebee' to kind of check. I've always played fast pieces so it came very naturally."

Do you practice the violin every day?

"Yeah. It also really depends if I have a full schedule. Normally I need my three hours a day and I do get a little upset towards management if they don't think about that because I would feel like I'm not doing my duty and be a little upset but besides that, normally, two to three hours."



Courtesy of Universal Music

What do you usually practice on?

"I start out with the basic scales and that takes one or two hours, just to warm up properly. Maintenance is very important of course, especially feeling the distances between each shift. I've got to be sure that it comes natural; I also practice the working material, the breathing stuff."

Who is your guitar hero?

"Well, Van Halen. I listen to a lot of '80s rock and '90s rock."

What is your favourite rock band?

"All my favourites are on my album - Aerosmith, Led Zepplin; I missed out on Pink Floyd but certainly Metallica. Pretty much the best of my favourite rock tunes and rock bands are on the record."

Who are your favourite composers?

"From the classical world, I would definitely say Bach; and then comes Mozart, Beethoven and them."



Courtesy of Universal Music

What about the Baroque, Romantic and Contemporary period composers?

"I like, probably, Bach still the most; he's been a big inspiration for everyone. If you look through composers from Beethoven to Brahms, everybody somehow relates to Bach because his music is not Baroque in a sense, the harmony and structure are sometimes more romantic than those of the romantic composers. So to me, Bach really is the founder of all music, classical music direction, and I think looking into history everybody really gets inspiration from Bach."

You picked up the violin at the age of four - you could have dropped the violin to pick the guitar up and be a rockstar at any point along the way. What kept you focus?

"First of all, I certainly did put down the violin quite a lot [laughs]. There are a lot of frustrations sometimes, even physically; it takes a lot of effort and practice. I guess I just felt this was right, and I was good at it. If you're good at something, it keeps you driving and it gets better and better. I never had that feeling with any other instrument."



Courtesy of Universal Music

Which concert of yours did you like the most or thought was your best?

"I'm not really somebody who looks back and says, 'Oh I really played well there, or there.' I don't know. You know there's a saying, 'You're only as good at your last performance.' So in the end, you always have to prepare to be better than what you can get and that's a challenge - to always have that ambition to improve. So I'm not really somebody who relies on the past performance."

You have a lot going on for yourself right now, would you consider yourself a phenomenon?

"No. In the end, we all wake up in situations where it's going so well and emotions make everything very realistic in my life not that I'm more happy or sad. I would say I'm very lucky, that I'm very strongly connected to work. I've worked very hard in my life but I'm also lucky. Before you get lucky, you've got to work. 'Phenomenon' makes it sounds easy that's why I wouldn't use that word because in the end it would give the wrong impression to other



Courtesy of Universal Music

If the girl of your dreams is standing right in front of you, which song would you play for her?

"F**k the music man; I would save my time and say, 'let's do this.'" [laughs]