

Livan's happy returns

The album "Happy Returns" was digitally released on the 15th of September. The name of the artist who created it is Livan, the shortened version of his father's last name "Livanos", a Greek politician who helped Greece get rid of the military coup and later played a leading role in Greek politics.



Livan has received some early comparisons to famed U.K. punk Billy Idol for his new album, and his story is a hard one. In his youth, he chose to run from the challenge of coming from a powerful, political family rather than embrace it. "When you grow up with those people in your house, you wonder how the hell you're going to top that. I was crap at everything, so I thought that if I couldn't be good at being good, I would try being good at being bad." His descent into drugs, alcohol, gambling, and other undesirable activities brought Livan face to face with his own mortality. He found himself in prison and, later, addicted to heroin, dying slowly in the ghettos of Athens and London. One day seeing clearly his self-destruction he decided that "life has to be better than this" and that was the point when he started creating music. With his hard work he is now "living his dream". We talked to him as he was preparing for his two shows in LA: one at the Viper Room and at the Whiskey a Go Go on the 20th and the 23rd of September, respectively.

Where are you originally from?

I am from Greece.

Where did you grow up?
Greece and the UK.

What is your family history/members? What part of Greece are they from?

My grandfather's name was and he was from Patra and my father's name was Dionisis Livanos and he was from Messolongi. Former Minister and European Union Parliamentarian Dionisis Livanos was born in 1934 in Athens and studied political and economic sciences in Athens, Thessaloniki and Oxford University. He was elected as a member of the parliament for Aitolokarnania with New Democracy in 1974, and re-elected in 1981 and 1985, when he became independent. He was elected European Union Parliamentarian with PASOK in 1989, while four years later he was appointed Minister of Tourism, holding the position for two years. My Brother is continuing the family involvement in Greek Politics to this day.

Why were they exiled?

My Grandfather was prime-minister of Greece at the time and was overthrown by a fascist

military coup in 1967. My Father was heavily involved with the resistance movement and got arrested, heavily tortured and then exiled to Parga which is a Greek island.

On your website you state that "you did not want to embrace the challenge of becoming better than your family members". How high are you aiming now with your album release?

That's a difficult one. Realistically, I'm hoping that this album will introduce my work and give me my first US audience, anything more would be a bonus. But you never know. You've got to shoot for the stars and maybe you'll get there, right?

Do you think that growing up in Athens shaped your music in a certain way.

Surely. I grew up in a charged environment both from a family and social aspect. Greece is a country second to none but full of controversy and psycho-social imbalance. I witnessed and lived with every walk of life in Greece. So, yes most definitely my lyrics are hugely influenced by my experiences.

Do you think that drugs help

inspiration for music? Did they help you?

No. Not at all.

Is it true that best music comes out of hardships?

I don't know about the best, but surely music that makes you feel.

What is the word that most characterizes your music?

On this last record I would say satyr/sarcasm.

On your album you play all your instruments. Which one is your favorite?

Probably the piano.

Do you think that rich or famous kids get addicted to drugs easier? Why?

No I don't. If you are asking me from a personal point of view I wouldn't know as I was neither rich nor famous. I can say with certainty though that addiction knows no boundaries and it will take you down, whoever you are whatever you do or do not have. It's a killer man, and a very underestimated one, especially in Greece.

What was the incident that made you strong enough to quit drugs?

Look, I don't consider quitting drugs an achievement as all I did was stop doing what I shouldn't have been doing in the first place, but I think what kept me going was hope that tomorrow was going to be a better day. Also my family!

Have you thought of crossing the Atlantic and coming to live in the US?

Yes, in fact I'm in the USA as we speak. It all depends on the circumstances and the timing.

Would you like the idea of becoming a politician yourself?
Never in a million years!!!

Is there any Greek aspect to your music?

Not really. I am Greek and proud of it but I'm also a Londoner and my musical influence derives from the heart of the London punk scene.

A political aspect?

Yes, absolutely. A lot of my lyrical content is politically charged. I said before I didn't want to be a politician but I strongly believe people should have political opinions otherwise you're not exercising the biggest gift given to man: freedom.

Philip Tsiaras International artist working in various media



Philip Tsiaras is an international artist of Greek origin who lives and works in New York City. Since 1974 he made more than 75 one-person exhibitions including: Seattle Museum of Art, The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessalonica, Mannheimer Kunstverien, Mannheim, Bernier Gallery, Athens, Studio Palazzoli, Milan, Shea & Beker Gallery, New York: Margulies/Taplin Gallery. Miami, Tegnerforbundet Gallery. Oslo, Museum Santa Apollonia, Venice, Gallerie Dominion, Montreal, Swank/The Regency-Intercontinental, Hong Kong, Newport Art Museum, R.I.,

Villa Reale, Monza, The Currier Museum, N.H., Spazio Cavallieri di Malta, Syracuse, Pinakotech of the Cyclades, Syros, International Contemporary Art Fair, Istanbul. Tsiaras works in a great range of media—painting, photography, glass, ceramic, and bronze. He has exhibited in the Venice Biennale three times and produced a ten foot bronze sculpture on the Grand Canal entitled "Social Climber". Philip Tsiaras has been the recipient of many national prizes: The American Academy Award for Poetry, The Thomas Watson Fellowship, New York State C.A.P.S grant, two

N.E.A. National Endowment Grants for Arts, nomination for the Blickle Stiftung International Photography Prize, Germany and The Generali Assicurazioni Gold Metal Award for "Civilita" Venice.

Philip Tsiaras' works are widely collected in corporate, private and important museum collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Fifteen books and catalogues are attributed to his work, most notably monographs published by both Electa and Mondadori books, recently a book of photographs entitled, "Family Album" published by Contrasto, Rome.