

Episode 31_Virtual Music transcript

Intro [00:00:02] Hello and welcome to the English Waffle, a podcast aimed at advanced English language learners who want to improve their listening skills by listening to real conversations. My name's Owain and in each episode, Mike and I do a bit of waffling about a particular topic. This episode is an interview and is dedicated to the topic of music. I talk to my friend Mike MacDonald about his projects and how we can watch live music even while you're stuck at home. We talk about creating, playing and listening to music virtually, which has really taken off during lockdown. Make sure you listen right to the end for a music related surprise. I'll also make a comment or two about this particular episode and the series of episodes about how to use the English waffle. So without further ado, I hope you enjoy the conversation. And let's get waffling.

Music [00:01:03] Welcome to The English waffle where we talk about random stuff. We'll take you on a journey where you'll find out soon enough. Why listening to the waffle is an entertaining way of sharing with you foreigners the things that British people say. So join us on the waffle and strap yourself in for ten whole earthly minutes of English listening.

Owain [00:01:33] Welcome to The English Waffle. Today we have another guest. And I'll just say a couple of words about about Mike. Um, he's Scottish, long term resident of, er, Plaza Mayor in Madrid. Is that right, Mike, yeah?

Mike [00:01:49] Yeah, that's right, yeah.

Owain [00:01:51] Dedicated teacher...

Mike [00:01:53] I am yes.

Owain [00:01:54] ...of many things.

Mike [00:01:55] Yes.

Owain [00:01:55] Mesmerizing musical talent, um, um, prolific songwriter, mega party host, all around great guy, right. I mean, it's er...

Mike [00:02:07] Thank you very much.

Owain [00:02:09] It's a, it's a pleasure to have you on...on The English waffle and it's been a while since we spoke last. How are things...how are things going there in madrid at the moment?

Mike [00:02:17] Fantastic. We're just in the middle of the lockdown. So today we managed to...to get out. So after seven weeks. So, yeah, it's been a very interesting time. Erm, but yeah great, we're very well.

Owain [00:02:28] So that's the first time you [ve] been out in seven weeks?

Mike [00:02:31] Yeah, that's right. So I've been incarcerated with my my still relatively new wife and we haven't killed each other. That's that's...that's,er, good.

Mike [00:02:44] And yes. So seven weeks teaching online and...

Owain [00:02:49] Ok, yeah.

Mike [00:02:49] Doing a lot of stuff catching up on all those books you haven't read and all those things you haven't filed so, yeah [it's been great].

Owain [00:02:55] Yeah. Okay. Yeah. And and you know, trying to stay sane more or less. Ha...any, any, have you got any particular tips, any new hobbies, you've started anything like that.

Mike [00:03:07] Erm, it's it's funny, actually, I had to write an article recently. Erm, I do...do some some blog writing for...for some companies and the last one I had to write was about routine and about having routines during [a] time like this. And er...

Owain [00:03:19] Right.

Mike [00:03:21] ...f...with a, with a view to kind of keeping you sane. And I...I recommended going to bed at the s...the same time every day, waking, you know...

Owain [00:03:28] Ah ok, ok.

Mike [00:03:28] Waking you up at the same time, which is really useful.

Owain [00:03:31] OK, yep.

Mike [00:03:32] You know, doing about sports or practicing an instrument or something like that.

Owain [00:03:35] Yeah.

Mike [00:03:35] So, you know, I've been trying my best to...to actually practise what I preach, but...

Owain [00:03:39] To follow your own advice, yeah.

Mike [00:03:41] Yeah, but it's hard after so long, you kind of find yourself putting five minutes on the alarm clock every morning and...and springing out of bed and doing your first classes in your pyjamas so.

Owain [00:03:50] Yeah, and and do you kind of lose tra...lose track of the days, I mean, [do you...?]

Mike [00:03:53] Yeah, well school helps a lot to...

Owain [00:03:54] Yeah true.

Mike [00:03:55] ...to try and keep it. Keep it real, but...But we had the Easter holidays recently so, yeah, I really didn't know what day it was, to be honest, like. Whether it was Wednesday or Friday, and it comes to Friday and a part from a few things, kinda, that a few friends do on the Net every every week there's nothing to mark it buy, so. Yeah. Yeah.

Owain [00:04:15] Yeah.

Mike [00:04:15] All good, all good.

Owain [00:04:16] Yeah. All right, well, an...and, um, one of the things I've noticed recently is that I...I've seen you doing are various things on Facebook, live feeds of concerts, right? Because you're a...you're a musician. And so I wanted to ask you about a couple of things. So, basically, you're...what you're doing at the moment terms music,um...And actually, as I understand it, you your situation, you've got a band and -well a few bands nor...normally - but...

Mike [00:04:45] I do, yeah.

Owain [00:04:46] ...er a particular band and you kind of kind of are already pretty well set up for for this situation.

Mike [00:04:54] Yeah. Well well I play in a band called Dapper. My my main band. And erm, so I used to play with a guitarist about 20 odd years ago - I'm showing my age now - erm, a guitarist called Gary White, erm back in Glasgow where I'm from. And then I left and I went away to university and I went down to to England and stayed down there for about 10 years and was always promising to go back and and have a band with Gary who's a fantastic guitarist, became a fantastic singer and now is...is a of a celebrity in the Glasgow music scene. Erm, really, I...a very, very, very good gigging musician, fantastic singer or frontman, electric guitarist. So then I moved to Spain, so it...it became even less possible than it was previously. But we kind of got to a point where we said, if we don't do this band now, we're never going to do it.

Owain [00:05:52] Yeah.

Mike [00:05:52] So we decided to use technology and we we wrote and recorded our first album over the Internet or, you know, meeting online very similar to like a Zoom call type thing, but maybe Skype and...

Owain [00:06:09] Yeah.

Mike [00:06:09] Sending CDs to each other, erm, then technology kinda caught up and we recorded everything in our in our own houses, erm, even like, we we recruited some other members of the band that I would rehearse with in Madrid.

Owain [00:06:23] Yeah, yeah.

Mike [00:06:23] And then, erm, and then we'd, we'd go off and record our individual parts and then put them all together. I would mix them. We got them finished professionally. So basically we've had kind of a a band that meet online and have done all our work on land for about the last three years.

Owain [00:06:42] Right.

Mike [00:06:43] Erm, so when when the...when the kind of lockdown happened.

Owain [00:06:47] Yeah.

Mike [00:06:48] And really, I think it was Gary's idea to begin with. Gary started doing a concert once a week.

Owain [00:06:53] Right.

Mike [00:06:54] Erm, just him in his, in his his, er, in his studio. He's really playing for for friends and family.

Owain [00:07:01] Yeah.

Mike [00:07:01] To try and keep people's spirits up.

Owain [00:07:01] Yeah.

Mike [00:07:03] And it's developed into something quite, quite amazing. So if he does something called the Isolation...Isolation Sessions, erm, and he broadcasts it on Facebook and a couple of other websites,.

Owain [00:07:15] Ok.

Mike [00:07:15] And, er, yeah, it's incredible [and so...].

Owain [00:07:17] And it's just him him there him there at home playing his guitar...

Mike [00:07:20] Yep, playing his guitar, singing along. Plays a bit of piano and things as well. Erm, and he kinda threw it out there and said, well, why don't you do one? And of course, then then the challenge was was laid down. So I had do it. So I...and I loved that as well. So. Yeah. So I[ve] been doing...I did my first one two weeks ago and got another one on the tenth of May.

Owain [00:07:44] Ok. What...what kind of music are you playing?

Mike [00:07:46] Well, I with Dapper are a kind of blues revival band erm...But I, erm, have always been a classical guitarist, so to play by myself, it's my best that I don't sing, you know.

Owain [00:08:00] Right. Just just just in general, right?

Mike [00:08:02] Just in general, yeah, yeah, [that's it] no one's going want to see that. So I write a lot of songs, but I'm not really a singer. So for me the way to perform by myself is on the classical guitar. And coming from, you know, it being beamed out from the centre of Spain is, you know, the reason I came here was because of music. So, it shows people what I've been doing and the type of music that I play. And yeah it's...it went down pretty well. People seemed to enjoy it. So I [going to do it again].

Owain [00:08:30] It's it's a strange new situation where people are kind of sitting down on a...on a Friday evening to watch a concert online, erm...I mean, it's not the same, obviously. But do you think people get the same kind of enjoyment out of it as as actually going to a concert?

Mike [00:08:46] I...I really, I'm surprised by how much I enjoy watching other people play online.

Owain [00:08:51] Right.

Mike [00:08:52] Because I always thought it would be a bit sterile. And you know what? But, you know, you're sitting there on your own couch. Nowadays, you can have a nice sound system. People have been telling me that they beam it to their TV and they're sitting with their with their carry out having a couple of beers and some food.

Owain [00:09:09] Right.

Mike [00:09:10] And they're watching good...you know, it depends what you watch there's there's good streams and there's...

Owain [00:09:15] Yeah.

Mike [00:09:16] And there's one that is not so good as well. But I think especially at this time, it's more about the community spirit.

Owain [00:09:21] Sure.

Mike [00:09:21] And it's more about allowing people to...to feel, you know, I'm sitting there watching Gary, for example, and down in the in the feed, I can see lots of friends and people that I haven't seen for years, and especially for me not living in Glasgow anymore. There's friends that, you know, I know from from from London or from Cambridge, who'll come on to see Gary...

Owain [00:09:42] Right.

Mike [00:09:43] ...who are kind of friends through me. And, you know, just send a little message to them. [inaudible] I haven't seen you for a long time. How are you doing? It's fantastic. And it really does make you feel that you've you've got together with a group of friends.

Owain [00:09:56] Right. Right. I mean, Mike, I'm at some point in this conversation, I think we we discussed it would be nice to have a little bit of music on so people can kind of hear, on the one hand, what you do with the band. You know, the kind of music you do.

Mike [00:10:09] Yeah.

Owain [00:10:09] So I think maybe now and in the podcast, in this conversation that be a good time for a bit of music. And then when we come back, perhaps you could tell us a little bit about these these concerts you've got coming up, how it's going to work, what I need to do in order to to [to get on]. So, let's let's just have a break for a bit of music and then we'll come back.

[Circumstance by Dapper]

Owain [00:14:50] Ok. That was brilliant, Mike, nice! Nice stuff!

Mike [00:14:53] Ok, that...that song was called Circumstance. That's the first song...

Owain [00:14:55] Right.

Mike [00:14:57] ...on our first album.

Owain [00:14:58] Nice. Nice. Yeah, yeah, love it. I remember I remember listening to that for the first time, probably in your flat. You always used to put all your new sounds and the recordings you'd done.

Mike [00:15:06] And force you to listen to them. Look what I've done!

Owain [00:15:10] Yeah, every time I walked in the door, it was like, oh come come and see this. Come and listen to this. Yeah, oh no, it's brilliant, brilliant. So that's that's the bands. So Mike, could you just just tell us when is this next concert and what do I need to do to be able to watch you?

Mike [00:15:25] Right, well, as I said, the singer from Dapper that you just heard, Gary White, does a concert every, er, every Friday. And I'd recommend that anybody goes along and has a listen to that. So you'll find it on Gary White on Facebook, erm, or The Quadrophenia Project, as in Quadrophenia, the album from the Who, 'cause Gary also sings in a...a Quadrophenia...

Owain [00:15:48] Yeah.

Mike [00:15:49] Erm, a Who tribute band that [played the Quadrophenia album].

Owain [00:15:52] Yeah, I've seen that one. Yeah, yeah.

Mike [00:15:54] Yeah, yeah. Erm, or you can also find it on Avra, erm, Productions.

Owain [00:16:00] Okay.

Mike [00:16:01] A-v-r-a...Productions, erm, and I'd checked out and on all those same sites plus my own Facebook site, which [you want / 'll be]: Michael John MacDonald, erm, on the Sunday. I'm gonna be doing another classical concert, but this time I'm gonna invite Gary to come and join me. And Gary's gonna do a couple of, er, songs with me. We're going to do a couple of Dapper songs.

Owain [00:16:22] Right, right.

Mike [00:16:22] We'll do a couple of requests for some covers. So we might do a couple of covers as well. So it's gonna be about the mix this time...as as well as the normal classical stuff that I do.

Owain [00:16:32] Ok, brilliant, well I'll...I'll be there, Mike. I'm gonna...

Mike [00:16:35] Oh fantastic! I'll be looking out for you.

Owain [00:16:35] I'm gonna go and have a listen. Have...haven't attended one yet. But this this is this is this is the time.

Mike [00:16:41] This is the one. Excellent.

Owain [00:16:42] Yeah. And I suppose kind of just the last question. How how how do your neighbours feel about all all of this? You know, your...

Mike [00:16:49] My neighbours, my neighbours love music. I'm confident that my neighbours love music.

Owain [00:16:56] Yeah. 'Cause, er, you live right in the centre of, er, Madrid, er, you're surrounded by people, um...

Mike [00:17:02] Yeah. Well, to be honest, like we we live in these in these really, really old flats, like this flats kind of three hundred and fifty years old.

Owain [00:17:08] Wow!

Mike [00:17:09] And the walls, the walls are so thick. There w..., you know, three or four foot thick. And I think most of the people that live here are kind of young people, to be honest.

Owain [00:17:19] Ah ok, ok.

Mike [00:17:20] I live in an apartment that doesn't have an elevator. So if you're going to living in the fourth floor, which is just below me, then you have to be young enough to walk up all the stairs.

Owain [00:17:30] That's true.

Mike [00:17:30] And they they they honestly don't seem to mind. So I...sometimes, er, after a late night recording session, I see...I get some strange looks as I walk past them. But, yeah, I think they love it.

Owain [00:17:42] Well now maybe they'll be tuning in.

Mike [00:17:44] That's it yeah.

Owain [00:17:45] At the weekend yeah.

Mike [00:17:46] And they can...they can hear the background noise.

Owain [00:17:49] All right Mike, well, we we'd better wrap it up. We're coming towards the end of our 10 minutes. Um, great to speak to you. Thanks a lot [for coming on].

Mike [00:17:55] Thank you for inviting me on it's been a real pleasure.

Owain [00:17:58] No, no worries. And everybody out there, thanks, thanks for listening. And, um, I'll see you at the concert.

Mike [00:18:05] See you at the concert.

[Waffle Variations by The English Waffle Virtual Orchestra]