

Contributors

Meet some of the talented people behind this month's issue



GAVIN MCOWAN

When the production editor for *The Guardian Travel* section told us he was "chained to the desk", we were almost ready to take pity on him. Then we discovered he's been to New Orleans ("Fabulous!") and Brazil this year alone. And his trip to Taroudant in Morocco, known as 'Little Marrakech' (see p66), and a stay at the world's best riad means he certainly won't get any sympathy from us.



SUSAN BURGHART

"There's nothing more invigorating than doing what you love," says this illustrator, whose work can be seen everywhere from McDonald's ad campaigns to the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*. She says creating a paper-doll illustration for our interview with Danish CEO Christian Stadil (p98) particularly sparked her imagination: "He's a very accomplished person".



TRISTAN RUTHERFORD

As a regular in the travel pages of *The Times* and *The Independent*, as well as a lecturer in travel journalism at London's Central Saint Martins, this is one writer who knows his beans. But even he was surprised to learn that Brits are the most common visitors to Berlin (a fact he puts down to the local beer). This was just a happy side-effect of his research into David Bowie's love affair with the city (p48).



REBECCA MILES

Obsessed with all things snow related since she was a kid, there are few people better qualified to tell you where to find the best backcountry bars or most perfect pistes. So this regular contributor to *Telegraph Ski and Snowboard* and *Daily Mail Ski and Snow*, was the ideal candidate to help us cherry pick the best snow-based happenings of the new ski season, on p36.

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**HE'S ARGUABLY BERLIN'S MOST FAMOUS
EX-RESIDENT - CERTAINLY AS AVANT-
GARDE MUSICIANS GO - BUT WHAT
IMPACT DID DAVID BOWIE HAVE ON THE
DIVIDED CITY? WE RETRACE HIS STEPS,
25 YEARS AFTER THE WALL CAME DOWN**



DID BOWIE BRING DOWN THE BERLIN WALL?

WORDS **TRISTAN RUTHERFORD**

FROM LEFT
Bowie's Berlin concert in 1987; the man himself at the Wall in the same year

SATURDAY 6 JUNE 1987, BERLIN.

Perched provocatively next to the city's infamous Wall, on the Cold War's bitterest frontline, the Platz der Republik rock festival is well under way when the British post-punk band New Model Army kick off their set with *My Country*. There are cheers from those who recognise this politically charged anthem of solidarity and by the time Eurythmics begin *Sexcrime (Nineteen Eighty-Four)*, the massed crowd is in a frenzy. But there's no doubt it's one particular ex-Berlin resident that fans on both sides of the Wall are really here to see.

Clad in a flowing pink suit, David Bowie descends spider-like to the open-air stage, suspended on a pink armchair. Wireless-microphone technology allows the then 40-year-old star to groove and leap with wild abandon, and his antics are beamed over the Berlin Wall on a giant video screen. Banks of speakers broadcast hits like *Big Brother* and *Let's Dance* across the divided city, and East Berliners shimmy under Stasi (state security forces) spotlights by the Brandenburg Gate a few hundred metres away.

All is going smoothly enough until Bowie reaches *Heroes*, the 15th track of his 26-song mega set, when the atmosphere ignites. The song was penned specifically about the Wall and the effect is immediate: fans in the east go wild and the police quickly spread out to contain them as the chant goes out, 'Tear down the Wall'.

At that moment, the cracks in the Berlin Wall, which finally fell 25 years ago this month, echoed across the world in one of the defining scenes of the 20th century. It was a point of triumph for the singer, who just a decade previously had arrived in Berlin seeking refuge, not revolution.

By 1976, the Thin White Duke looked gaunt, pallid and not particularly regal, the result of an alleged diet of red peppers,

hard drugs and milk. Bowie later described it as one of “the worst periods of life, lots of emotional and spiritual trouble...so I decided to split”. So that summer he joined legendary rock producers Brian Eno and Tony Visconti to record what would become his seminal Berlin Trilogy of albums and simply stayed on. That he chose to reside in a city more concerned with tens of thousands of occupying troops than a visiting rock star is telling.

With the anniversary of the Wall’s fall being celebrated in the city right now, I’m here to find out a little more about the influence Berlin had on Bowie and what impact his music had on this city in its last divided days.

Few people know more about his time here than Thilo Schmied. A Bowie aficionado, Schmied has been running tours (*musictours-berlin.com*) that follow in the tracks of the rock star for nine years, and we’re currently on one, walking ‘round the famed Hansa Studios. Rock legends from Depeche Mode to the Manic Street Preachers – and from Boney M to David Hasselhoff – recorded hits here, and you can still picture how the no-man’s land surrounding the studio, just 150m from the East/West frontier, suited the musician’s pensive mood. Bowie could compose his musical thoughts in peace as he wandered alongside the Wall.

The albums *Low* and *Heroes* were recorded in Hansa’s glitzy main recording room. Remixing was done in the adjoining Studio 2. Here, the sound desks and amps overlooked the



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE the piano Bowie played in Hansa’s Studio 2; the Hansa Studios; Checkpoint Charlie, 1976; the Wall and TV Tower from West Berlin 1977; Bowie at the Hansa Studios with King Crimson guitarist Robert Fripp and producer/songwriter Brian Eno during the recording of the album *Heroes* in 1977

Wall’s watchtowers. East German border guards had no choice but to preview the latest capitalist rock before it hit general release.

Schmied has interviewed several hundred people for his Bowie tours, and anecdotes come thick and fast as we head into Osteria Caruso underneath Hansa Studios, where Bowie and dozens of other rock stars ate, drank and partied. “When he stopped in a record shop to buy Kraftwerk or Tangerine Dream,” says Schmied, “West Berliners would dive in demanding to purchase the same.”

And, while the singer was undoubtedly having an impact on the city, it was rubbing off on him too, not least in the way the synth-





PHOTOS CORBIS, JEAN GAUMY/MAGNUM PHOTO, GETTY, MEISEL MUSIKVERLAG BERLIN

“WHEN HE STOPPED IN A RECORD SHOP FOR KRAFTWERK OR TANGERINE DREAM, WEST BERLINERS WOULD DIVE IN DEMANDING TO BUY THE SAME”

heavy ‘Krautrock’ bands influenced Bowie’s late 70s look and feel. His producer Brian Eno came fresh from working with electro supergroup Harmonia, whose members included veterans from ambient outfit Cluster and Kraftwerk offshoot Neu! This scene’s stylised, suit-clad personas were aped by the Brits: when Bowie played *Sense of Doubt* from the album *Heroes* live on German TV show *Musikladen Extra*, for instance, he began with an electro-tinged intro, then fell into a keyboard frenzy, then grooved robotically like a digital doll before the camera.

“I hold the same opinion as Günter Grass,” Bowie told *Vogue* magazine at the time. “That Berlin is at the centre of everything that is happening and will happen in Europe over the next few years.”

As a Brit, Bowie could easily travel to East Berlin through Checkpoint Charlie, although few recognised him outside his stage persona. That Ziggy

Stardust face-paint would surely have raised eyebrows in the socialist zone. Older East Berliners, like Schmied’s grandparents, were permitted to make day trips in the other direction and some GDR citizens raised eyebrows there too. “I sent my granny to hip music stores to ask for Nick Cave,” remembers Schmied. “What must they have thought?”

So, did rock music really crack the Berlin Wall? I walk to the most decorative section of the former divide a few days later. At the East Side Gallery, 118 artists have made a mockery of the former police state, with murals of Trabants, the half-plastic, smoke-belching national car, bursting through the Wall. The best-known artwork shows East German boss Erich Honecker snogging Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. It was Honecker who allegedly gave his border guards the infamous ‘order to fire’ – permission to shoot their fleeing citizens. Such drastic measures worked. Before the Wall was erected, some 20% of East Germans deserted the GDR. After the Wall, only a trickle escaped.

Here I discuss pop and politics with Martin Wollenberg. This West Berliner now runs Berlin on Bike (berlinonbike.de) tours of the former Berlin Wall. “Of course, getting rid of political pressure was an important point,” he says. By the time the Wall came down, one in every 63 people was a Stasi agent; up to one in five was an informer. The levels of recorded intrusion rendered their work the largest surveillance operation on a state’s own people in the history of the world.

“But Western youth culture was very important, especially to the young people in East Germany,” Wollenberg continues. “From Western TV [which most Berliners could tune into], they

saw exotic destinations for travelling, shiny cars, modern private homes and so on.” In 1989, 650,000 East Germans holidayed in socialist Czechoslovakia. Only 1,300 visited Cuba.

East German authorities fought a specific battle against Western pop music. Walter Ulbricht - the East German leader who presided over the building of the Wall - said: “I am convinced, comrades, that we should put an end to the monotony of this ‘yeah, yeah, yeah.’” But radio waves beamed Bowie and his ilk across the nation to influence impressionable teenagers. The GDR battled back with their own DJs. “The discotheques had to play at least 60% East German music,” recalls Wollenberg, “but the other 40% could be Western hits.” So the best parties would play GDR staples, like Dean Reed (the ‘Red Elvis’), before spinning Bruce Springsteen later celebrating the messages of freedom and liberty that these artists espoused. By the time of Bowie’s 1987 concert this clamour was at a fever pitch and you could say his performance represented a tipping point. It lit the touch paper on a series of demos that didn’t stop until those epoch-making events of November 1989.

Of course, pop culture was only one of the contributing agents of the Wall’s ultimate fall, but what’s undeniable is that the anything-goes spirit of creativity that Bowie fed off when he was in Berlin remains today. Kreuzberg, Berlin’s most artistic hub, is now just 10 minutes on the U-Bahn from Warschauer Strasse, as opposed to several hours 25 years ago, when the authorities snipped metro services beneath the divided city. American candy, Polish advertisements and Chinese tourists have colonised the run-down wasteland of the 1980s, but you still get a sense of the buzz.

My first stop is music club SO36. Bowie partied with Iggy Pop in its sweaty confines and one of the stars nearly came to grief courtesy of a rotating electric drill, which was wielded on stage by a punk-metal outfit. There’s now a Turkish prayer hall next door and Fenerbahçe flags flying above. Around the corner Bowie frequented Café Exil. Today, it’s a fancy French restaurant called the Hováth, rated not by rockers but the Michelin guide. Few on these streets recall the 67-year-old musician.

Bowie’s nearby former home, at 155 Hauptstrasse, provides better insight. It’s Germany’s Abbey Road, with fans taking Samsung Twitpics outside. For 500 Deutsch marks per month, Bowie rented the six-room apartment, while his son, Zowie, attended the



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Bowie in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, 1976; his Berlin Trilogy albums: *Low*, 1977; *Heroes*, 1977; and *Lodger*, 1979



“THE DISCOS HAD TO PLAY AT LEAST 60% EAST GERMAN MUSIC, BUT THE OTHER 40% COULD BE WESTERN HITS”

British Forces school. His housemate, Iggy Pop, had the hygiene levels of a college student. One producer called in to find the American soiled and starving. All there was in the fridge was a solitary carrot. He was eventually turfed out into a rear-garden flat.

On Schmied's recommendation, my final stop-off is Neues Ufer, a gay-friendly bar on Hauptstrasse. Bowie is warmly remembered here as a regular. He even paid for the window to be fixed when it was smashed by a mob in less tolerant times. As ever, the star acted a transcendently unapproachable role. He would order cappuccino (the café, then called Anderes Ufer, had one of the city's few Italian coffee machines) while ostentatiously reading a Berlin newspaper and smoking an unlit pipe. Iggy Pop, sitting beside him, would don reading spectacles to look like an intellectual, even though his eyesight was perfect.

For Bowie, playing the introverted musician was just another of the roles he's inhabited over the years, from Major Tom to the Thin White Duke, but what he may not have realised is the impact he would have on Berlin – not least on that Saturday evening in 1987, as the echoes of *Heroes* carried across the divide, uniting a fractured city. A week later, Ronald Reagan told the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to, "Tear down this Wall". The seeds had been sown.

"BOWIE'S CONCERT LIT THE TOUCH PAPER ON A SERIES OF DEMOS THAT DIDN'T STOP UNTIL THOSE EPOCH-MAKING EVENTS OF NOVEMBER 1989"



DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

David Hasselhoff starred in *Knight Rider* and *Baywatch*, two of the most exported shows of the 1980s and 90s. No joke: his worldwide appeal made him the David Beckham of his day. Unwittingly, his hit *Looking for Freedom*, recorded in West Berlin's Hansa Studios, was the chart-topping anthem of German reunification.

The Hoff sang the track live atop the Berlin Wall on New Year's Eve 1989, while wearing a strobe-effect leather jacket. Both sides of the Wall went wild – but not everyone was amused by his 'I smashed the Wall' strut. YouTube footage shows revellers aiming firecrackers at Hasselhoff's mullet, with one zipping past his ear at 3m 22s.

That said, Hasselhoff remains ever popular in Berlin. He flew in to lead protests against the partial demolition of the East Side Gallery, a mural-covered section of Wall, in March of last year. He's also recorded a new version of *Looking for Freedom* at Hansa in time for the 25th anniversary commemorations – so be ready!

For a complete rundown of commemorative events, see visitberlin.de

*FOR TBGS SEE PAGE 147. PHOTO EYEVINE, GETTY



David Bowie in a Berlin hotel room, 1983

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