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The Saw Doctors and Waterboys Team Up

By Layli Foroudi

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Thistlethwaite and Moran playing a delicate and intimate set for their fans.

Anthony Thistlethwaite's last visit to Russia was a holiday in 1995 that saw him accidentally meet and jam with Boris Grebenshchikov, the legendary singer from the group Akvarium and the grandfather of Russian rock.

This time Thistlethwaite, a founding member of British Celtic folk and rock group The Waterboys is in Russia with Leo Moran, the lead singer of Irish folk band The Saw Doctors, on a mini tour as Leo & Anto that will see the old friends sing songs, tell jokes and have some banter with audiences across the country.

Thistlethwaite and Moran first met in a hotel on the blustery western coastline of Ireland, when Thistlethwaite started playing saxophone from the crowd at an event where Moran was performing.

"He came in with his sax and sat in an all-day session that became an all-night one as well," Moran told The Moscow Times in a Skype interview from Ireland.

The two groups the pair hail from — The Waterboys, best known for their hit single "The Whole of the Moon," and The Saw Doctors, best known for "I Used to Love Her," which is also Ireland's best-selling single — have a long history of working together.

The Waterboys took a shine to The Saw Doctors at the start of their career in the late 1980s and took them on as a support act, helping propel them to fame. Thistlethwaite, who played saxophone, mandolin, the harmonica and other instruments with The Waterboys, played bass for The Saw Doctors and toured with them.

Thistlethwaite said he was excited to come back to Russia after so many years. "I think everything will have changed, it could be quite a different country," he said.

Thistlethwaite's holiday in Russia in the 1990s led to another chance encounter and him appearing on stage with some of Russia's top musicians.

Thistlethwaite bumped into Vadim Kurylyov, who invited him to rehearse with his group DDT. They ended up touring together, performing in Vitebsk, Ufa and St. Petersburg.

It was then that he met Grebenshchikov — described by some as "the Russian Bob Dylan" — and his group Akvarium.

Thistlethwaite also said that he once spent the night jamming with Bob Dylan, but said he'd save that story for the show.

Thistlethwaite's stay in Russia ended up with him recording songs with the likes of DDT lead singer Yury Shevchuk for his album "Crawfish and Caviar" at the Melodia recording studio.

This time things are more organized. Moran said the gigs in Russia will be more "like a theatre show than a rock gig."

It is a relaxed evening, said Moran, with story telling and singing of a mixture of familiar and lesser known songs. One song they sometimes sing is "I'm Never Going on Facebook Again."

"It is nothing like The Saw Doctors, which is a full rock band. We have rearranged songs for a more delicate and intimate set," Thistlethwaite said.

"We like it to be spontaneous each night and we try and allow whatever happens to happen," Moran said.

Leo & Anto will perform Saturday at 8 p.m. Doolin House Irish Pub. 20 Arbat. Metro Arbatskaya. Tel. 495-695-9206. Sunday at 9 p.m. Masterskaya Club. 3 Teatralny Proezd, building 3. Metro Teatralnaya. 495-625-6836.

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