

## Sunday, 30 May 2010

### Anthony's America 10: New York City, Book Expos, Testicle Meat-Eating Plants, Jon Stewart, Literary Agents & Home Time



For those of you who have faithfully followed my American adventures here [thank you], you may have noticed a slight leaning towards "home sickness" and "tiredness" lately. You know that feeling when some things you do in life come effortlessly, as if they're easy and as light as a feather. Whereas other things feel heavy, difficult and a little like you're wading through treacle?

Well, I'm getting the latter about being away from home now. Don't get me wrong, I love America and the wonderful friends I've made here (and who I will make sure I stay in touch with). And I'm more thankful than I ever have been at any time in my life for being in a country where the impossible seems *possible*; it's truly liberating to experience another culture for an extended period of time, instead of just for a few weeks holiday.

But, after spending a week in New York City, where I spent four days networking with publishers and literary agents at the Book Expo of America (one of the largest book industry events, aside from the monstrous Frankfurt tradeshow), I feel utterly exhausted. And it's not just jet-lag and tiredness, there is a clear underlying feeling - for want of a better way to put it - *that I need to be back with my people now*.



I miss my family, friends and the English countryside. I miss, unbelievably, the fog and rain. I miss driving on the left side of the road. I miss roast dinners and a real, *proper* pub. And, God, I miss British music so much. But, most of all, I miss having a space all of my own - including a garden - to live and create in.

In one way or another, I've been moving around and "on the road" since January 2009. I haven't sat still much for almost 18 months, sleeping on friends sofas, parents of friends houses, going to Scotland and Wales, climbing a mountain, using couch surfing here and there, living in the woods in northern California, driving the whole of America's 1300-mile long west coast from Seattle to San Diego (plus my amazing trip to Death Valley), working at a film office, writing half a novel, writing several short films, moving to Los Angeles, writing a Hollywood blog and now flying the 6 hours each way to New York City.

God, I'm exhausted just reading that back.



I've found it incredibly difficult to "settle" and feel content over the past year, and I'm still struggling with this. So, after spending time exploring who I am and what I want to do with myself in the near future, I think it's time for me to go back to

England and make myself a new home where I can feel comfortable enough to flourish and create in.

I've made so many contacts here in LA for film-making, and now lots of literary agents and publishers after my trip to Manhattan too, but now I need to *put my money where my mouth is* in terms of my writing...and actually create - and FINISH - several different books and scripts so I can *come back* to Los Angeles and sell Brand Burt to Hollywood. I feel this will be the right move because I'll be refreshed and armed with a quality portfolio - one that has had professional guidance from people doing this work - that gets me a job as a staff writer on a TV show. And this trip away has, I feel, improved my writing skills too; they feel more honed and I feel as if I understand how to write in different mediums a lot better than several years ago. And, also, importantly, that it's *really okay* to want to write and be successful in many artistic mediums.

My six months here in the US were, perhaps, healing time, full of adventure, self-realisation and also a fact-finding mission to discover what *exactly* it is I need to do to achieve my dreams (and fulfil many of them whilst I was here too, I mustn't forget). And this mission just happens to have been one where I've made tremendous contacts ready for the future, many of whom have helped me feel more confident in myself about my writing and networking successfully.

Hollywood doesn't scare me one bit now. It used to. But now it's not a faraway, impenetrable dream that I could never, ever reach...it's very much a real place with real people who - if you find the right ones - *want* to help you succeed.

Yet, as there are so many distractions in LA - going out, shopping, drinking iced teas, chatting and going to endless workshops - I think heading back to England with my newly-found knowledge of Hollywood (and the book industry too) means I can create a new pilot script for a TV series, finish my adult thriller book as well as start writing a non-fiction book. I can do all these projects safe in the knowledge that there *are places* - especially in America - where my work will come alive.



And New York may have been hot, sticky, smelly and disgustingly humid (35 degrees celsius, 99 fahrenheit with no wind - add to this the heat from millions of people and an endless supply of idling traffic, honking their horns *all the time*), but it is where virtually all of this country's publishing decisions take place.

At the Book Expo I was lucky enough to go to talks by authors John Grisham (intense), Christopher Hitchens (posh), Jon Stewart (hilarious), Barbra Streisand (yawn), the Duchess of York (witty) and Condoleezza Rice (nervous). After ex-Secretary of State Ms Rice had done a shaky, heartwarming talk about her family and upbringing in America's deep south in Birmingham, Alabama, the political satirist Jon Stewart came back to the microphone, paused with his comedic skill, and said: "Don't. Make. Me. Like. You."

Also at the expo I met a man who broke the Guinness World Record for answering the most amount of "life advice questions" on post-it notes in a 48-hour period; met the youngest all-body tattooed girl, which was slightly disconcerting; and discovered, rather distressingly, that Google appears to be attempting to take over the book industry through thinly-disguised subterfuge. But I'll leave this last story of corporate-giant-bullying-tiny-booksellers to another day when I'm a regularly published author and have the right to comment and an audience who will listen.



But, as far as attempting to reach my goal of being regularly published, I did manage to talk with several publishers and literary agents about them reading my work, so I'll keep you posted on progress with this. Whatever anyone says about needing a literary agent, I think for *my* kind of work I definitely need to get one before I can find the right publisher.

I also met a very talented young artist at the expo, Harvey Smith. He is from the West Midlands in the UK, and one of his passions is sculpting, movie special effects and making creatures. You can see his excellent work on his website [here](#).



Before heading out to New York I drove south from LA to the city of San Diego (where *CSI: Miami* is filmed...no, seriously) and spent several weekends having fun with my friends Charla and Heather.

With the lovely Charla I spent the day having very insightful chats, going to several boat museums where we went on two submarines (American and Russian), and manned the wheel of the *Star of India*, the ship used in the filming of Russell Crowe's *Master and Commander* movie. We also visited the beautiful Balboa Park, where there is a science and natural history museum, lots of sculptures and a Shakespearian-style theatre-in-the-round.

But, as my love of nature always wins through, and the botanical gardens at Balboa Park were a relaxing joy to wander around and encased in an intricate dark wood cage. There was Spanish architecture, carnivorous plants that looked like testicles (see pic if you don't believe me), purple orchids and duck ponds.



With the gorgeous Heather I spent a fun day out at, er, a *fun fair* with her sister Nikki's two cute little girls. We went on the Big Wheel, played mini-golf and enjoyed the sunshine.

As I said, I feel very lucky to have met such wonderful people out here who want to spend time with me.

So, I have three weeks left, if no visa miracle is found between now and June 22nd. And, over the next couple of weeks I'll be volunteering at the Los Angeles' film commission, Film L.A. I'll be doing writing projects for

them and hope that - when I head home to the UK - this will lead to longer-term freelance work that I can do via the internet. But I also have a lot more still to do before my Big Departure Date arrives, and some really exciting things too, so stay with me for now...and also stay healthy, happy and adventurous. Wink.

View the pictures that go with this blog post [here](#).