

Deep pool of spies



Graham Greene lived in the region for many years.

Graham Greene – The Swiss Chapter/A l'Ombre de la Suisse. By Pierre Smolik. Published by: Call me Edouard, Vevey, Switzerland.

VEVEY The Lake Geneva region has always been a magnet for some of the world's leading literary talents ranging from Goethe, Lord Byron and Mark Twain to Somerset Maugham, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Georges Simenon. Goethe frequented Madame de Staël's Salons at the Chateau de Coppet at the end of the 18th century, while Byron rented a summer house in Cologny. He wrote his famous poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon", based on a visit to the eponymous castle with fellow English poet, Shelley. Hemingway used to ski down from Les Avants to Territet in the days when there was snow and drank white wine in Aigle. Russian-born author Vladimir Nabokov lived and died in Montreux. This tradition continues with key writers residing in the region, or attending literary festivals such as the one at Morges funded by the new Maison de l'Écriture in Montricher.

What is less well known is that British author Graham Greene, who died in 1991, spent his final years in Corseaux, a small village above Vevey. *Graham Greene – The Swiss Chapter*, an intriguing book available in English and French by Pierre Smolik, explores the Catholic writer's bizarre relationship with Switzerland, plus revealing aspects of his life and works. One is never quite sure whether Greene really liked Switzerland and the Swiss, or whether, like one of his *Dr Fischer* or *The Bomb Party* characters, he considered them utterly dull. After all, it was his screenplay for *The Third Man* that claimed that Switzerland's

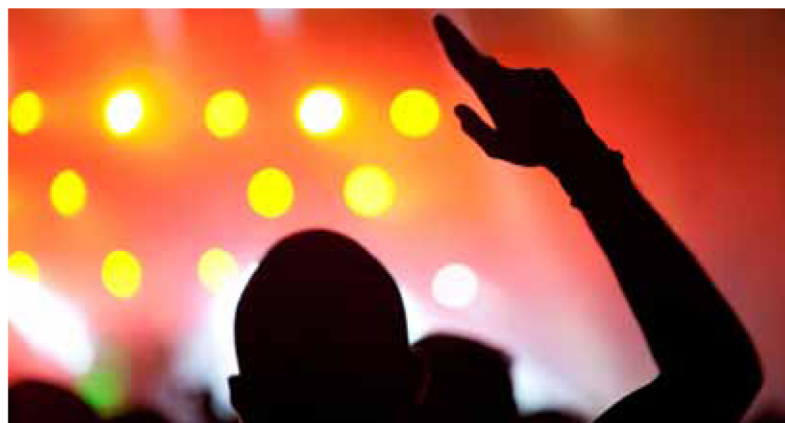
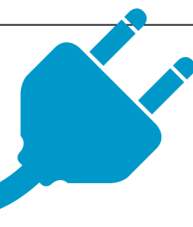
only achievement was the cuckoo clock – although these words were allegedly added by Orson Welles.

Based on hitherto unknown documents and photos, as well as Smolik's research, *The Swiss Chapter* looks into Greene's Swiss connections, including his past as a British Secret Service agent during World War II. As with so many exceptional 20th century British authors with links to the Arc lémanique, such as Somerset Maugham who spied for London in Geneva during World War I, or Lawrence Durrell, a World War II intelligence officer, Greene enhanced his writing with his espionage experience. The book lends credence to allegations that Greene was a Soviet double-agent. Greene's MI6 supervisor was Kim Philby, later unmasked as a KGB spy. Greene gave him a highly sympathetic introduction in Philby's memoirs, *My Silent War*. There is also a CIA letter that can "neither confirm nor deny" that Greene had been involved with US intelligence.

There is much insight that makes the book fascinating reading, such as Greene's involvement with the film *Dr Fischer*, starring Alan Bates and James Mason. Portions of it were filmed in the Vevey Town Hall with the registrar playing himself. Or Greene's writing methods. He preferred using a pen to a typewriter. As Smolik points out, Greene had an "obsessive fear of new gadgets and computers." But there is also pragmatism. "If one had to wait for what people call 'inspiration', one would never write a word," noted Greene. The book also reveals Greene's efforts to help Charlie Chaplin with his memoirs. Greene is buried a few graves down from Chaplin and Mason at Corseaux.

Ed Girardet

Plugged in



Wanna be a rock star?

Ferney-Voltaire If someone had told me five years ago that I'd be in a rock band, touring the Pays de Gex and Geneva with 30 concerts behind us, two albums recorded, and over 10,000 views on YouTube before I reached the age of 16, I would've laughed it off. And yet here I am, the bassist and singer of The Wazoos, a rock band based in the French border town of Prévessin, going from gig to gig, enjoying the music.

So how did we end up here? And, more importantly, how can YOU end up here? First, you need to be lucky enough to have friends who play an instrument. It can be hard to find a bassist, so if you want to join a band, consider taking this instrument up as you will always be in demand. Second, the practice takes place where the drums are: make sure that your drummer has a spacious basement that won't disturb the neighbours! Equipment is quite expensive as well: best to invest in relatively good amplifiers and instruments as soon as possible to get the sound you want. And you'll definitely be needing a good singer – it's no good having just four instruments. Ask around your friends, as friends work best

together.

Someone in the band should take responsibility for fixing up gigs, whether it's sending lots of e-mails or calling up town halls. So you're ready to rock and roll, but what do you play? It's not easy making your own songs at the beginning, and inspiration can be hard to find. A good tip is to start by doing covers of bands you like until you have enough experience to create your own music. Once you start writing your own material, you'll carve out your own identity. At this point, you might want to consider recording which is seriously expensive – I'm talking in the thousands – so start those weekend jobs now.

It took us a while to get to where we are now. Several years of playing together, a few hundred rehearsals, a large sum of money spent on equipment, and plenty of fun. But it's not only the pleasure. A lot of hard work is involved and disagreements are certainly not uncommon among bandmates. As long as you're prepared to compromise, put in the effort and practice, you never know: you could be the next Red Hot Chili Peppers! *Jonathan Woodburn. The Wazoos can be found on Facebook.*

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