

The Moscow Times Highlights Charitable Efforts of Singer-Songwriter Robins, as he Raises Funds For U.S. Military Returning Home

[CD Reviews Compare Robins to Cat Stevens](#)

Singer-songwriter **Gregg Robins** continues to earn attention for his critically acclaimed debut CD, 'Everything That Matters' and his charitable efforts to support U.S. Troops as they return home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Robins, a Bronx transplant living in Russia, was interviewed by **THE MOSCOW TIMES** last week:



The Moscow Times

12/2/11, BY Alli Rath

Gregg Robins is an American expat living in Moscow...Robins grew up in the Bronx, New York, and eventually found his way to Oxford University where he earned a doctorate in management and a masters of philosophy in East European studies. Robins, a classically trained clarinet player turned singer-songwriter, recently released an album entitled "Everything That Matters." Part of the proceeds from this

album will be donated to HonorVet, an organization that provides support for past and present U.S. soldiers. Robins spoke with The Moscow Times about his experience with charity work and what makes this cause so special for him.

Q: What is the first charity you gave money to?

A: Growing up in a modest middle-class family in the Bronx, New York, I do not recall giving money to charities in my youth, though as I got older and began to make my own living, I certainly did. Over the years, I also learned that giving one's time can be as valuable as giving one's money. One example, when I was turning 20 I was in India and spent my Christmas Day serving lunch to the people at Mother Theresa's Home for the Destitute and Dying. I also made a cash donation to them, but the time spent and interaction there was most meaningful. Another example is the hours and hours of volunteer work I did over a number of years as the treasurer and also president of my synagogue in New York.

Q: Did you volunteer as a teenager back home?

A: Not as a teenager, but in my early college years I did so with pleasure. One

experience I remember in particular was reading books to make tape recordings for the blind. My grandmother suffered from deteriorating vision, and this was a cause close to my heart.

Q: Which charity is closest to your heart?

A: Supporting our troops returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am a singer-songwriter, and using my song, "Heroes," I have teamed up with the organization HonorVet to raise awareness and funds for returning soldiers. What is often not understood is that for many soldiers, the return home is more difficult than the time they spend serving overseas. HonorVet is an organization that provides them with resources, support and a community.

Q: Does it feel strange to be supporting an American charity while living in Russia?

A: Not at all. I think the cause of honoring our soldiers who return from battle is a universal one, and that everyone should be aware of the tremendous challenges they encounter.

Q: What is the biggest difference between charity-giving in America and in Russia?

A: Charitable giving has long been a part of American culture. What's more, it is institutionalized through the Tax Code and charitable deductions. In Russia, charitable giving is at a much earlier stage, though it is clearly developing quite rapidly through a variety of activities and causes.

Q: What other charities are you involved in?

A: I have been involved with the Rotary organization, which channels funds to various charities. In fact, I myself benefited from a Rotary scholarship as a student, and over the years I have been a speaker for Rotary club events in a number of different countries. I have also supported both cancer research and diabetes research. Diabetes is a major health problem and one that has greatly affected my own family, as my late father suffered from it. So, it is a very personal cause for me.

Q: Do you give money to panhandlers you see on the street?

A: Yes. It is hard to imagine not doing this. But apart from money, I have always made an effort to offer food and meals where possible. I see this as a more direct way to provide support than by giving money, and perhaps stems from the fact that I was partially raised by my Depression-era Jewish grandparents: For them, wasting food was a sin and sharing it a blessing.

During Thanksgiving week, Robins released the following in-house video for his song 'Heroes,' referenced in the Q&A above. The homespun clip draws attention to the challenges faced by soldiers returning to America, and aims to raise awareness and drive funds to the non-profit organization HonorVet: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZqhLPfFzNQ>. Robins' "Helping our Heroes at Home" initiative donates 100% of the proceeds from sales/downloads of the song 'Heroes' to HonorVet. The song, which was written on the eve of Robins' visit to the Landstuhl Medical facility in Germany, may be purchased here: <http://greggrobins.com/heroes/>.

Listen to Robins' recent interview with radio host Aaron Myers in Washington, D.C.: <http://greggrobins.com/news/audio-interview/>

Early reviews have praised Robins' CD as evoking the music of Cat Stevens, and as "*an album with a musical underpinning that keeps providing these small bursts of sunlight and surprise. Taken together, they make this one of the most uncommon of delights — an exploration amongst very familiar landmarks that somehow feels brand new.*"

SOMETHING ELSE!

SOMETHING ELSE REVIEWS

By Nick DeRiso 10/19/11

<http://somethingelserreviews.com/2011/10/19/gregg-robins-everything-that-matters-2011/>

Gregg Robins' debut album, and this is quite a feat, speaks to the idea of loss — loss of family, loss of country — without ever descending into a shivery gloaming.

A Bronx transplant living in Russia, he was separated not just from his home but also from his children after suffering through a broken marriage, and that space between Robins and everything he so desperately loves couldn't, at times, be any wider on the appropriately titled *Everything That Matters*.

Yet, the album's intriguing instrumentation, and Robins' dogged determination to find purchase in this new and uncertain world, keeps the project aloft. For all that he seems to have lost at first, there is something gained for Robins through the telling — and, through sheer force of will, it seems, things begin to turn for him.

Like most singer-songwriter projects, this is, on its face, an autobiographical, deeply personal journey. But, along the way, *Everything That Matters* transforms into something more universal, beginning with the way Robins transforms the album's base of stark acoustic instrumentation — so reflective of the hard truths associated with divorce — with these richly expressive local textures. At times, you hear something in his soloing approaching klezmer; at others, there's an angular Eastern European feel to the strings, as well.

By the time this trip is concluded, Robins has done much to reconcile things. There is a touching, ex-pat sentiment to tracks like "Morning In America" and "Heroes," but at the same time Robins slips into an unmannered, folksy Russian dialect for the tune "Pages of My Life." He moves from a desolate loneliness in his family life ("Sounds of the Day," "So Many Ways" and, in particular, the shattering "Memories & Yesterdays") toward the hill-topping vistas of "Just What I Needed" and the title track — songs that provide a detailed roadmap as Robins rediscovers love and ultimately reconnects with his long-lost daughters.

There arrives this particular resonance. For all of its specificity, *Everything That Matters* ends up dealing with some very universal things, delving into meaningful thoughts on loss and on what's important. Just as particularly, Robins has crafted an album with a musical underpinning that keeps providing these small bursts of sunlight and surprise. Taken together, they make this one of the most uncommon of delights — an



exploration amongst very familiar landmarks that somehow feels brand new. *Everything That Matters*, a crisp, spacious sounding set scheduled to be issued Oct. 25, was mixed by Yvan Bing, who has worked with Phil Collins. The record was mastered by Greg Calbi, who did similar work for Bruce Springsteen's *Born to Run* and Paul Simon's *Graceland*. David Hadzis was producer, along with Robins.

Record-Journal

THE RECORD-JOURNAL

By Jim Pasinski, 10/20/11

<http://jpsmusicblog.blogspot.com/2011/10/cd-review-gregg-robins-gives-us.html>

CD Review: Gregg Robins Gives Us "Everything That Matters"

Classical trained musician, Gregg Robins is releasing his debut album "Everything That Matters" on October 25. Robins started out as a classical clarinetist, he then moved on to alto saxophone. His passion now lies in American folk music, which is showcased on his new album as he tells of his journey of human emotions and experiences.

The gentleness of his sound is noticed right from the beginning with the opening song "Sounds Of The Day." His song-writing style draws similarities to Cat Stevens, where each artist would only use the minimal instrumentation to convey the song's meaning. Robins' song "Heroes" tells the story of soldiers returning home. He does it masterfully and with such heart and passion, which is hard to capture in song. Robins' songwriting rarely strays from the mellow acoustic background that only enhances his vocals on the songs "Pages Of My Life" and "If I Could Be There." Robins' does plug-in for a couple songs, the up-tempo rocker "Walk Away" and the patriotic "Morning In America." But, his strength lies in his folk-style storytelling as in "Just What I Needed" and "Angel."



More about Gregg Robins and his debut CD:

With plain-spoken, emotive lyrics and unexpected instrumentation, singer-songwriter **Gregg Robins** crafts a heartfelt debut CD dedicated to his three daughters. Robins, a Bronx transplant living in Russia, builds engaging songs that are direct and conversational in tone, many driven by the pain of a broken marriage, the estrangement from and ultimate reconciliation with his daughters, and the hope of finding new love. On 'Everything That Matters', Robins' understated delivery is often juxtaposed by lush instrumentation, ranging from strings to klezmer-infused solos to songs that

suggest a Native American rhythmic undertone, and more. Visit www.greggrobins.com for audio samples and additional information. Listen to Robins discussing the evolution of the CD, via this expansive podcast: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDgWTc58Rjc>.

There's an emotional integrity to the music that is reflective of the subject matter, as Robins suggests in his song notes, below. Highlights include the rich and winning track 'If I Could Be There,' the ironically titled 'Angel', and a Russian-language version of the song 'Pages of My Life'. There is also a pair of tracks, 'Morning in America' and 'Heroes',

which convey Robins' patriotism from abroad. 'Morning in America' focuses on the 2008 presidential election, and 'Heroes' shines a light on our men and women in the military.

The Production Team for the album includes:

David Hadzis of Arthanor is the Producer, with Gregg Robins as co-Producer. Since the mid-80's, Hadzis has been involved in the production of over one hundred record releases in Europe, the U.S., Canada and Australia. **Yvan Bing** of Kitchen Studio is the Mixing Engineer. He studied audio engineering at Berklee Music College in New York and was the main engineer at Dinemec Studios in Geneva. He has worked with **Phil Collins**, including on his last album. **Greg Calbi** of Sterling Sound is the Mastering Engineer. He has mastered at the highest level for decades, including **Bruce Springsteen's** "Born to Run" and **Paul Simon's** "Graceland."

More about HonorVet.org:

HonorVet.org is a non-partisan, registered 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization devoted to giving back to the men and women who have dedicated their lives to serving our country. HonorVet.org provides transitional, psychological, spiritual, educational, and career support using an interactive-community to serve veterans, service members and their families in a safe and trusted environment. Learn more about HonorVet, the 'next generation community for veterans,' here: <http://honorvet.org/>.

For more information about Gregg Robins, to set an interview, or for a review copy of his debut CD, contact sethcohenpr@earthlink.net