



It was earlier this year that Steve Clark joined the fan club and as he lives only about 10 kms from me it was inevitable that we would meet up at some stage. When we did meet up Steve wanted to know if there were likely to be any more concert tours by Ray and if so would I inform him immediately as he would seriously consider going to one. I then made rather a rash statement saying that if Ray toured Brazil again I would give that consideration also. Well, in early August I received the news that a tour was being considered and told Steve straight away and as soon as I had some confirmed dates we both started to get dates sorted for leave from work, flight availability etc. I was not going to work out that I could make the same dates and venue as Steve. He would be going to Rio de Janeiro for the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September and I would be going to São Paulo for the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. Obtaining tickets for São Paulo concerts turned out to not be a problem due to the kindness of Elias Ramos Gaia, but tickets for Rio concerts were different, in fact I was unable to get tickets for this venue before Steve left for Brazil.

On Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> at 2200 hrs I left London airport and after an eleven hour flight I arrived at São Paulo to catch a bus to the centre, check in at the hotel, where I was to meet Jürgen Klaus and join him at the breakfast table. Jürgen could tell me that he had seen the new CD "My Way" in a store just along the street and the price they were charging was about R\$ 5 cheaper than other stores. Also he had been in contact with Elias and that we would meet him at the Ibirapuera shopping centre at 1300 hrs that day. So we decided to visit this the record store before going to meet Elias. Straight away I could see that this store was different to any I had been in before. There were sealed boxes of CD's stacked everywhere, many of the shoppers had supermarket type trolleys and were piling them with CD's. The displays were not in order of type of music or artist but by record label. Jürgen took me to the display for PolyGram where he had seen 15 or 20 copies of "My Way" the previous day and there were none to be seen but there were still some copies of "I Love Movies" with the extra track from "Titanic".

So it was time to get the Metro and a bus to the shopping centre to meet Elias for lunch. It was enjoyable to meet Elias at last as I have been corresponding with him for some time. We all had a very enjoyable lunch and Elias could tell us that Steve had phoned him to say he was at the hotel back in São Paulo centre and that Angel was there, too. This came as a surprise to me as I understood Steve was leaving Brazil after the Rio performances. Elias could

also tell us that Ray was appearing on the Ana Maria Braga show that very afternoon. We discussed our plans for the rest of the day and agreed to meet up in the evening at the Hotel Sofitel. There we would meet Helmut Ihly another fan from Germany who would be going to the Saturday concert. Back to our hotels, on the way back to mine I noticed a television set on in a store and there on it was Ray. Should I stay and watch it or should I dash back to my room only five minutes away? It was a dash for the hotel to be greeted by Steve. Up to my room - only to find the programme had finished. Only hope Elias had managed to tape it as he said he would. Later Angel Infante from Venezuela joined us in the hotel lobby. It turned out Steve had had such a fantastic time in Rio that he rearranged things so that he could come to São Paulo. So we all went to the hotel Sofitel, there we chatted about our favourite subject, exchanged information and Jürgen delivered the latest copies of the newsletter to Elias, who was acting as guide and taxi driver and took us to a pizza restaurant where we spent an enjoyable evening together.

Saturday dawned, wall-to-wall sunshine and we were off to the hotel where Ray and the band were staying to meet Perry La Marca. Perry greeted all and suggested that we find a café or bar and take in the locality. Of course we had lots of questions for him about the tour and the orchestra. We had promised Elias that we would phone him and let him know what was happening with regard to the concerts so Perry suggested that we return to his hotel and phone Elias. As we all piled into the lift at the hotel to take us up with a porter and a couple of bags of laundry, the doors tried to close but could not do so on the first attempt, so they opened again and there standing waiting for the lift was Ray. Before we could say anything the doors closed again and we were going up. However, we had seen our idol!



*Jürgen, Elias, Michael, Steve, Angel*

So it was agreed that we would go back to our hotels and relax before getting ready for when Elias would collect us in his car and take us to the Olympia for the concerts. On our way back to the hotel we spotted some of those posters advertising the concerts at the Olympia and of course had to take some photos of these. The concerts will be described in a later part of this article.

Well, I have to admit to not getting a great deal of sleep that night because the proceedings that had taken place the previous evening were going through my brain again and again. Elias had suggested that a good place to visit on Sunday morning would be the street market on the *Avenue Paulista*, which we duly did. On one side of the Avenue were present day arts and crafts, many of them incorporat-



**TRIBUTO** Ray Conniff (foto) homenageia Frank Sinatra em shows hoje, às 19h30 e 22h30, e amanhã, às 18h e 21h, no Olympia (r. Clélia, 1.517, tel. 252-6255). Ingresso: R\$ 30 a R\$ 55

(↑ from *Folha de S. Paulo*, Sept. 12, 1998, *Especial*, p.4)

ing the famous gemstones of Brazil. On the other side were the antiques, something for everybody. We spent time in the *Parque Ten*. We enjoyed *Siqueira Compos* with a can of *Guananara* (a soft sparkling drink made from berries native to Brazil). On our stroll back I decided to get a few postcards to send to friends. It was while I was choosing the cards that I heard Steve exclaim, "I know that voice" only to look up and see Ray walking down the Avenue with some friends. We called out "Hi, Ray" and he stopped and chatted with us. We asked if we could have a photo taken with him and the reply was "of course". It turned out Ray was out to see if any of the CD stores had his new album in stock. We told him how much we enjoyed the concerts the previous evening and were looking forward to the ones tonight. Now when I tell you that São Paulo is the largest city in the Southern hemisphere with a population of over 15 million - was it just a coincidence that we should just bump into Ray like that?

Back to the hotels to prepare for two more concerts. This time Elias would take us to the Olympia theatre but not stay himself and would meet us after the concerts at the hotel where Ray was staying. We had a taxi for this trip and arrived at the hotel before Ray and the gang so we were able to say hello to them again. We waited for Perry to change and come out with us for a meal and chat. While we were waiting, Fred Cooper and Jerry White came along and had a chat about various musical topics including the band of Ted Heath. Perry came along and we went for a great evening. Then it was time for goodbyes and the realisation that all good things have to come to an end as the following day Steve, Angel and Jürgen would be making their way home.

### Those fantastic Concerts

The seating layout was different to what I have seen at a concert before as you sat at tables and could order drinks and snacks with waiter service. The only way to get a programme was to buy the CD "My Way". There were two concerts each evening with about a one-hour break between each. It proved to be a good move to get to the first concert on the Saturday evening early as Ray and the gang came on stage to do a small rehearsal, and he told the audience that were there that they were getting a bonus.

### The Programme

My Kind Of Town ("São Paulo" is) / The Second Time Around / New York, New York / The Way You Look Tonight / I've Got You Under My Skin / Paloma Blanca (Sing-along) / Somewhere My Love / My Heart Will Go On (Tamara on synthesizer, also the Singers sang part of this to demonstrate no lipsync) / The Lady is a Tramp / You Make Me Feel So Young / The Music of the Night (Stephanie Bennett, harp solo) / Unchained Melody / All the Way / Strangers In the Night / Pretty Woman / Besame Mucho / Green Eyes / La Mer (Ray said this was his favourite, most applause for this one at intro) / Let's Dance (Fred Cooper, clarinet solo) / Tico Tico (Perry La Marca, piano solo) Brazil / Encore: Love is a Many-Splendored Thing (a request at the first Saturday concert) / Mack the Knife / Cidade Maravilhosa (Singers wave Brazilian flags) / My Way (sung by Ray). [Not always in that order.]

In my opinion the group of musicians Ray had assembled for this tour must be the best he has had for many years and the presentation was superb. Oh, the choreography by Sandy Howell for the numbers *Pretty Woman* and *The Lady Is a Tramp* was fantastic.

The musicians are in place before the show starts and then Odilon Krambeck comes on and introduces the evening and Ray. The Singers run on stage in pairs (male, female) and start singing "My Kind of Town Sao Paulo is". The Singers formed into groups of male and female for *New York, New York* with Top Hats and Sticks. With "Paloma Blanca" Ray demanded audience participation, the room being split into two halves for a stereo effect. The shows varied a little in that the sequence was not always in the same order. Ray would ask at some stage for requests and most times a request would come up for something that was in the programme but at one show "Love Is A Many-Splendored Thing" was requested. Although this has not been practised (as I learnt later) they gave a very creditable performance. At every show Ray introduced the Singers by name and introduced the soloists, Stephanie Bennett (shown here with me) on Harp playing "Music of the Night" and on one occasion Ray asked Stephanie to lead off with the harp "Unchained Melody", Fred Cooper on clarinet playing "Let's Dance", Perry La Marca on piano playing "Tico Tico" and Dick Bogert, the sound engineer. Others to get a mention at one of the shows were Tamara on the Keyboard for her playing in "My Heart Will Go On" from *Titanic*. This was also the number Ray used to demonstrate that the chorus did in fact sing the words and that no recording material was used. Greg Turner had a mention on the guitar. At one show Ray announced that although we could see eight Singers on stage there were more, as Kathy Mann was pregnant! The show finished with "Brazil" with Ray leaping off stage and of course there was an immediate call for more. At one of the concerts the whole audience chanted in Portuguese "Why did you stop? Why did you stop?" Ray would return and introduce "Mack The Knife" followed by "Cidade



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# RAY CONNIFF Orquestra e Coral

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Maravilhosa” (Wonderful City, I think) with the Singers waving Brazilian flags, this had everyone singing and waving. The finale was a surprise to me as Ray started to sing “My Way” solo and really put his heart into it, he was later joined by the Singers. Ray then said his good-byes and left the stage while the orchestra continued playing under the direction of Perry. The Singers then moved forward and picked up some white roses that had been placed on the floor of the stage and threw them into the clapping and yelling audience. It was great to see Ray so full of energy and receiving the applause and credit that he deserves. The Brazilian audiences were so enthusiastic. Between each show Perry would get us backstage and we had a chance to meet Ray again. Tamara looked after us with food and drink as well as looking after her dad. I could not believe how relaxed Ray was, I guess he was pleased how the tour was going. Being backstage also gave us chance to talk to the Singers and members of the orchestra as well as having photos taken with them, I felt very privileged. After the last show of the evening Ray would go to a table and sign autographs for the many fans queuing up. Many just wanted to say thank you to their idol. On the Saturday evening I estimate there were between 300 and 400 in the queue and Ray dealt with everyone.

There are many people I need to thank for making this trip possible. My wife Sheila for allowing me to be away on our wedding anniversary. To Manfred, as without the fan club I may never have known about the tour. To Jürgen, Helmut, Angel and Steve for their

good company. To Perry La Marca for doing so much and spending time with us particularly as he had other commitments and he was suffering with a chest infection. Also to my ticket purchaser, guide, translator, taxi-driver and friend Elias, he simply could not have done more for us. And last, but not least thanks to Ray and the Gang for their kindness and hospitality.

-Michael Leach

Both ads on this page - found by Michael - are from a magazine titled *Veja São Paulo* (September 1998 edition, pages 59 and 62)

## Desta vez, ele ataca de Sinatra

Senhoras e senhores, ele está de volta! A bordo daquele coral inconfundível (pã-rã-pã-rã-rã-rã-rã-rã) e dos arranjos instrumentais dignos do melhor muzak, o maestro americano **Ray Conniff**, 81 anos, chega a São Paulo pela oitava vez. “Eu amo este lugar”, diz. O band-leader está em turnê por dez cidades brasileiras para promover seu 101º (!) disco, *My Way*, no qual presta um tributo a Frank Sinatra. “Ele é uma das minhas inspirações, assim como Tommy Dorsey, Louis Armstrong e Duke Ellington”, conta Conniff, que gravou standards imortalizados por “The Voice”, como *New York, New York*, *The Way You Look Tonight* e *I’ve Got You under My Skin*.

O show é calcado no repertório do CD, mas o veterano maestro promete não decepcionar os fãs. “Vou tocar também os hits que o público pede sempre, como *Paloma Blanca*, *Pretty Woman*, *Besame Mucho* e *Aquarela do Brasil*”, avisa. Ou seja—para o bem e para o mal, não haverá muita novidade. O Olympia vai virar um grande salão de baile ao som de canções conhecidas, interpretadas por aquele coro afinadinho e uma orquestra de 28 músicos.

É som para dançar de rosto colado. Foi com essa fórmula que o artista encontrou o sucesso há quase sessenta anos. “Faço música alegre, dançante e emocionante”, define.

MARCOS PINHO

**Ray Conniff - Orquestra e Coral.** 14 anos. **Olympia** (2 200 lugares). Rua Clélia, 1517, Lapa. ☎ 252-6255. Sábado (12), 19h30 e 22h30; domingo (13), 18h e 21 h. R\$ 35,00 a R\$ 55,00. Bilheteria: 10h/22h (seg. a dom.).

**Conniff: turnê para vender o 101º disco**

