

KITS Radio Interview

"Alex in the Morning on Live 105" in San Francisco - March 1996

Interview: Alex Bennett

Submitted to the Shrine by Hagenpaws

They discuss a cabaret show Nina was doing called "Hanussen":

Alex Bennett - Now...always looking like a million bucks at 9:25 in the morning
- I don't know how you do it.

Nina Hagen - Well, it took me ages. I went to bed at 3 o'clock at night cause
I'm doing two shows in this city lately...

AB - and then you got up...

NH - I got up very 'oily'...and put on my makeup. There you go. Otherwise I
would look like David Bowie.

AB - Do you have, like, a thing where you just stamp it right on or something?

NH - Doesn't work like that Alex.

AB - Ladies and Gentleman, Nina Hagen is with us!

(Applause)

AB - Wouldn't it be great if they had, like, this thing where you just put your
face in it and you come out and you would be all made up?

NH - It would be fabulous. It would be worth an invention.

Lori Thompson (co-host) - Like the Shroud of Turin in reverse - kind of.

AB - Because you can't just come to something like this right out of bed. You
have to come looking like Nina Hagen.

NH - Exactly, because, ahh, like I am a very important person...like a VIP,
kind of, and I have to show this in my face otherwise no one will even look at
me.

AB - Now, ahh, you're not from around here - are you?

(laughter)

NH - No, I am from East Berlin.

Unknown Voice - Hey, Alex, what gave it away?

AB - I don't know...it's the accent thing...ah, I thought it was Spanish, but I guess I was wrong.

NH - No, I'm from East Berlin...yeah.

AB - You were born in East Berlin?

NH - Yeah...in '55

AB - so, ahh, that was the Soviet part?

NH - yup.

AB - So how did you get out of there?

NH - Well, ahh, (at this point Nina gets a MAJOR frog in her throat and clears it, then her voice sounds completely different, like a deep, gravely growl)... 'scuse me!

(the audience breaks into laughter at the change of voice)

AB - Boy, that cigarette voice just came out!

NH - oh no, no, no...I'm a singer. I have to sing all night...

AB - but where did that voice come from? It was like (Alex imitates her), "Hello Alex"...

NH - (her voice goes VERY deep) Well, Alex I can go even deeper than that Alex.

(Alex and the audience roars with laughter at the sound of her voice). Anyway, I went out when I was 21. My stepfather, he ahh, he was the enemy of the system. He was like the Bob Dylan of the 60's. He was very political...

AB - Your father was a pain in the ass?

NH - Yup!

AB - and they just asked him to leave?

NH- yeah.

AB - You mean, you could actually get out of...forget about climbing the wall, you should have just been an annoyance!

NH - Yeah, he was like, um, the head of the opposition in the East and...

AB - Did they think like, that they were throwing him out of Paradise or something, was that their idea?

NH - yeah.

Another Guest - Did he complain a little, just to make it seem like...like he didn't want to go?

NH - All his songs were about the system and he was sarcastic about it, and ah, critical about it.

AB - I would imagine, that if you were somebody who wrote songs against the system and you were rallying against the system, the last thing you want to do is be thrown out, because then you have no, like, forum anymore.

NH - Exactly!

AB - I mean what are you going to do? Go sing songs in West Germany where everybody is like, 'ok, terrific...whatever'. No, I mean its true.

NH - Yeah, I mean all the community of artists, they all made a petition they signed saying that we want him back in and every signer, they got big problems, you know?

AB - Yeah, they just didn't want to get to see him leave.

NH - Afterwards the opposition went down, but then it came back up again, because they all met in the churches, and ah, discussed the break in the wall.

AB - And then what happens is all the kids come along and they all want to be exactly the opposite of their parents and that's why she (Nina) is so normal.

(long, awkward pause)

AB - aaahh hmmm.

NH - (growls) But, I play geeee-tarr.

(laughter)

AB - ahh, how's things been going? I love this album, cause I love 3-D. This cover is great!

NH - Yeah, that's my album cover.

AB - Freud Euch?

NH - Yeah, Freud Euch. It's the German version of the English version. The English version is called 'BEEEEEE Happy' and Freud Euch means just that.

AB - But you should have, in this country, just called it Freud Euch...it's very nice. I like that. See, I love the fact that Germans have certain terms for things which encapsulates a thought that's very hard to capture, for instance...

Lori - (speaking to Alex) 'Schaden Freud' is one you like.

AB - yeah, Schaden Freud!

NH - Ahhh, schaden freud (laughs)

AB - Which means relishing in the misfortune of others?

NH - Yeah.

AB - But it's a short word which encapsulates a whole idea. 'Zeitgeist' is another word that I always loved...that's German - right?

NH - mmmhmmmm.

AB - Meaning: the essence of the times?

NH - Yeah.

Lori - Is there one, "Mein Sein Allsein" which means: more being than seeming?

NH - 'Mir Sein Alsien' (sp)...yeah.

Lori - I like that...substance over style...something we don't have here in America. We've got the flip-side right.

AB - But then again, the other thing about German is... it is in some ways the funniest language in the world because I will go to Europe and watch German

television - not that I'm in Germany at the time, because you can be in Spain at the time and watch German television...

NH - Yeah, satellite!

AB - ... and ah, we have a game show over here called, ah, 'Family Feud'...

NH - YEAH! We have that!

(laughter)

AB - and over there they have their version of it...

NH - Of course! - Merv Griffin all over the place!

(more laughter)

Guest: Nina Hagen saying 'Merv Griffin'...that's something you don't hear everyday!

NH - I know him!

Guest: Do you really?

NH - Oh yeah! I was a guest on his show twice.

Guest: Oh...great.

AB - ...and...I'm dying, cause I'm watching this show one day, and it's..it's like, ah, you know, you can tell what they're saying - you know: "Gibt mir, ah, toothbrush!" and it's, you know, and the host is doing the same things, and It's famous, I guess it was famous fairy tales and they are coming up with answers like (in German accent) ah, Haanzel und Gretel; VRUMPLE-schtliz-schkin (Nina laughs) I mean it's funny to watch German television...it's almost as if...if you speak English you can almost understand it, cause if you just kind of, like, take English and ...

NH - Yeah, it's what you guys say...yeah. And for me, when I learned English it was kind of interesting to see, like many words are quite alike...Kann/can; Ich Kann/I can...

AB - 'Und' is 'And'.

NH - yeah! - 'I' is 'Ich'.

Guest - Volkswagen. (Nina laughs..she thinks this is very funny)

AB - So I can watch german television and I can kind of follow along.

Lori - Is it true that when JFK made his famous speech he said, "I am a jelly doughnut?" instead of, "I Am a Berliner?" (more laughter)

NH - Well, ah, a 'Berliner' is a jelly doughnut.

AB - Is it really?

NH - Ein Berliner - you go to the bakery and you say, "Ein Berliner, bitte...and then they ah ...(inaudible - Alex interrupts again)

AB - So he really said, "I am a jelly doughnut?"

NH - No...you know it's just one of those things... double meaning of the word...yeah.

AB - Well maybe he meant jelly doughnut - could that have been?

NH - Well, we shall not talk bad about the deceased.

AB - Actually, Clinton looks more like a jelly doughnut. So, do you still reside in...where do you live?

NH - I live, ah, near Los Angeles.

AB - Yeah, that's a big german town.

NH - And, I'm putting a band together and I'm gonna go on a big world tour again this year, after the American version also comes out in this country also we're gonna do lot's of open-air festivals in June - in Europe, and then I come to America, Canada, Mexico for the first time and Australia for the first time, then back to Brazil - 13 cities. Wonderful production.

AB - Wow!

NH - Also I'm going to be back in San Francisco...

AB - You see, that's what I like about you...I mean, you're really more theater...

NH - Everything. I'm everything!

AB - You don't just...you don't...

NH - I'm funk and punk and soul and hip and hop.

AB - You think in terms of yourself as a total performer?

NH - Yeah.

AB - For instance, now your doing this thing in San Francisco at the (he mispronounces 'Goethe'...pronounces it, 'goth') institute (then he mispronounces 'Hanussen' - 'han-ow-sin'...Nina doesn't correct him), the true story of Hitler's clairvoyant.

NH - Yeah.

AB - Don't you think he would have known what was going to happen to him if she was a good enough clairvoyant? or maybe she was jewish and just didn't tell him (Alex is under the impression that the clairvoyant was female which HE wasn't and this seems to confuse Nina who answers as though Alex is talking about Hitler)

NH - Yeah, he didn't tell anybody that he was jewish and there was definitely...

AB - (Alex seems to understand the miscommunication) He was part Jewish, wasn't he?

NH - Hitler? I don't know.

(by the way, Alex is Jewish)

Are there any Hitler's left in Germany?

NH - Yeah.

AB - There really are?

NH - Yeah.

AB - 'Cause you would have thought they would have changed their name.

NH - (laughs) Yeah...they haven't. They are still called nazi's and neo-nazi's.

AB - No, I mean, are there still people who use the name 'Hitler' as a surname?

NH - Oh no! I mean I haven't heard that. I don't think I would like to be called that!

AB - We found a guy in Philli called Hitler. He's a lawyer. We called him up and said, "you know, people named Hitler changed there name after the war, but you haven't, have you?" and he said, "Well, because it's 'Hite-ler' not 'Hitler'." That's like saying, 'Fronk-n-stien' instead of 'Frankenstien'.

NH - Then I'm 'Nine-ah'.

(everyone laughs)

AB - But, he (Hitler) did have a jewish clairvoyant?

NH - Yeah, he did.

AB - He was into all that, wasn't he? He was into horoscopes. Obviously, he proved more than anybody that it doesn't work.

NH - Exactly.

AB - Did she lie to him? Did she screw around with him?

NH - The clairvoyant? The female clairvoyant...I mean the male clairvoyant? Hanussen was a man...Well, Hitler knew from the astrological charts what was happening anyway, and so he, um, just asked the clairvoyant if it was true, because he saw that his success, his ah, rise wouldn't last long. He could see that, ah, on the planets and stuff.

AB - Yeah, um...and this is all based on truth?

NH - Yes, it is.

AB - And what is it? A musical?

NH - It's a cabaret play with music. Club Foot Orchestra is there and I can only tell you it's worth it. It's worth to see it. It's really great.

AB - It looks fascinating. Looks absolutely fascinating. Can you hold on a minute? We just want to play some commercials and get them out of the way.

NH - Cooooool.

(commercial)

AB - Were back with Nina Hagen talking about Hanussen. It seems this guy was a cabaret star; a very good clairvoyant or at least he did a great act and Hitler got taken aback by him and started using him as his clairvoyant and, in fact, built him a palace and everything to do his occult work in.

NH - Yeah.

AB - And then they found out he was jewish and they, umm, executed him?

NH - (in a sing-song voice)Yeah, they found out there was something wrong with the birth certificate.

AB - And so they executed him?

NH - Yep.

AB - That's a fascinating story.

NH - Amazing!

AB - Why haven't they made a movie about it or something?

NH - I think they did, they, ah, there is a movie about Hanussen. The Goethe Institute has it. I think it's a German production.

AB - Now, who is the Goethe Institute?

NH - Goethe Institute is an institute from Germany whose mission it is to bring german culture into other countries.

AB - Yeah. Now, when you say 'german culture' are we referring to that kind of culture...I mean prewar, world-war-two Germany had some great cabaret's and theater, and had some great film makers - Fritz Lange and people like that.

NH - Yeah, right and and great poets like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Heinrich Himmler. Those are incredible german poets from the 18th and 19th century.

AB - In fact, it's kind of interesting that even during World- War-Two, I've seen some very interesting. . of the culture of the time even during the war. I mean Goebbels ran a movie studio. That's when they did 'The Adventures of Baron Munchausen'...it was under Goebbels.

NH - Yup. Yeah.

AB - And so there was some very interesting work being done, even though some of it was very anti-semitic and it was meant to rally the Germans. German movies, theater, film, has always been not only interesting but it delved into a certain kind of surrealism. Look at the Cabinet of Dr. Caligary and things like that, and...

NH - Yeah, and Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weil - the opposition.

AB - Yeah. Yeah. I don't know exactly how to describe it. Again, there must be a german word for it, but I don't know what it would be.

NH - KUNST! Art. Kunst.

AB - Well, I kind of like 'kitch', but it wouldn't apply to this particular situation.

NH - No.

AB - But I mean, some very amazing art being done during that period. Amazing work. Ahhh, and so the Goethe Institute works to at least trying to let people know...bringing this culture to peoples doorsteps?

NH - Yeah.

AB - And what better way than to have Nina Hagen come to town and perform in one of their performances! The performances are when again Nina?

NH - Every night, two times - 8:30 and 10:30 until April 1st.

AB - At Bimbos?

NH - (growls) AT BIIIIIMBO's!

AB - So you kind of make that place kind of like a cabaret?

NH - Yeah. Totally.

AB - That's a great little club, isn't it?

NH - Yes. And, people love the show, by the way.

AB - Well, why not? You know, I always love having you here.

NH - (whispers) Thanks!

AB - You always bring a certain dignity to the program that it doesn't usually

enjoy.

NH - Oh wow! (sings) That drips down like honey..ha ha ha

AB - And if you want to get an import this one is great with the 3-D cover, because you say when it comes here they aren't going to do the cover?

NH - No, but they are gonna do another nice cover.

AB - It's called 'Freud Euch' which means 'Get Happy.'

NH - Yeah!

AB - And, ah, it's Nina Hagen as well. Come back and see us again?

NH - Okay I will. Definitely.

AB - Ladies and Gentlemen. Nina Hagen!

(applause)