

INTERVIEW WITH RENATA LINO

Renata Lino is one of the Internet's best recognized music photographers. In the last 16 years, she covered hundreds of shows, took thousands of pictures and literally befriended the biggest names in the rock and metal business. Her skills, passion for her work and never ending smile melted the hearts of the countless band members. We spoke about the private photo sessions, the best and the worst concert scenarios and the fun of being the middle of the photographic pit!



Vanadian Avenue: You work full time, take photos, write reviews and run your own blog. We would like to know how you manage all that (or at least know the brand of coffee that keeps you awake).

Renata Lino: Well, on my deviantART gallery I'm still posting pics taken in December and I have two CD reviews in waiting for over a month, so I guess I'm not managing it that well after all, lol. But I know what you mean. First, my day job is as a secretary. Meaning that I'm on the computer all the time and many times I can update my blog while I'm at the office (hope my boss won't read this...). This is a passion I have, so I spend most of my free time with it. The gig reports have priority – I usually write the first version up to 48 hours after the concert (I say first because I write for three other websites. If I cover a certain event on behalf of one of

them, I obviously post it there first, and later, when I have the time, in my blog). The CD reviews I choose to write are usually of bands that I like/know well, so it's easier to write about them. But most of the times I review CD that are assigned to me, by those other websites I've mentioned – bands that I'm not familiar with or not even heard about ever. That is not so easy and sometimes it may take a while. But using your own words, it's manageable ;) And yes, I still have time to hang with my friends. About the coffee, I'm not very picky on the brand – it just has to be strong, and I take it black with no sugar ;))

Vanadian Avenue: Juggling so many tasks makes it impossible to squeeze you into one particular job description. If you were to give yourself a label you would be a blogger, a gig photographer or a music journalist.

Renata Lino: I think music photo-journalist is the best. I love to take pics, but right after that comes the love for writing. That's why I started a blog instead of my own photography page (besides, I already have deviantART for that). But in a blog I can post photos AND my writings/reports.

Vanadian Avenue: Female photographers are rare. What attracted you to this job?

Renata Lino: You think so? ‘Cause I know many ;) It all started with my passion for music. I just wanted to keep memories of the concerts I’d been to. I think the first live pics I took were in 1996... but then I became best friends with a girl who had taken a professional course in photography. As all I wanted was “memories”, and her photos were obviously better than mine, I stopped shooting for some time, keeping copies of her work. But then she got a complicated job, she missed a lot of concerts... I had to do it myself. And that’s when it got serious, eh, eh. I wanted to be better at it and suddenly it wasn’t just for the sake of memories but for the sake of photography, concert photography itself. It was in 2005 that I started to take my crappy camera to the concerts again and one year later I started looking for better cameras and photography tips on how to take better shots.

Vanadian Avenue: A girl with a camera surrounded by long haired guys. How do you manage to survive in the mosh pit?

Renata Lino: A short girl, don’t forget that, ah, ah. My trick is to stand literally in the front row, where I can support myself against the metal barriers or the stage itself when



the biggest mess starts. I’ve earned some bruises along the way, broke my upper lip and, worst of it all, a stupid incident with a stagediver broke my left knee. But in 20 years of concerts, I can that’s a quite good injury statistics.

Vanadian Avenue: Now, be honest, does the job pay?

Renata Lino: If we’re talking about money, definitely not. If I get an official press pass, then I

don’t pay for the ticket, so that’s some money I save. But sometimes I don’t get a pass – I go because I REALLY want to see the show and so I pay like everybody else. Of course I still take my compact camera and then write about the show anyway – it’s an addiction. But if we’re talking about satisfaction and personal fulfillment, then totally yes :)

Vanadian Avenue: Let’s play a game: the Good, the First, and the Ugly. Tell us about the first picture you ever took, your favorite one and the worst you have ever taken.

Renata Lino: Damn, just when I thought this interview was a piece of cake... (laughs). Let’s see, the first picture... I THINK (big emphasis on “think”) it was of a local underground band called Blasphemy. The first one I was officially asked to do was Web, that I’m sure of – but just because I was friends with the guitar player, not because I was a great photographer.

Naming one favorite is really, really unfair. I have many of them, ah,ah. Some because of the “technical quality”, some because of the captured moment, and some because of what that concert in particular meant for me... But okay, I’ll try to pick one. Probably the one of Mas (Samaël) where I caught him mid-air in one of his jumps! For those who don’t know, Mas is “the heavy metal cheerleader” – he jumps non-stop in every concert. Last October when they played here, I tried soooooo hard to catch him in the air! And I finally did, in one of the last songs. So that must be a fave, for the all the effort it took, lol.

Now the worst... there are a lot of those too, ah, ah. So I’ll choose one that made me sad and frustrated at the same time. Deathstars, when they opened for Korn in 2008. They’re one of my top bands, and I made it to the front row... but it was useless as I only had a crappy compact camera and the lights were all red... a total “photographic disaster”. The 69 Eyes in Salzburg, the year before, also sucked dish water. Amazing concert, but my pics turned out total trash.

Vanadian Avenue: Can you tell us the craziest thing that happened to you while taking pictures during a gig?

Renata Lino: Apart from breaking my knee when this total idiot jumped from the stage and landed on me? I was photographing a thrash metal band called Pitch Black, and was so concentrated on it that I didn’t see the guy until he literally hit me...



I don’t know. A lot of funny things happened, but not exactly “crazy”. But one thing that made ME crazy with joy was when Bobby Blitz from Overkill posed for me! I was the only girl in the photopit, so I guess that helped, ah, ah. On the song “Fuck You” he turned to me and raised his middle finger. He only put it down when I nodded to him, as if saying “done!” The pic was awful in the end. I wasn’t in the best position to catch a good light, and I got so nervous that it came out totally unfocused. But of course I kept it – Bobby posed for ME ;)

Vanadian Avenue: Many photographers are afraid to publish their materials on blogs due to copyrights issues. On the contrary, you proudly showcase whole sets from various gigs you covered. What is your opinion on the exchange of information on the Internet and the rights of the artists?

Renata Lino: I'm not a professional. This is just something I enjoy immensely. So I feel thrilled when people leave all kinds of nice words. But for that, they need to actually SEE my work! If I don't share it, how on Earth will I hear that feedback?!



work as your own is obviously completely wrong – but plagiarism has always been there, way before internet. Now if some one uses your work on social networks or forums just because he/she liked the photo... I honestly don't see any harm in that. But like I said, I'm just speaking for myself, someone who's not looking for profit or prestige. I'm not the best person to be asked about this.

Vanadian Avenue: You are also self publishing books with your works. We have one and it does impress. How important is to you to keep your portfolio varied?



and then, of course, I'll show them to my friends. And the variety is just to remember me that I REALLY go to a lot of different concerts, ah, ah.

Vanadian Avenue: What advice would you give to people who would like to become music photographers? Where should they start?

Renata Lino: Well, it's always good to check some basic tutorials. I don't mean a full photography course (I never took any!). But it's helpful if you know how to set your camera when, for instance, you have too much light or none at all – that kind of thing. But remember

I once found on Blabbermouth a picture I took of Roland Johansson (ex-Sonic Syndicate). It clearly had been "stolen" from my gallery on deviantART, as the frame with my signature had been removed. Okay, that wasn't very nice. But I don't share my pics in order to be famous. And if a complete stranger thought that one of my pics was good enough to be included in some news article, which made me proud, not mad. I guess it's different when you're trying to make a living out of it. Or if you're trying to "be a star". Posting some other person's

Renata Lino: Once again thank you for asking me for one of those! It was a real honour :) But I print photobooks because nowadays it's all digital! I miss picking an album from the shelf and browse its pages with the printed photos on it! Everything is in the computer. And okay, we have digital photo frames now, but it's not the same thing. So I choose my best photos and make these books. Sometimes I make some smaller ones to offer as gifts. But it's mostly for myself,

this is all theory. Especially in a concert, where the conditions keep changing all the time, the most important thing is to know your camera, how it works best in each circumstance. I've dealt with a few different ones and trust me – they all react differently under the same conditions. So get the basic theory but then do a LOT of experiments.

Vanadian Avenue: You seem to enjoy surprising people. Let us just mention your legendary seasonal cards. Members of Pantera used to send Christmas cards with some witty messages (“Money’s short, times are hard, here’s your fucking Christmas card”). Yours reads: “Every season is good to rock” and it features Santa shredding a Fender. What else can we expect from you in the future?



Renata Lino: Ah, ah, my “famous” cards! Yes, that’s another passion of mine. Like you said, I like to surprise people and make them smile. And I think a personalized card, on Christmas, birthday or some other special occasion, is the best way of doing so. My cards are always related to the person’s interests – that’s why yours had an image and message related to rock/metal music ;) Sometimes I also adapt private jokes. I remember a friend of mine once mistaking the name of a place with another one, so my card for him had Santa looking for that place on a map... So let’s see what I come up next for you, girls! My drawing skills aren’t exactly brilliant, so I obviously search for images on Google. And when my friends like movies/actors or bands that I never photographed before, I also have to use other photographer’s works. Maybe that’s why I’m not that big on the whole copyright issue...

Vanadian Avenue: Thank you for answering our questions

Renata Lino: Thank you!!

Interview and design by Rita and Malicia Dabrowicz
All pictures: Renata Lino, all rights reserved

Important links:

<https://www.facebook.com/pieni156> - Renata Lino’s on Facebook
<http://pieni156.deviantart.com/> - Renata’s Deviantart profile
<http://frontrowforever.net/> - Renata’s blog about music
<http://www.backstageforum.com/> - you can read Renata’s articles here
<http://valkyrianmusic.com> – another website where Renata’s a member of staff