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Joanna Stingray



Singer

Born: Los Angeles - 3 July 1960

Joanna Stingray, an American singer who became famous in Russia in the early 1990s, first came to the Soviet Union in 1984. The year before, she had released her debut EP in California. However, her trip as a tourist to Leningrad with her sister caused her to abandon her budding career in the USA. Through a Russian emigre acquaintance, she was put in touch with Boris Grebenshikov, singer with the Leningrad underground group Aquarium, and she fell in love with the secretive world of Soviet rock that centered round the infamous Leningrad Rock Club.

Stingray returned to Leningrad in August 1984, and with Grebenshikov hatched a plan to release an album of Soviet rock in the USA. The result, *Red Wave. 4 Underground Bands from the USSR*, was put together in 1985 and released in 1986 on Los Angeles indie label Big Time Records. Stingray smuggled tapes and film of the bands out of Leningrad, hiding lyrics sheets in her boots and tapes sown into her clothing. Three of the bands it featured - Aquarium, Alisa, and Kino - would go on to become bona fide legends in Russia and throughout the Soviet Union.

Although the album did not sell particularly well, the videos Stingray had shot were shown on MTV and the record attracted the attention of several celebrities. Through Stingray, Andy Warhol presented all the musicians with signed cans of Campbell's Soup, and David Bowie sent Grebenshikov a red Kramer guitar. Stingray also used the proceeds of the album to buy Western equipment for the bands. The record, along with Stingray's tireless promotion, was partly responsible for rousing an interest in Soviet

rock that allowed Aquarium to record and release an album in the USA in 1988, and Kino to tour Italy, France and Denmark 1988-1989.

Stingray herself continued to travel to the Soviet Union and, despite various obstacles from the Soviet bureaucracy, she married Kino guitarist Yuriy Kasparyan in Leningrad in November 1987. She lived in Moscow from 1989, and released several albums, mostly filled with English-language versions of songs by her famous friends, on Soviet and Russian labels in the early 1990s. She even presented her own music show on Russian TV.

She left Russia in 1995, and now lives in Los Angeles with her family, although she has made occasional concert appearances in Russia since.

Connected with: Boris Grebenshikov, Viktor Tsoy, Sergey Kuryokhin