Gothica 40



DARK MUSIC & LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE EST. 2006

MUSIC CINEMA STYLE EVENTS ART





SHCHEDRYK/CAROL OF THE BELLS

A **STORY** OF A UKRAINIAN SONG THAT BECAME A SYMBOL OF **X-MAS** ALL OVER THE **WORLD**

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Gothica Magazine #40

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Cover photo: Dismal

We are happy to present you the 40th issue of the Gothica magazine.

The issue contains story of Shchedryk (Carol of the Bells) - a ukrainian song that became a symbol of XMAS all over the world.

Intreview with Dismal, Vlad in Tears, Eric13 and Seadrake.

And special diary by Markus Pfeffer about travel to Ukraine with Samsas Traum.
Enjoy your reading!

Andriy "Featon" Harkusha Editor in chief

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ELARA KERRIGAN

Ukrainian cosplay model, photo art artist, designer, grimmer and crafter. Lives in Kyiv Ukraine.

She started her career at the age of 16, performed at various festivals and design shows, took part in various TV show programs. She collaborates with many photographers such as Eva Davydova and others.

Hobbies: collecting dolls, retouching and photography, drawing, pole dancing and traveling

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Dismal

Written by Andriy Featon

Dismal is an italian gothic/alternative band formed in 1995. A sonorous mesmerism take the listener into a bizzarre epic limbo, in a "carnival of the mind" where rationality and madness are constantly touched. Mix of magical atmospheres characterize the new gothic musical fairy tale by DISMAL – The Waltz Of Mind.



Hello, tell me about the history of the band. I know that you started back in 1995. How has the music industry changed in Italy since then?

When we started in 1995 there were few bands launched in this new genre called «Gothic Metal», it was considered a niche genre, new and ready to be shaped.

Our first works tell the darkest part of our way of doing gothic, and then we moved on to experiment with more melodic and symphonic musical forms.

In the mid-nineties, we didn't have many musical references for the «Gothic Metal» genre and so we were inspired by gothic architecture, goth-fantasy films, gothic novels, dark music, and the sense of expression of the genre.

Since the 2000s there has been an explosion of the gothic genre in Italy and the rest of the world; certainly, with the advent of digital platforms, the market has changed considerably. Digital has opened many paths, but it has also destroyed



a part of the underground. In the end, we are always rooted in the old pillars of the eighties and nineties.

contributed in some way to the Gothic Metal scene in these years of activity.

Separately, I want to ask about the mysterious inscriptions on the Dismal logo - "The Waltz of Mind". What does this mean?

It is that playful or sarcastic dance that makes our mind in this modern or deviant society... the world tends to madness.

Dance is mental: the relationship between the instinctive part and the logical part in our brain, during the processes of our life. The instinct that dominates when you are a child and the logical and rational that takes over with adulthood. You don't always get along with the world and with yourself, and here is the music of the mind, our medicine, our world where we feel safe.

What are the band's main achievements?

In over 26 years of activity, we have passed many goals and collected many satisfactions. 8 recordings, and a dozen official videos. We didn't deal with the live aspect in an intense way, but we participated in great European festivals, gathering great acclaim in every country. We have been in many top 10, as album of the month in the most important magazines, we are proud of it, we have

In mid-January 2023, you have a new album scheduled to be released. Tell us more about this album. What awaits the listeners?

Beyond the spiritual aspect of the Middle Ages society, there is a human contradiction that still needs to be overcome: the detachment from what we are and what we should be is high. With this album I want to emphasize the nihilistic side of the world, the reaper is always ready to reset this path.

Surely there is an ideal world in our collective dreams, but we have great difficulty in bringing our desires on a real plane. In simpler terms: by failing to realize our collective utopia (ideal world), humanity tends to self-destruct. Via Entis summarizes this journey through the places of the past: a spiritual journey through ancient times, where we rediscover our roots and our awareness.

Title of the new album "Via Entis: Return to Emerald Forest". I see this phrase "Emerald Forest" from time to time. Can you tell me what it is? I know there was a movie "The Emerald Forest".

Yes, of course, "Return to Emerald Forest" is inspired



by "Cristal-Tears In The Emerald-Forest Or Thinking About "The Leviathan", a song that I wrote in 98 contained in our first official album «Fiaba Lacrimevole», it represents the introduction of this journey to the places where I lived like Turin, Val Susa and the woods that inspired me a lot. The atmospheres of "Via Entis" are quite dark and introspective, but they always leave a glimmer of light.

What do the Dismal band members do besides music?

They are music teachers. Caterina has a jazz band and teaches singing, and Daniele teaches guitar. I made soundtracks for experimental theatre shows and short films and I'm also a craftsman.

What kind of music did you grow up with? Remember the first self-purchased records?

Yes, I remember well, especially the self-financed demo tapes and the mountains of flyers I received from all over the world; we exchanged jobs, we supported each other, and we were a great community. Luckily with Dismal, we had a recording contract; at that time the labels also paid the recording studios. I grew up with dark music and

post-punk, and later I was kidnapped by black metal and the doom/gothic of the early 90s, I loved bands like Lacrimosa, Anathema, Type O Negative, Laibach, and My Dying Bride. I always love old movie soundtracks, like great masters like Fryderyk Chopin, Sergej Rachmaninov, and Astor Piazzolla. I love Laibach, Massive Attack, Katatonia, Sigur Rós, Dead Can Dance, Front Line Assembly, Dimmu Borgir, Rome, Pink Floyd, Candlemass, Depeche Mode, Joy Division, and The Cure.

What five albums would you take with you to a desert island?

5 albums are very few, but I try: Spectre (Laibach), Wildhoney (Tiamat), The Silent Enigma (Anathema), 100th Window (Massive Attack) and Bloodflowers (The Cure).

We also have traditional wishes for the readers of the magazine. What would you like to say in the end?

A big greeting to all readers of Gothica Magazine, and a special thanks to you Andriy for the beautiful interview. Never stop dreaming.

When in your house black ravens will give birth to white doves, then you are going to be called wise.





VIA ENTIS: RETURN TO EMERALD FOREST
A NEW GOTHIC-SYMPHONIC TALE WITH A MEDIEVAL AND ALCHEMICAL ATMOSPHERE

OUT ON 13/01/2023 CD | LP GATEFOLD | DIGITAL













Vlad In Tears

Written by Iryna Kalenska

Vlad In Tears was virtually reborn after decades when the three brothers Chris (vocals & piano), Lex (guitar) and Dario (bass) decided to move from old and sunny Italy to Germany in 2013. The brothers immediately showed their great musical skills and their ability to be fantastic live performers. This rapid development led to a steadily growing fan base to this day.

Tireless and insatiable, Vlad In Tears are always looking for new sounds and arrangements to perfectly blend their melodies with very dark sounds, ranging from 80s wave to the hardest and most modern rock sound. The strongest part of the band is the voice of singer Chris, which seems to know no limits.



How do you feel about your new album Porpora? What is the story behind it? What were your major inspirations while working on it?

Chris: I am still in love with it. Porpora is for me my best work so far, it takes inspiration from all that happened in the last 2 years, which have been very hard, and full of deep dark feelings.

What are the fans' reactions to the new album?

Chris: We could not be happier! Our fans totally fell in love with each song of this new album. That's simply great.

Now let us talk about the songs and the work on them a bit in detail. For example, there are two versions of «Wasted Lives», a cover of «Running Up That Hill», «Right Now», for which you made a video.



Can we say that these are the main songs of the album?

Chris: Yes, «Right now» is my favorite song. It is a message of hope for all of those who have fought at least once their demons.

«Wasted lives» is a song about death. It tells the story of all those people who have died in vain, and who have been left to witness this despair, there is a story that must be told. «Running up that hill» is simply a great song, we love it and we wanted to make it sound like our own song...

How does it feel to be able to present the new songs live in front of an audience now? Do you have a different perspective on it after the time off (for all known reasons related to the pandemic), maybe a greater appreciation?

Chris: It feels great. Being back on tour, on stage, and playing in front of our beautiful fans, and new fans as well is just priceless. I have never underestimated the importance

and value of being capable of being on stage and performing my music, now more than ever.

How important is the personal exchange with the fans for you? Does that also give you some kind of inspiration?

Chris: Our fans are 99% the reason why we do what we do. The relationship with all of them is vital, and of course, talking to them, gives us inspiration; we want to tell everyone's story.

As a long-time or better to say, permanent band member, how would you describe your development, musically and personally, from the first album to today? After all, you already have seven albums in total and it is a long way.

Chris: I am always evolving. I do believe in a personal challenge, so every time I start writing something new, I ask myself «What can I do this time that will make me think, what the hell are you doing Chris?» ha-ha-ha As I can see and understand, you have a certain style, and it does not change. And if you compare it with other bands in the Schwarz scene, you look as gothic as possible compared to them. :) What is the reason for choosing this particular style direction?

Chris: That is not entirely true. We actually have changed a bit of style over the last 10 years.

I have never considered myself to be absolutely 100% pure gothic, because of all the music and artistic influences I have been through, I may be more of a hybrid style, between Goth metal, Dark rock, and alternative.

And in the end, I am simply in love with the gothic and dark subculture, it's part of me forever.

Did you grow up in a musical household? What sounds shaped you as a young person?

Chris: Yes, my parents are great music lovers, and my dad used to play the guitar and sing.

My mom is our biggest fan! We grew up listening to any kind of music, starting from the 50s and 60s to classic rock.

Do you think it's worth separating music and politics? Or is it still worth using the opportunity to support those who are needed it? As you understand, we are from Ukraine, and of course, it is important for us to show, and explain to people and to the Gothic world what is really happening in our country. As I remember, you and Heldmaschine supported us with a video at the very beginning of the war.

Chris: As a musician, I have personally never wanted to be involved in politics, but sometimes it is important to show support to all of those who are victims of injustice and suffering.

The music industry has changed, and people's listening habits have changed. Especially the younger ones listen to music mostly via streaming and playlists and buy single songs rather than a whole album. How do you consider this development?

Chris: We have to try to make the best out of it and be up to date. That is the only way we can hope to survive. At least being on tour and playing live shows is still done the old-fashioned way!



Would you say your music has any direct influences - does a particular performer or artist inspire you for example - or do you find other musicians have a more subtle effect on your creativity?

Chris: I listen to tons of music every day. It helps me keep an open mind, and it keeps me up to date on what is going on with new sounds and productions. Of course, they have been several artists in the last 10 years that have played an important role in my inspiration process. (Bands like The Cure, Him, Korn, Marylin Manson...)

What is the creative process like in your case? Is it the melody or the lyrics that come first? Do you recollect any particular image, person, or situation that would inspire a specific song that is the most outstanding and personal for you?

Chris: I dream of music, most of the time, while I am dreaming, I can hear music playing in the background of my dreams, it's like a real soundtrack...when I wake up, I know what I have to do...music comes first for me.

Is there a place you have never played, but definitely want to play?

Chris: Being on tour in the US and Asia would be a dream come true.

I am wondering what we can expect from you in the upcoming months. New music, new concerts?

Chris: Absolutely! We are planning a big tour, big festivals, more and more music and very interesting insights from the whole band! Just wait and see...

Thank you for having me, it is always a pleasure. Stay Vlad!





This is a story of

a Ukrainian song

that became a symbol of Christmas all over the world

UKRAINE >

The country that gave___ Christmas magic to the world



The project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of

Created by plusone social impact

Conception of narrative, research and text by

isual identity by Maksym Shapoval

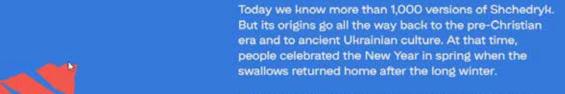
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Ukraine NOW



People blessed one another for a good harvest and prosperity in their homes, by singing ritual songs. One of these songs was Shchedryk, a simple 4-note melody, which featured a swallow as its main character.



For a long time the song lived in Ukrainian folklore until a talented Ukrainian conductor and composer, Mykola Leontovych, heard it. Taking a simple monophonic melody he went on to create a choral masterpiece.

Mykola Leontovych (1877-1921), Ukrainian composer

GHEI



This new choral version of Shchedryk was premiered at a performance in Hylv in December 1916 at the Hylv Philharmonic. The choir was led by a well-known conductor, Oleksandr Hoshyts.

KVIV PNiharmonic

6



Name and Address of the Association

In 1918, Ukraine declared independence and had to fight for its recognition by the international community. The head of the newly created Ukrainian state, Symon Petliura, former well-known journalist, editor and art critic, chose a song as one of his tools of diplomacy.

On January 1, 1919, at one of Oleksandr Hoshyts' concerts, Petliura heard a composition by Leontovych. This wasn't Shchedryk, but a song called Legend. He liked it so much that he directed Hoshyts to assemble a choir of 100 of the best singers to go on a European tour.

Syrnon Petiliura (1879-1926) Head of the Uleasman State in 1919-1921



The choir had to be formed immediately in order to accomplish an important mission – "to sing for the independence of Ukraine". At that time, the Paris Peace Conference convened its deliberations in France, during which leaders of nations, victorious in World War I, set about redrawing European borders. It was there that the fate of Ukraine was also decided. And with the help of the touring choir, Symon Petiliura wanted to gain international recognition for Ukraine and foreign support in the fight against Bolshevik Russia.

Paris Peace Conference, 1919

S



Shchedryk's runaway success on the world stage began in Czechoslovakia. Although the original idea had been to perform in national costumes, the singers appeared before the audience in classic European attire: black tallcoats – for men, white silk gowns – for women. This was to indicate that Ukraine is a modern nation, and not a rural one.

prestigious hall in the country – the Prague National Theatre. This is where a foreign audience for the first time was captivated by the magic of Shchedryk.

Ulinainian chorus in Prague, 1919

JE



The Austrian press wrote: "Ukraine's cultural maturity must become the legitimization of its political independence in the world". The Ukrainian choir performed 11 concerts here, and more than 70 reviews were published in local newspapers.

Announcement of the concert at Wiener Horzerthaus, 1919.



The next stop was Switzerland. The ambassador of France who was present at the concert in Bern, was so fascinated by the choir's singing that he facilitated its entry to Paris.

Ukrainian choir with representatives of the Ukrainian diplomatic mission in Bern, 1919

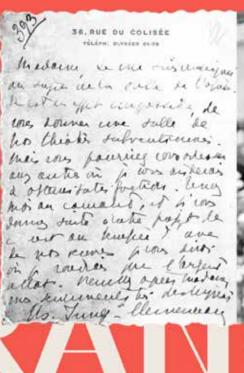


Finally, the Ukrainians arrived in France. The choir reached its destination only nine months after the beginning of their tour, as the French government had long denied visas to singers from an unrecognized state.

In France the touring choir performed not only in Paris, but also in Toulouse, Bordeaux, Nice, Marseille and Lyon, In total, 25 concerts were sung, and everywhere Shchedryk was rewarded by encores

Postcard from Paris with a view of the Seine and the Eiffel Tower

Poster of the Ukrainian premiers in Paris, 1919





Famous composers, conductors and music critics admire Ukrainian culture, but also call for the recognition of Ukraine's independence. However, the French Prime Minister, George Clemenceau, on whom all Ukrainian music diplomacy efforts were focused, did not attend any of the concerts. He was chairman of the Paris Peace Conference and did not support the idea of an independent Ukraine.

This is despite his daughter's attempts to persuade him to listen to the Ukrainians. Fascinated by Ukrainian singing, Thérèse Junq-Clemenceau tried to organize a concert at the Paris Opera, but her attempts failed.

Letter from Thérèse Junq-Clemenceau to Hanna Vistych, Ukrainian choir translator.

Thérèse Junq-Clemenceau, daughter of Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France (1917-1920)



After France, the Ukrainian chorus continued to tour Europe. During 1920-1921, Oleksandr Hoshyts' choir presented close to 100 concerts in Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany, Poland and Spain.

Royal Theatre of La Monnaie, Brussels

Announcement of the Ulirainian premiere at the Royal Theatre of La Monnaie in Brussels, 1920

ELS



Their concerts were attended by the members of royal families, heads of state, famous academics and music critics. In particular, Queen Elizabeth of Belgium was among the guests who admired the Ukrainian music and the singing.

Queen Elisabeth of Bavaria, 3-rd Queen of Belgium, and her signature in the book of visitors of the Ukrainian concerts

Chtchédrik, Chtchédrik,
Chtchédrivotchka,
Une petite birondelle,
S'est posés sur le toit d'une maison,
Elie s'est miss à gazouiller
A appeter le maitre de la maison,
"Sors, maître, sors,
Va voir dans l'étable:
Les breble ont mis bas des agneaux,
Ton bétail est très beau.
Tu vas avoir beaucoup d'argent.
Mais l'argent n'est rien.
Tu as une belle femme
Aux sourcles noirs. "
Chtchédrik, Chtchédrik,
Chtchédrivotchka,
H est arrivé une petite hirondelle.

Leontovych's song became one of the most loved in the program of the Ukrainian choir. Shchedryk was translated into different European languages and performed by foreign choirs.

Translation of Shchedryk into French from an article by a famous Belgian poet and writer Franz Hellens (1871-1972)





But despite the fascination with these Ukrainian songs, the Western leaders did not recognize Ukraine's independence. In 1921, Ukraine was occupied by Bolshevik Russia. And the punitive Soviet authorities immediately began purging the Ukrainian intelligentsia.

Mykola Leontovych, the author of Shchedryk, was also targeted by a VChH (All-Russian Extraordinary Commission) agent. On January 23, 1921, he was killed in his parents' house in Vinnytsia region.

Portrait of Mykola Leontovych by B. Roerich, 1921

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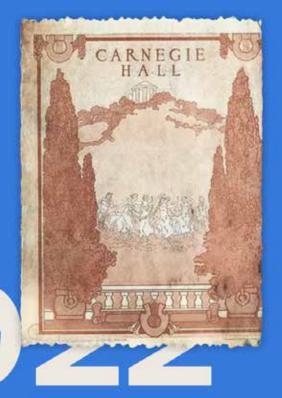


In 1922, having lost their homeland, the Ukrainian singers moved to the United States. That's how the melody of the future Carol of the Bells made its first appearance on the American continent. Famous impresario Max Rabinov, who had heard the choir's performance in Paris, organized their tour in the USA.

Arrival of the Ukrainian choir in New York, September 26 1922.

Page from the booklet of the Ukrainian four in the USA, 1922-1924. Picture by Serge Sudellen





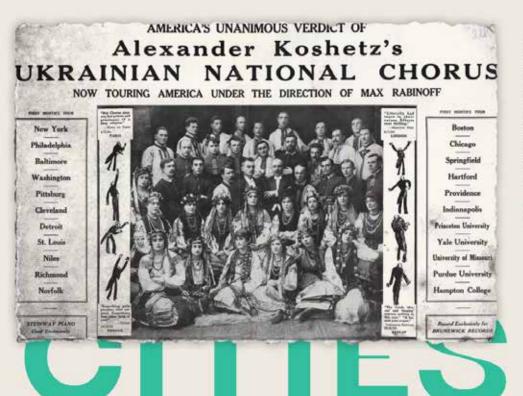
On September 26, they arrived in New York. On October 5 they gave their first concert at Carnegie Hall, where the premiere of Shchedryk took place. The song received rapturous applause and calls for an encore. "Shchedryk had to be repeated", wrote the New York newspaper "Sun".

Concert program of premiers at Carnegie Hall, October 5 1922

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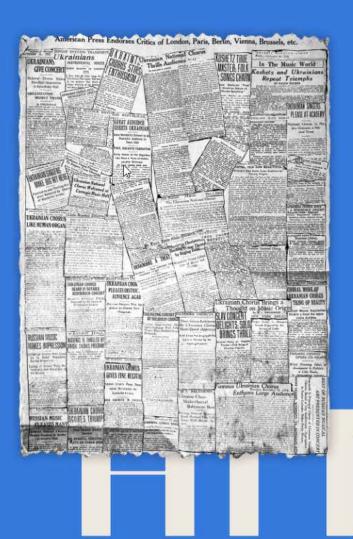


Shortly after their arrival in the USA, the choir recorded several songs, including Shchedryk, with the New York record company Brunswick. This old recording is still available for listening today.



This was the start of the American triumph of Leontovych's melody. On October 6, the Ukrainians performed at the Academy of Music of Philadelphia, and on October 7 – at Princeton University. Then Yale, Harvard, Washington, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Dallas and St. Louis. In total, more than 40 cities and 60 concerts in the most prestigious music halls and universities across the United States took place. And this was only in the first two and a half months of touring.

Announcement of the Ukrainian National Chorus's American tour in October-December, 1922.



Music critics, press, famous musicians, deans and presidents of American universities – all of them admired the Ukrainian choir and the performances they heard.

Excerpts from articles about Ukrainian concerts in the American press, 1922



Their work is an expression of the highest form of art and our Princeton audience was enthusiastic in its approval and appreciation.

John Grier Hibben, President of Princeton University, From a letter dated November 21st 1922



After a successful tour in the United States, the choir went on to perform in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba and Canada. Everywhere Shchedryk was heard, there were calls for encores. In May 1924, the choir stopped touring.

A concert of the Ukrainian chorus on the stadium "Plaza de Toros" in Mexico on 26 December 1922. Then the singers faced the largest audience in their history and set a world record (32,600 listeners)

MEXICO



Shchedryk was the real hit in our repertoire in all countries for five and a half years

wrote conductor Oleksandr Hoshyts in his memoirs

Oleksandr Hoshyts in Mexico, 1922





During one of these concerts, Peter Wilhousky, an American conductor of Ukrainian descent, heard Shchedryk.

At that time he led a school choir in New York and was looking for a new composition to be broadcast over NBC radio.

Peter J. Wilhousky (1902-1978), American conductor



"I had heard it [Shchedryk] sung by a
Ukrainian choir and somehow obtained a
manuscript copy. At about that time I
needed a short number to fill out a
program I was asked to do for the Walter
Damrosch Music Appreciation Hour with
my high school choir. Since the youngsters
would not sing in Ukrainian I had to
compose a text in English. I discarded the
Ukrainian text about 'shchedryk' — (the
barnyard fowl) and instead concentrated
on the merry tinkle of the bells which I
heard in the music"

from Peter Wilhousky's letter to the Ukrainian musicologist Roman Savytsky



This is how the swallow changes to the bells, and the Ukrainian spring – to the American Christmas. Although both symbols were depicted on American Christmas cards as early as 1910s.

American Christmas card from 1910-1920s



The popularity of the song grew rapidly. According to Wilhousky, after the radio premiere of Carol of the Bells, he received numerous requests from American music teachers who wanted to receive the music of the song. So in 1936 he published his musical score at the Carl Fischer Music with a title which read: Carol of the Bells. Ukrainian Carol. Words by Peter J. Wilhousky. Music by M. Leontovych.

Fragment of Carol of the Bells sheet music, published by Carl Fischer Music, 1936



From that point on, the Ukrainian Shchedryk began its new life as an integral part of American Christmas culture. Since the early 1940s, it has been performed by numerous American choirs, ensembles, jazz bands and orchestras. Leontovych's melody is used in the advertising of famous brands and it has become the soundtrack of more than a hundred American films, TV shows and serials.

where Carol of the Bells created a wonderful Christmas atmosphere,

SHCHEDRYK SHCILLER SHCHER SHCHER

Shchedryk Lyrics

Shchedryk, shchedryk, shchedrivochka, Pryletila lastivochka, Stala sobi shchebetaty, Hospodaria vyklykaty: Vyidy, vyidy, hospodariu, Podyvysia na kosharu, Tam ovechky pokotylys, A yahnychky narodylys. V tebe tovar ves khoroshyi, Budesh maty mirku hroshei, V tebe zhinka chornobrova, Khoch ne hroshi, to polova. V tebe zhinka chornobrova.



English translation

Bountiful evening, bountiful evening, a New Year's carol;
A little swallow flew into the household
and started to twitter,
to summon the master:
«Come out, come out, O master,
look at the sheep pen,
there the ewes have given birth
and the lambkins have been born
Your goods [livestock] are great,
you will have a lot of money, by selling them.
You have a dark-eyebrowed beautiful wife
If not money, then chaff from all the grain you will harvest
you have a dark-eyebrowed beautiful wife.»



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Electronic Resistance - Reconstruction

Side-Line presents you: «Electronic Resistance - Reconstruction», a follow-up to our previous 55-track strong free download compilation «Electronic Resistance» which was released earlier this year. You can download the new release here from Bandcamp.

Compiler Bernard Van Isacker from Side-Line Magazine explains: «The title of this new volume clearly indicates what the concept is, it's all about reconstruction, reconstruction of people's lives, but also reconstruction of a nation which is still being brutalized by Russian aggression.»





The release holds again more than 50 darkwave / post-punk acts from the Ukrainian underground scene only including a lot of new names.

'EBM Day' T-shirt + medallion + badge

This premium made t-shirt features the 'EBM Day' logo and is available in various sizes, including also a selection for the ladies!

Also included:

- a special hand finished 'Electronic Resistance' medallion
- an Electronic Resistance badge
- a free compilation CD.

All proceeds will go to Ukrainian charity. Shipping starts end of December.



«We again were confronted with difficult conditions to get hold of the necessary files as some disks were in occupied territories, other files were lost and so we sometimes worked with very raw source material to reconstruct the tracks. Many track titles again refer to the current situation.»

Bernard Van Isacker



The compilation features artists from allover Ukraine and just like the first time we again had the honor to have music from musicians active on the frontline, from soldiers to medics, and from people who continue to help out where possible. Heroes.

The war is still far from being over and what the Russians started on February 24th 2022 already has had a huge impact on all of our lives, but way more on those of the Ukrainian people.





As a bonus you also get 4 remixes of the Iwan Lovynsky & KingSMarine track «Ukraina» by Aesthetische, Cubic, Acylum and Kant Kino.

All donations this time will go to United24, a global initiative to support Ukraine.

https://sidelinemag.bandcamp.com



SEADRAKE

Written by Iryna Kalenska Photo by Chris Ruiz

SEADRAKE is an electronic music and art collective led by Mathias Thürk (ex-Minerve) from Zurich and Rickard Gunnarsson (Statemachine, Lowe) from Stockholm. Their debut albumg entered the charts in Germany and Norway and SEADRAKE played many sold out shows and music festivals, such as Castle Party and the Wave Gotik Treffen. And this year the band played as a support act on the SOLAR FAKE - ENJOY DYSTOPIA TOUR.





As I can see from what you are doing now you are open to collaboration with different vocalists, thus Dorian Electrique (DEAR STRANGE, WE ARE LOVEBLIND) and Sir Boyfriend (VISITEUR) joined SEADRAKE not long ago. How does your music change now? Because a new vocalist always has a different voice. Now you have two new vocalists :) Is it reasonable to say that SEADRAKE music now sounds different? To what extent does the

mood or the cohesion in a band change with a new frontman?

Mathias: After the release of the "Isola" album and the very successful tour as a special guest to Solar Fake it was clear to me that I wanted to change the sound of SEADRAKE again. I do not like to repeat myself, and to work on songs that sounded like "Isola II" was not really, what I wanted. I was happy that Rickard felt the same way.



The change in the line-up was a surprise, but in the end, we were happy because it opened up new possibilities and gave us the freedom to work in different ways and with new artists...and that was impossible with the former line-up. It important is also to say that working with different artists does not affect the way that we develop our songs because we finish the music first and then we decide which artist could fit the song.

Rickard: I have always found it interesting to work in a collective. Now we can make whatever music we want to, and work with people that bring joy and energy to SEADRAKE. I am glad that we are able to work with such talents as Dorian E and Sir Boyfriend. They have quite different voices and personalities, but I only see that as a plus when it comes to songwriting.

Tell us about the new members of the band. How did you guys meet, and decided to work together and how is the cooperation going? Do you invite vocalists only as part of live performances?

Mathias: If Rickard and I decide to work with an artist then we make it very clear that we prefer an open working relationship with them.

That means: every artist can come and go whenever they want and we share all rights. That is why we see SEADRAKE more as a music and art collective and less as a typical band. I think in the beginning the new band concept was a bit strange for our fans but when most of them saw us live, they understood how cool it is to see different artists perform both old and new songs. The fan feedback has been euphoric and it seems now they like the new concept.

Rickard: Sir Boyfriend is a friend of mine from Stockholm, and when we got the offer to go on tour in Germany I immediately thought of him. He is not only very good at singing but has a great sense of humor and a big heart. Dorian E I have to know through her former band Seasurfer. I love her singing and we got in touch. You have probably already heard our singles "The Fever" and "Asche", so you know how magical her voice is. We have a special bond and she can really tap into what we try to express with our music.

What does the band mean to you personally? And who of you gives which personal influence in the band?

Mathias: SEADRAKE gives me the possibility to be creative in different ways, as long Rickard and I like it. I enjoy this freedom and I can do whatever I want. I like to be creative, not only music-wise, and I like to share my ideas or visions with Rickard and develop new things with him together.

Rickard: For me, SEADRAKE has become its own being of sorts. Of course, it means a lot to me, more than I imagined from the start. Music and artistry are a call for me, and I do not know where I would be without them.

Have you always known that you want to make music?

Mathias: Never! *laughing* in the beginning I was only interested in synths and recording sounds. I was never interested in releasing music or playing live on stage worldwide. I remember when we started with my former band Minerve I was not happy with the idea to release our songs or to play them live. I was afraid to give the music out of my hands and to let others "judge" it. And honestly, saying...and most of you did not know that...when I started to work on the songs for the "Isola" album my main intention was to record some nice songs and collect them on my private hard disk. That's



all. I never wanted to release this music; I did not see a reason to present the music to others. Later I changed my mind, added artists like Rickard to the line-up, and worked with them together on the album... this little story shows that I like to create new music, but I am not soooo much interested in publishing the results.

Rickard: My father, Rutger Gunnarsson, was a famous musician and I grew up in the studio and on the road with him. So I rather knew from the start that I wanted to make music. But not only music, I love everything about the business... working on live shows, making videos, and creating a brand. I released my first record when I was 6, and since then I've always made music.

How does it feel to be on tour again? What did the time of the pandemic do to you? Do you think you changed in some way?

Mathias: the pandemic was a strange situation for all of us. On one hand, it was cool to come down and relax a bit. On the other hand, it was a challenge to work on new music and to develop new ideas via Skype or via phone calls. I think that is the reason why we were so happy when Solar Fake offered us to be their special guest on tour again and why we enjoy it so much to play in front of our fans again, even when the pandemic is not over yet.

Rickard: In Sweden, we did not have as hard restrictions as the rest of the world, so life somewhat just continued as before. Mathias and I live quite far away, so we have always talked a lot on Skype and sent files and emails to each other.



The only bad thing was that we were not able to meet up in person.

It was also very pleasant for me to see you openly support Ukraine in these difficult times for our country, for example, within the Solar Fake show in Hamburg Rickard performed on stage with a patch of the Ukrainian flag, and after the show, you gladly took part to make a photo with the Ukrainian flag. Tell us a little about how you support Ukraine and why it is important for you to do so.

Mathias: I am not so much interested in politics but if you have close friends in Ukraine Let me say it clearly: I am against EVERY war and I do not care about the reasons for this war...l care only about the Ukrainians who suffering and dying. If you know people there and you wake up in the morning and get messages like "Please help us, Russia attacks our country!" then you are in shock and totally paralyzed. You watch the news, you talk with your terrified Ukrainian friends, and you hear the explosions and sirens in the background during the phone calls...it is horrible! You cannot ignore it, especially when you are personally involved (because of your friendship with them) and that is why Rickard and I decided to donate some money to the Ukrainian Red Cross and to donate the money from our single "The Fever" to them too. It is a shame and nobody should ignore what happens there.

Rickard: Outside Sweden, Ukraine is the country that I have played the most in (with my previous

band LOWE). So I have many Ukrainian friends and I care a great deal for the country. I was horrified when I woke up that morning and had many text messages from my friends in Kyiv and Lviv saying that Russia had invaded Ukraine. Since then I try to support them as much as I can, either financially or spiritually. As Mathias said, SEADRAKE has donated a large sum to the Ukrainian Red Cross and all our income for the single "The Fever" goes to Ukrainian charity as well. I really hope and wish that this war will end soon and that Ukraine will be free again.

I am wondering when you sit to write new music what is the usual process you approach the tools you use? Do you have a clear vision of the effect you want to achieve, or it comes during the creative process?

Mathias: During the pandemic, we had enough time to develop our own, let me describe it as, a working routine because we both live in different countries. Someone worked on an instrumental demo and put it into Dropbox and the other added new things to the demo or reworked it again. This creative "ping pong" process is mostly the starting point for a new song. After a while, we decide to bring a vocalist into this process, and together, we finish the song.

Rickard: Music for me is therapeutic. If I am in a mood and cannot explain it, I sit down in front of my piano and make something of my feelings. That is usually how I start a song. We send many files to each other, and that is an interesting way of working cause a song can change quite a lot during the process.

What music did you listen to you in your teenage years? And what kind of music are listening to now?

Mathias: Everything started with Modern Talking. During this time, I liked pop music in general but Modern Talking was the best for me. *laughing* Later my cousin presented me with Depeche Mode and I was blown away. I remember that I was sitting in his room, there were many DM posters on the wall and I listened to a remix of "Fly on the windscreen". It was music from another world to me, much darker but also very emotional, and from this moment I fell in love with the look/image and the music of the band. As a teenager, I grew up in the GDR and that is why it was not easy to find similar music, but I also shared many tapes with my friends and that was



the reason why I could also listen to bands like Front 242, Frontline Assembly or Nitzer Ebb. I became older and today I listen to a wider range of music, from Metal ala Fear Factory, Electronica ala Trentemoller to Techno ala Robag Wruhme.

Rickard: When I was a kid, I listened to a lot of synthpop, like Pet Shop Boys, Depeche Mode, and such. And as Mathias, I started listening to harder sounds in my teens... Front Line Assembly, Skinny Puppy, Nitzer Ebb. Nowadays I do not listen that much to synthpop, as I prefer listening to other genres than the one I play myself. So at home or in

my car, I listen to a lot of soul, funk, and blues. I am a big fan of David Bowie and Bryan Ferry as well.

What was the most life-learning live show experience for you?

Mathias: The most life-learning live show experiences were the concerts together with And One, Camouflage, De/Vision, and my former band Minerve in 2011. I had the chance to play with all these great bands, which influenced me since I was a teenager – it was like a dream come true! And please do not forget that I am not able to play any instrument, I can't read any notes, I am not a

musician who knows everything about chords, song arrangements and so on, I am only a simple guy who needs a computer to bring his song ideas out of his head. That is all. And this guy played together with these big bands in front of thousands of people and after this experience, I knew how good and important it was to believe in myself and in my bandmates, to listen to my heart, to follow my dreams, to respect the fans and to be grateful to the people who helped you on this way.

Rickard: I see every show as important, no matter if it is in front of thousands of people or just two people and a dog. As long as there is at least someone in the audience that likes your music, I will try to do as a great performance as I can. I really learned a lot during the two tours in the USA that my former band LOWE did there. The quality of bands in the States is so high that I felt like I was starting from scratch. I really developed as a musician during those shows.

Please tell us a not-very well-known fact about any of you.

Mathias: As I mentioned before: when I started to record the first "Isola" songs in the studio together with producer Olaf Wollschläger I never had the idea to release them later. I was happy with the feeling to have and to save them on my private hard disks. Later I changed my mind and the whole band / album concept but, in the beginning, there was absolutely no intention to form a band with Rickard or to release an album.

Rickard: When I was 6 I released a Christmas song, which I'm glad to say has become a Christmas classic. I was ashamed of the song for many years,

but now I have grown to like it myself, as I have understood how much it means to both kids and grown-ups. The record company actually gave me a platinum record for the song just recently. Nice to know that you peaked at 6 years of age, ha-ha.

Have there been any life events (apart from those affecting us all) that would influence you artistically to create new songs?

Mathias: I do not think so, no.

Rickard: My mood is my main drive when it comes to creating new songs. But I also look back upon my life to get inspiration. I lived in Berlin, Germany, for a couple of years, and that has been a great inspiration to me.

Are you working on something new already? What can we expect from you in the next few months?

Mathias: Rickard and I are always working on something new... music, videos, or releases in general. But we prefer to present all these things when they are really done.

Rickard: As Mathias said, we are always working on new songs. Now we are working on a couple of new tracks, one of which will be a spoken-word release with a Ukrainian artist.

A few words of support for your Ukrainian fans

Rickard: Our hearts and minds are with our friends in Ukraine, and we hope that we will be able to see each other soon again... In a free, prospering, and independent Ukraine. Слава Україні!



Rickard (Seadrake) Favourite albums 2022

I don't really listen to albums anymore, as I find single tracks more interesting... but I do love concept albums. When I listen to music I try to pick genres miles away from whatever I'm working on at the moment. Having said that, these are my 5 favourite albums of this past year. Слава Україні!



ALEX CAMERON - OXY MUSIC

Seadrake's live vocalist, Sir Boyfriend, introduced me to Alex Cameron and I've loved this album since day one. Not only is the production very laid back (which is something that should be admired in this day and age) but his lyrics are out of this world. Favourite track: "Breakdown".

RÖYKSOPP - PROFOUND MYSTERIES

This is how it's done. Scandinavian melancholy at it's best. Favourite track: Stay Awhile.



LUSTANS LAKEJER - MÖRK MATERIA

If you don't live in Sweden, I doubt that you've heard of Lustans Lakejer. They were actually New Romantic before that was a thing some 40+ years ago. I've done the design for these boys since a few years back, and this is one of their best albums in my opinion. Political and romantic at the same time. Favourite track: Rom i regnet.

UNIFY SEPARATE - MUSIC SINCE TOMORROW

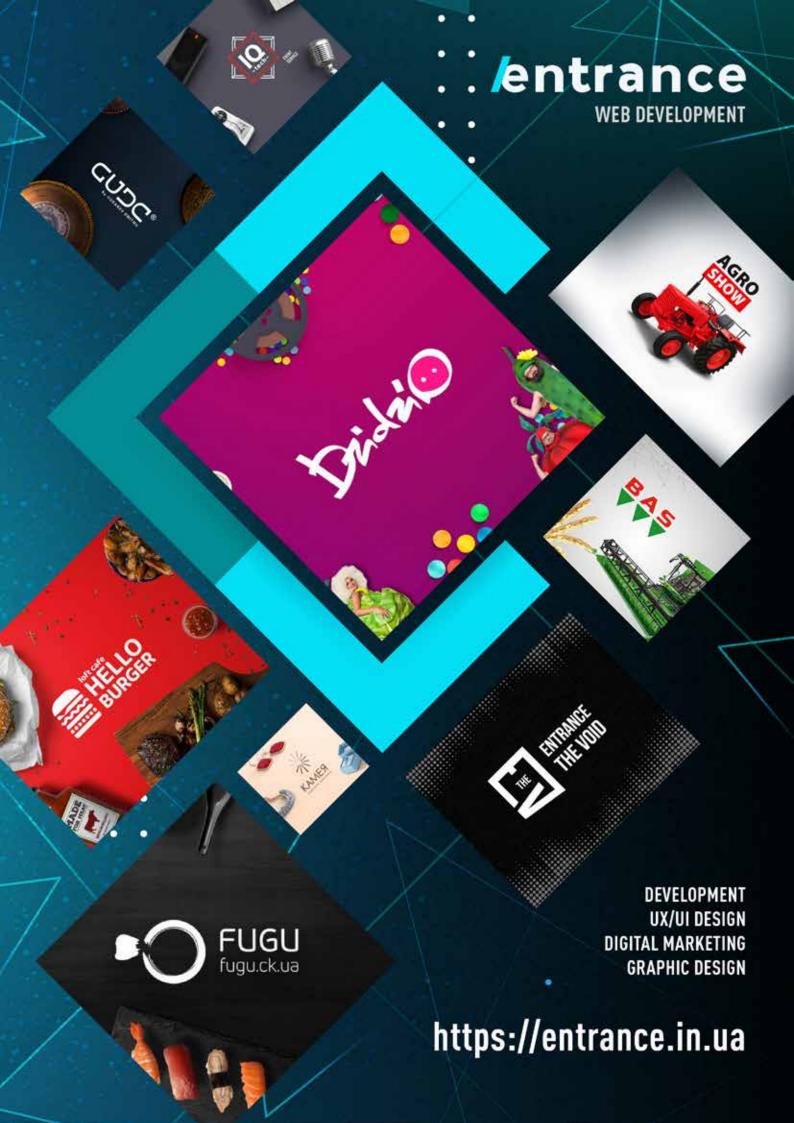
My bandmate and brother in arms Leo from LOWE started a new project a few years back together with the former singer of Geneva. I didn't really listen to it until they performed as support to Suede earlier this year, and both the performance and the music was brilliant. Favourite track: Embrace the Fear.





MOONAGE DAYDREAM - OFFICIAL SOUNDTRACK

This is the official soundtrack to the amazing film "Moonage Daydream" about David Bowie and his creative process. It's a must-see! The music is perhaps not really "new", but the mixes are. Favourite track: Hello Spaceboy (Remix Moonage Daydream Edit).



ERIC13

Written by Ira Titova, Iryna Kalenska

ERIC13 is an American rock musician from Philadelphia. He was the founder, singer, and guitar player for Sex Slaves, a loud, daring, and unadulterated rock band from New York City. He has since recorded and toured with the industrial band Combichrist and released two solo acoustic rock 'n' roll albums. We met Eric on the Internet during the pandemic and since then he has been a frequent guest on our streams, and we, in turn, closely follow his work and support his ideas and initiatives, just like he does ours. But first things first.



It is almost the end of 2022. How has this year been for you?

Eric: 2022 was a year of different emotions – uncertainty, skepticism, relief, fun, and accomplishment. As late as March I still had not played a show since before the pandemic; over two years! Now that it's December, the beginning of the year seems like a distant memory. With so much touring now behind me, I can hardly believe

that I even had the long break. I have been to Malta, Mexico, The UK, and Argentina for solo gigs, and two times all over Europe with Combichrist! What a year!

Combichrist had a massive tour this year. Were you sure, it would happen?

Eric: It seems simple, now, to speak about the big summer tour, but there was a time when I was not even sure I would be back with the band.

I was skeptical of my return until the very last minute before the first show. I wanted to be back, but having suffered so many setbacks and so many cancellations, I needed to complete that first show before I finally believed it. It all seemed so fragile, and at any moment could be taken away again.

It felt great to be back on stage! The energy and the magic came right back. I have always had a natural on-stage chemistry with Andy, and it was no different this tour. We picked up right where we left off.

Once it got going, it came back at 1000 miles per hour – just like the old days. The European Tour was incredible. I will never take for granted how lucky we are to travel to so many places and share these moments with people. I did not realize how much I missed it, how much I needed it.

How did it feel to play in the pandemic world? Do you feel like things have shifted in the music industry?

Eric: In many ways, it feels like everything returned to normal in 2022. All the shows went on as planned. We traveled far & wide via plane, train, ferry, shuttle bus, and taxi, without incident. People were hungry for concerts and entertainment. Touring came back into full swing, and both the bands and the fans were sharing in the excitement of the moment.

Some festivals had smaller crowds than in years past, this was noticeable, but they were still as fun as ever.

You humbly mentioned you wrote a play. We are thirsty to know more about it! So, what is BOWIECHURCH?

Eric: BOWIECHURCH is my new one-man show, a musical really, that will be performed in Philadelphia in January 2023.

The play explores the phenomenon of how the music of David Bowie has been present during some of the most memorable, and the most frightening, moments of my life.

It is a mix of stories and monologues, and I will perform both my own and Bowie's songs on several different instruments. The venue is a historic and beautiful church in Philadelphia that perfectly holds the story, and gives the show its name (There is no religion in the show, it just happens to take place in this church.)









photo: Cynthia Sharpshooter



photo: Jeff Cohn

I have been working like crazy on the script, tweaking, expanding, and refining it. It is amazing how much the story has evolved since I began working on it. I cannot wait to do it.

Doing a play is a major new development for me. It was not a plan or something I even wished to do, it just came to me. I have been involved with some theater productions in the past, but even then, it was as a musician just joining in the fun. I had seen many popular and smaller Broadway shows in the years I lived in New York City but was never inspired to try one myself.

One day, I saw a fellow Philadelphia musician (E.J. Simpson) do a one-man version of Jesus Christ Superstar and was so impressed, I knew then that I wanted to try something like it.

As I began to work on it, I realized what a challenge it was and decided that I would wait until after the big summer tour to really dive into the work, but I thought of it often and collected my notes over the days and weeks. Now I work on it, or at least practice, every day. There is a lot to memorize!

What bands/artists/songs have you been listening to a lot recently?

Eric: I listen to music all day, every day, so I tend to be listening to many different things at once. Lately, I have been spinning vinyl records on my Twitch channel and have been re-exploring my old collection. It is an eclectic mix: Billy Idol, Ozzy Osbourne, Duran Duran, The Cramps, and Adam Ant.

I also have some brand-new records I have collected on recent tours that are in heavy rotation: Priest, Ash Code, Calabrese, Duff McKagan's last solo album, and Echo and the Bunnymen Peel Sessions.

My daily ritual is like this: Chopin piano music with my morning coffee, then switch to heavy stuff like Alice in Chains or Ministry or Motorhead when I work out. When I listen for fun, it can be anything: The Ramones, The Cult, Iggy Pop, Tom Waits, Prismatic Shapes, Madonna, or maybe just some Goth playlists my friends make. I also listen to many international DJs on Twitch: DJ Evangel from Germany, Jo The Waiter and DJ Acid Payne from London, and RiotnerdPhilly!

Public personalities, including artists, have quite an influence. To some degree, you are also in the public eye. Do you think artists should go political?

Eric: There is not a simple answer to this. Each artist has a different voice, and a different style and many simply do not have the desire, or the knowledge, to weigh in on serious issues.

For many years, I made it a point to avoid any sort of political statements. My views were private, and I did not feel informed enough to add to the larger conversation. But the world seemed like a simpler place only a few years ago.

Now, I support any person, not just artists, to voice their opinion. I hope that these opinions are based on facts and intelligent thought. Too often today, people confuse opinions with facts, and it has created an ugly political environment, particularly in the United States. However, we are certainly not the only nation suffering from this.

You have supported Ukraine, our Music Portal, and us personally from day one. Why did you decide to voice your opinion?

Eric: Prior to the pandemic, Kyiv was the last city I visited in Europe. Despite the bitter December cold, I really loved it. People were easy to talk to and made the band feel and me comfortable and welcome. This sounds so simple, but you would be surprised how many places are not like this.

I also had an instant personal connection with the writer/hosts of the Ukrainian Gothic Portal. Just like at the Kyiv show, there was just an obvious, easy friendship. You cared about the music and the artists and had a selflessness that I really respect. There was no hidden agenda. I love to support these types of projects. It was then a natural fit to invite Ira and Iryna onto the live interview show I was hosting during the pandemic. Each time we spoke, the friendship grew. This is my favorite part of traveling and being a touring musician. Meeting people I respect, cultivating friendships, and learning about new places and different cultures.

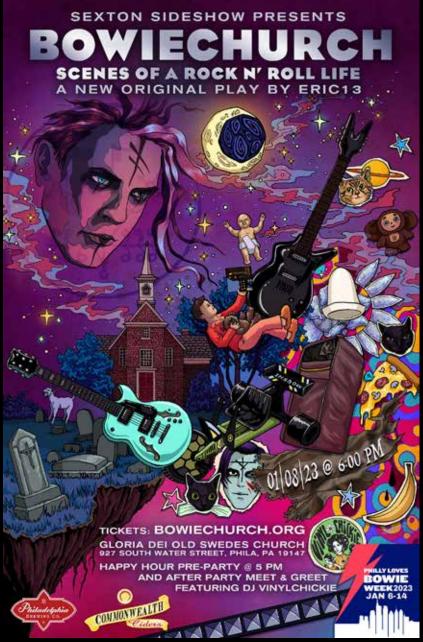
When the Russian War on Ukraine began, I was outraged. It was terroristic and baseless. I thought of my friends and fans there but also of any person that would be so cruelly subjected to this.

I have many Russian friends and have loved my visits to this country, but the atrocities of the Putin regime could not and should not be ignored. I wanted to show my solidarity with the Ukrainian people being so unfairly attacked.

I am lucky enough to have a small international audience who shares such empathy, and I knew I had the means to make a small difference. I was humbled to learn that many other people were willing to contribute and together we were able to help some people in need. This is simple humanity. I want to return to a peaceful Kyiv, to a peaceful Ukraine.

We are sure you have some great plans for 2023. Care to share?

Eric: My goal for 2023 is to try to do one project at a time, to completion. LOL. I am an inspiration junkie



Poster art by Daniella Batsheva

and can easily get involved in so many different things. This keeps me very creatively fulfilled, but I want to put even more music and art out into the world so 2023 will be my year of focus!

First, I make my BOWIECHURCH production as entertaining as I can. Then, I will work on some new music with my friend Erk Aicrag and the experimental music project we have called CHUNTATA BOYS. Then, I plan to record and release some new ERIC13 solo songs before I return to duty with Combichirst for another summer tour. All during this, I will still be streaming on both Twitch and Instagram, and continuing my weekly live streams with my Patreon members. So much to do! I am super inspired heading into the New Year, let's gooooo!



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TRAVEL TO UKRAINE with Samsas Traum

Written by **Markus Pfeffer**Photo by **Maryna Spodaryk**



Preface

My name is Markus Pfeffer. I'm the owner of a comic book store called Weltflucht ("Escapism") in Bochum, Germany.

In September 2022 I joined the band Samsas Traum on their trip to Ukraine. In order to keep all the experiences, impressions and feelings, I wrote this travel diary shortly after my return.

If you have any comments or questions, you can always reach me at markus@weltfluchtbochum. de, in English or German.

Before Bochum

I've always been a cautious person. When I was a child, I didn't do dares, I tried to keep out of arguments, I always chose the path of the least resistance. And now I'm sitting in a car, driving to Ukraine. Seven months ago the country had been attacked by the Russians, since then there's war in Europe – a war everyone is talking about, yet which is not much more than images in the evening news for us in Germany.

Rewind. It's January, Alex and I are sitting in a Greek restaurant in his hometown Marburg. I've had a rough time, so I asked him if I could tell him about some personal problems I'm struggling with. He doesn't give me any advice, but rather decides: we should go visit Kyiv. He knows the city and Ukraine in general, has been there several times before. Iron Maiden will play there in spring, and we could go see Chernobyl with a local guide. We wouldn't go into the dangerous areas, but close enough to get a better feeling for the 1986 catastrophe. In the last ten years, I haven't been farther away from home than at the coast area a few hundred kilometers away.

In February we start planning. I pay for my tickets and a new passport, we're booking AirBnBs. A few days later the Russian invasion and the fights at Hostomel airport make the news. It will be over soon, they say. I make a distasteful joke about Kyiv being Russian by the time Iron Maiden will be there. Who cares, this will be over soon, nothing to see here, rock on. Everything will turn out just fine. I didn't understand anything.

Of course the trip got cancelled. When Maiden announced they wouldn't be coming to Kyiv we didn't have any reason to go there either. But I didn't want to accept this. I admit being egocentric, but what I thought was this: this one time I want to go on an adventure, one single time in ten years – and then this Wladimir Putin appears and takes that away from me? Well, I obviously haven't understood how serious all of this is, but to me, it's something personal now. I sew a Ukraine flag to my battle vest, and start learning about the country, starting in the present. What's happening there? Why? What happened at the Krym? How did that crazy guy become president of Russia? And what exactly was the Soviet Union anyway? I feel stupid and uneducated, because I don't know jack about all these things. If this is western ignorance and arrogance, then I am part of it. But now I want to change that.



Wednesday, September 21st Bochum, Kassel, Krakow

August. Half a year of war. I've seen pictures from Bucha and Mariupol, I'm following the discussions about delivery of weapons, sanctions against Russia, and how to deal with refugees. I want to help, but my job is neither giving me much free time nor spare money. I start engaging in discussions on social media with a clear pro-Ukrainian stance, even though I lack background knowledge.

And then Alex tells me about his plan to play two charity gigs in Ukraine with Samsas Traum. I could join them if I agree to help. I once mentioned wanting to try out being a roadie, so maybe he remembered that? The question is: Do I dare going into a country at war? It's so dangerous! I don't need time to think about it. I agree.

On the evening of September 20th I drive to Kassel, where I meet Michael who'll play guitar on this tour. We talk about the trip, but about old times as well. I don't like feeling like a fanboy talking to members of his favourite band – but I can't ignore all the years in which the music of Samsas Traum gave me strength while my life was dull and grey, and when people like Michael, Alex and their friends were celebrities I only knew from music magazines.

We're driving to the east for eight hours, passing Leipzig, where a dear friend of mine lives. I say hello via WhatsApp. I wonder if she's worried about me. Hours pass, and as long as my mobile phone still connects to the internet I watch political talk shows about the current situation in Ukraine and Germany's position on heavy weapons. It doesn't feel all that different from home. Not like I'm driving to the very place where these weapons are meant to be used. And then the news hit: partial mobilization. Right now. Hundreds of thousands of men are ordered into military service. It only takes hours for huge streams of refugees at the Russian airports and the Russian-Finnish border. We have no idea what this means for our plans – and our safety.

Krakow is a beautiful little city. Poland is yet another country I've never been to, but I like it here. I notice

a candy shop with a cat as a mascot – Candy Cat. We don't have much time, thus we take a walk through the city center and visit a restaurant specialized in pierogi. I usually don't like trying new food, but here I don't have a choice. I order pierogi with potatoes, cottage cheese and onions (or rather, I ask Michael to order for me, because he speaks several slavic languages) and don't regret anything: It tastes fantastic. This is another one of these small moments that teach me an important, new lesson: it's worth taking risks.



On our way back to our hotel we come across a vigil: adults and children carry flowers and the Ukrainian coluors, and state in calm, but decisively voice the integrity of Ukraine. They say reconin English and Polish: "Kyiv is Ukraine. Donetsk is Ukraine. Krym is Ukraine." I reckon it's starting to get serious. I hear Alex breathing heavily. He's obviously moved, his mood changes. When we first arrived in Krakow, I heard one of my friends say "I don't understand how anyone could want to destroy such beauty." I feel guilty because I have a soft spot for dystopic, post-apocalyptic scenarios in comics and movies. I like the strange kind of beauty that can be found in the destruction of civilization. But that's fiction. Art. Welcome to reality.

Thursday, September 22nd Przemysl, Lviv

You forget about a lot of worries when the alarm clock screeches after only four hours of sleep and you only have an hour to get yourself ready for the next trip. Ukraine is still there, no one pushed any red buttons. We drive a few kilometers to Przemysl and joke about not having any idea how to pronounce the name of the small town at the Polish-Ukrainian border. It's all fun and games until we get closer to the border, and there are military vehicles on the road – but no more civil cars.

Przemysl has a small railway station from which trains go to Ukraine. Loads of people are there already. It takes us a while to realize what's off about the situation here: it's almost exclusively women and children. The only male persons here are a few elderly men, a group of jewish rabbis – and ourselves. Hard to say who stands out more: the rabbis in their traditional clothing or us guys with our leather jackets and instrument cases. We

overhear most of the people being refugees who want to return home. Maybe they want to go back to their relatives, maybe they just don't want to stay in Poland anymore. The children carry toys. An older woman has a case on her from which I can hear faint meowing. Later on I see her two small cats, wearing diapers for the long journey. I love cats, and this really touches me. Weeks ago, I had seen pictures of refugees who were desperate to keep their pets, no matter what – all this is real. If the Russians were to bomb down my home, my two cats would be the first I would try to save. I think so. I hope so.

There are a lot of checks at the border, so we have to endure a delay of more than two hours. It is a strange atmosphere – people look at us skeptically. Maybe they wonder "what could those Germans possibly want in Ukraine?" Outside of our train the countryside is empty and boring. Until I start noticing details: a farmer with a lone, single cow. Small, empty cottages. No cars on the streets. The train seems new and modern. Its information displays show our route, advertisements and security notices about anti-personnel mines. A dog checks the train for explosives. It looks like Nelly, the dog of one of my employees





By noon we arrive in Lviv – a city some Germans still know by its German name Lemberg. My first impression is that of an unfamiliar but peaceful city. This impression will start to fall apart over the next days, until it ends up shot down in the gutter. But one thing after the other.

We spend the afternoon with Ruslan and Igor who will be our most important contacts over the next days. Ruslan is a friend of Alex who appears a bit grumpy at first, Igor is the promoter of our two gigs, owner of a club in Kyiv, guitarist of Aghiazma and an all around nice guy with weird earrings.

I come across the Ukrainian version of Candy Cat, called Marmeladniy Kit, and visit a comic book store where I buy some souvenirs for friends at home. I chat a bit with the owner, tell him I own a comic book store, too, and wish him well. I don't know a single word Ukrainian yet, but at least I can say "Slava Ukrajini" rather confidently by now.

With Ruslan, Igor and their wives we visit a bar that looks like a military shelter and where they sell a plush cat with a Javelin rocket launcher. And we have a lot of alcohol, but these Eastern Europeans stay true to their image: that stuff tastes great, but it's no shit. I'm not used to drinking much alcohol, but here I never get drunk, even after nearly a

dozen of shots. I can't engage in the discussions my friends have anyway. They talk about politics and military strategy I have no clue about, so I decide to listen and learn without talking much myself.

This first day in Ukraine was so overwhelming that I decide to stay at the apartment at the end of the day, while my friends take to the streets one more time. It is this first calm moment when I start to realize where I am. I am in Ukraine. I am in a country that has been attacked. This is war. A war that's not even being disguised as a "special military operation" anymore, not after the partial mobilization. I am here.

The day could have ended here, with some poetic words – but the last talk we have is with an elderly woman we meet in front of our apartment. She tells us she had learned German when she was young, complains about corrupt policemen and asks us what we are doing here. Then she starts to show her German skills with the wonderful phrase "Good morning, hands up, 1 2 3 4, goat." Maybe that was some old Ukrainian magic spell? Good night, old woman. One moment I've been melancholic, now I'm laughing about these weird words. But soon I was to be confronted with much bigger contradictions.

Friday, September 23rd Lviv

The next day I finally get a bit more sleep before we go out and explore the town. I notice that there's nothing to notice. What did I expect? Ruins and smoking houses? Lviv seems like a normal city with a lot of history and tradition. It could be a part of Munich or Vienna. Until our cellphones emit a harsh screech. A message pops up that reads "Extreme emergency" – I remember: cell broadcast is the name of this technology which at that time wasn't used in Germany yet. It overrides volume settings and works with nearly every phone. My heart skips a few beats until someone explains to us that this is one of the regular tests – even though this technology has already been warning about incoming rockets before.

There it is again, this looming feeling that something is off here. You feel it, but here you can only see it if you look closely enough: sandbags in front of cellar windows. Propaganda posters. There's an ugly doll on a noose, holding a Russian flag. We find an old bunker and walk through the pitch black hallways

with our flashlights. On the floor there's a syringe – we're cautious not to stumble or touch anything.

Still, I feel like a tourist here. I even help an older couple take a photo, we tell a group of students who we are and what we're doing here. We marvel at statues of people I don't know and find another small but very modern comic book store. I recognize the covers, these are the same books as those in my own store, just with names I can't even read. We eat liquid chocolate and pass a Roshen store – the candy shop chain belonging to former president Poroshenko. I find another Marmeladnij Kit – Alex takes a funny photo of me and the pirate cat mascot.

In the early afternoon we arrive at our destination. Announced as a "secret place" for security reasons, it is the Lviv Art Center, a typical urban meeting point for students. There's a comic book store next to it, not much bigger than my living room. We see drawings of Ukrainian military, propaganda slogans and similar stuff. The amount of patriotism feels weird to me because in Germany patriotism is usually seen as something suspicious, if not downright evil. I assume this feels very different in a country that has been suppressed by outside forces.





I buy an art print showing a female army volunteer with a rescued cat, then it's back to the Lviv Art Center. Michael and Alex are still preparing their show, the support band Nordfløw has arrived, too. I take photos of the people and the venue, look at the artworks and photos on the walls and wait for the start. Around seven o'clock the first guests arrive. I have no idea if any of these people are fans of the band. How do you become a fan of a German gothic band in a country like this, anyway? However, when I was young I was into Japanese underground music, so I guess anything is possible.

And then it starts. During Nordfløw's performance the team becomes hectic as we realize that the live stream via YouTube doesn't work. They fix everything in time, thus shortly before Samsas Traum will start everything is up and running. However, I can't enjoy the gig among the rest of the audience as my job now is filming everything from various perspectives in order to have more material for the upcoming concert DVD.

Still, I am a fan, even though I'm concentrating on doing good work: acoustic gigs aren't my personal favourite, but it's nice to hear beloved classics in these arranged versions. I'm especially touched by Dein schönster Augenblick ("Your most beautiful moment"), one of my favourite songs by Samsas Traum. "Time heals everything – but facing the truth it never heals fast enough" is one of the lines. It befits this country.

There isn't a big audience. Two very beautifully dressed young women catch my eye, as does a young girl who moves her mouth during the whole gig. Apparently she can sing along to every song. When I talk to her later I unfortunately realize that she doesn't even speak German, and only very rudimentary English. Unfortunately we can't have a real conversation.

The gig goes well, we have a good amount of time for small talk and photos afterwards as well. The people in the YouTube live chat seem to be very happy as well – but I start to feel disconnected from these people. I imagine the German fans sitting on their couches at home while I am here in Lviv. At some point, the admin asked where everyone comes from. Several people from my home town Bochum said hello, and I just couldn't resist answering "I'm in Lviv right now".

Even though we're in time, we feel the pressure. We pack our stuff, call an Uber. Of course we'd like to stay longer, but everyone's already on their ways home. Don't take any risks, there's a curfew. Where I live this is the time at which most parties start – here it is already their end.

A bit later we're already sitting in an old train that will take us to Kyiv. We celebrate the first successful evening with vodka and orange juice in paper cups. The train chugs along with 50 or 60 km/h. Later that night I want to go to the toilet, open the wrong door and find myself at the hitch that connects the train cars. I can see the tracks and it's very loud. Better not think about what could have happened if I had opened the door faster, or if I had been drunk. It had been a hard day, but still I finally manage to find some sleep. The next morning I remember dreaming something uncomfortable, but I can't remember what it was. Right after I awake we're already in Kyiv. I'm about to learn that everything until this point was nothing more than a prelude.



5.Saturday, September 24th Kyiv

The first thing I notice in the Ukrainian capital is McDonald's. But while the omnipresence of the hamburger maker is kind of funny, even this is an important thing here: it's only been a few weeks since the American company has resumed operations here, an optimistic signal for many people. Igor guides us to our apartment – a very nice, 200 m² flat with three separate rooms with double beds, a lounge and a huge TV. I'm happy to have one room for myself. I'm sure we'll have an aftershow party here, and I can't predict yet if I will want to join or not. I'm actually not really used to this kind of party, so I'm glad to have the choice.

As we weren't able to have a shower or change clothes since the morning before the bathroom is our first interest. Two hours later we finally feel fresh, clean and relaxed, so we decide to go for something to eat somewhere and head to Maidan afterwards.

The Maidan – a huge place in the center of Kyiv – was where the protests against pro-Russian president

Janukovyc in 2013/14 took place. Of course pictures of the protests and the brutality used against them were in the news all around the world, but still not many people here in Germany cared. I have to admit that I didn't really care either back then; it was just too far away from my little world. Alex however, whose interest in Ukraine originated in some research about Chernobyl, found himself right in the middle of the protest on one of his trips.

In the end, Ukraine got a new president in Poroshenko (the chocolate guy) and Russia annexed the Krym peninsula – which marks the original starting date of the Russian war against Ukraine. Thousands of little flags honour those who died in this war. Putin's victim, a sign reads. Big cyrillic letters read "I love Ukraine", next to them someone dressed up as Tigger from Winnie The Pooh entertains children. The hyperactive tiger, the thousands of dead people, the images from the Maidan protests in my mind – it's hard to get a grasp of the contradicting images and feelings. Until now, "war", to me, is when the sky is red and the world grey, as I know it from Schindler's List or Call Of Duty. A performance by Laibach or Nachtmahr, maybe. History books, woke people chanting "Never again!" But here, war is part of everyday life. War, parties, and Tigger. I struggle to accept this weirdness.





There is a huge park where military vehicles and devices are shown. They are of the Ukrainian military, some defect, some deactivated on purpose. Have I ever seen an actual tank? I don't think so. My mind still doesn't accept what all of this really means. For the people here it seems normal to worship the military and its means. Parents stroll through the park, children climb onto the tanks and into attack helicopters. "This is our defence!" they seem to proudly say. Again, I feel disgustingly arrogant, coming from a peaceful, wealthy country where a lot of people detest even harmless toy soldiers. I take a selfie in front of a T-10M tank with a sign that reads "To Moscow!" I'll use this as a social media profile pic for a while. If anything, I want to demonstrate that I'm not just talking about Ukraine, I've been there.

Then we go to the venue, the Art Club Teplij Lampovij. It belongs to our friend Igor and it consists of a relaxed chill out area, a bar and a dancefloor about the size of my comic book store. The atmosphere

is dark, a bit rough but full of interesting details – I like venues like this. Maybe it's a bit small for a regular Samsas Traum concert – but this is not a regular concert. Still, everything seems a bit more normal than the day before. There's an actual stage with a drumset and a lightshow, and the audience looks more like gothic or metal scene than the day before. Surprisingly, the girl from yesterday is here again – the one who sang along to all the songs. Apparently she followed us through half of Ukraine – I'm genuinely impressed.

Everything goes to the plan, and I like this concert a bit more than the first one. The audience seems more used to rock concerts, jumps and dances and sings along with Samsas Traum as well as with the support act Violet Raymoor. This is the kind of feeling I visit concerts for. The energy, the enthusiasm, the hands in the air. I love all of this, and seeing that I suffered from depression and social anxieties for many, many years, this is a surprising and wonderful revelation – each and every time.



This time, there's no rush after the gig, so I start watching Alex talking to fans, Michael improvising a song with some other musician, and have an idea: I start talking to people and ask them to share their feelings about this evening with my camera. They can say whatever they want, no matter the language - just authentic and unfiltered feelings. All of them are thankful and happy, but I wasn't prepared for the reaction of two girls. While the two friends thank us for the concert, they get tears in their eyes. I turn off the camera and only now I realize that this is the first time I'm actually talking to Ukrainian people on my own. And I understand that their feelings are much more than just those of fans who get to meet their idols. The two can hardly find words to express how thankful and happy they are. And I am sure that it will be hard for me to put into words how I felt at this moment. I never lived in a country that's been threatened by another one. I never had to be afraid of rockets. I have never known how it feels to live in a country no one seemingly cares about. I have never experienced a conflict transforming

into a fully blown war. Real rockets hitting my hometown. I have never felt that it would be impossible to see my favourite band one day. And I have no idea how someone feels whose favourite band comes to his country to show support in the most unlikely of times.

No, this is not a "meet and greet" with some rock band. I understand: We did something good here, and not just by raising money for a local refugee shelter.

These two girls will keep this evening in their hearts. They will remember it when they are old and when they tell their children and grandchildren about the war. They will talk about the guys from Germany who were brave enough to travel to Ukraine when most people didn't do more than send toughts and prayers below a picture on Facebook. Back then, decades ago. They will remember us when the war will be a part of history books.

They don't want to leave, but they're worried about the curfew. They leave, reluctantly. Happy about this evening, sad that it had to end. I feel similar. I feel lucky to have been part of something so

important, so wonderful – yet I feel useless because I can't help any more. I hug my new friends, wish them well and for the first time since my departure I promise to someone that I'll meet them again. "I will come back and then war will be over and we will celebrate and dance and drink. You can do this, I believe in you."

We finally get home. For a few hours we sit in our apartment with friends, drinking, talking. A young woman, a bit tipsy, seems interested in me, again and again she thanks us for coming. I tell her the same I told the girls at the club: "You can do this." When I finally go to bed, I don't care what the others are doing. My thoughts circle back to myself and my little, harmless, more or less happy life with its small problems. I "can do it", whatever "it" is. No problem I could ever face can be compared to what these people are going through. And yet, they dance and celebrate. And yet ... and yet ...

Everything will be fine one day.



Sunday, September 26th Kyiv, Irpin, Bucha, Borodyanka

This is the single morning on our trips with no obligations waiting for us. No gigs, no trains, just free time. But we're not here for fun. If yesterday was an emotional high, this will be the total opposite.

After breakfast we stroll through Kyiv again. There have been images of captured Russian tanks displayed on a Kyiv main street some weeks ago - now these tanks are on a public place near a park. The tanks yesterday were put there as an exhibition on purpose, like in an open air museum. "Interesting", "cool" stuff indeed. But it's different here: this is no long forgotten history – with these devices people have been killed, just months ago. In these tanks, young men from Russia were going to war. They shot Ukrainian people, soldiers, buildings, other tanks. And they died in these tanks. Maybe they actually believed the twisted Russian propaganda, maybe they actually believed they were doing the right thing. My mind plays tricks in order to not get mad: maybe they escaped before

these tanks were blown to pieces. But maybe they were actual sadists, evil people who deserved to die. "Their own fault", one could say. Maybe it was like this. Maybe.

The tanks are full of pro-Ukrainian graffiti but also still bear the Z, the Russian symbol of the war. A BMD-4M is torn in half. The twisted metal gives a good impression of how hard hitting the explosion within it must have been. A sculpture made out of sandbags bears signs asking for international help. A wall of fame shows pictures and names of thousands of victims – starting in the year 2014.

For me, the emotional intensity builds up continuously during our trip. Maybe I was lucky I didn't get confronted with this horror from the get-go. Three days ago, it was military transporters on a highway. I listened to people talking about their lives. I saw toy soldiers and tanks in a store. A military exhibition. Thankfulness and joy in the eyes of young people whose lives were so radically different from mine. Actual, real tanks from a war that happened right here, right now. What's next? I fear that this evening will confront me with feelings and sights you can't prepare yourself for. We're going to Bucha.





Our driver knows the area, wants to show us areas north of Kyiv where actual battles have been fought. But first we go to a small market, as if it could clear our minds one last time. I buy two handmade plush cats and a T-shirt with a tank and "Good evening! We are from Ukraine!" printed in blue and yellow on it. Then we get into our friend's car. For the first time we get so see actual destruction, still from behind our windows. The windows also separate us from a collapsed bridge and destroyed houses. It's still "pictures" to me. What I see behind the window is what I've seen on TV screens. I still feel disconnected. Just pictures. One last time my emotional self defense tries to see this as something that's interesting, good to know, an adventure. Then we stop. Leave the car. No more windows or screens. And reality hits me with full force.

No one can prepare you for seeing a burnt down car full of bullet holes that might have belonged to some normal person like me. On a parking lot in Irpin there are dozens of them. After the town got raided by Russian soldier they were put here to free the way, and now they are still here. They look like they were rusting in some jungle for decades – but this is burnt paint. And the holes are not from corrosion. There's a suitcase in one of the cars. A washing machine in a small transporter. Random stuff in glove boxes. A case for glasses. People

painted sunflowers onto the cars – the symbol of resistance against Russia. I want to take a closer look, like I would do with some tourist sights. One of the cars has its spare wheel attached – the normal wheel lies on the passenger seat. Did the car break down? Or did an attack destroy the wheel? Did the driver try to escape with the spare wheel attached? The car is burnt down, parts hang out of the chassis. I can see traces of the light blue colour it might have had once. Maybe someone liked this colour. Maybe.

When I want to go further I feel moist in my face. Without me noticing I had started to cry. I sit down, stare at the cars. I see Alex taking photos. Michael standing at our car. Finally it hits me, my mind, my very soul. I understand now. This is what "war" means. People like myself, people I've met. People like this have been sitting in these cars. Never before in my life did I feel such certainty about how wrong the priorities in my life are. Everyone has their own problems – and the most pressing always appears as the biggest one. But standing in front of these cars I can't help but feel sheer hate for those people in Germany who oppose supporting Ukraine because they fear for their own wealth. People who protest on the streets because this year our heating will be two degrees colder.



We continue. Time after time we stop at destroyed houses, get out of the car and turn pictures into realities. I see an advertising sign for a sushi bar in one of the buildings. What if all this had happened in Germany? Would embedded journalists or people like us walk through the remains of a destroyed Bochum, find a Weltflucht sign and wonder what happened to the owner of that store? Would someone ponder what the meaning of the cats in my company's logo was? If the people who worked here tried to fulfill the big dream of their lives? How does it feel to have everything you love and care about destroyed? When you know that it was this one person who ordered this destruction? One person who has more power than you and me will ever have? Because he wants to own the country you're living in? How does it feel when you know that this person wants you dead - not even out of a personal hatred against you, but simply because you're in the way? You're in the wrong place at the wrong time, and this is why you die? What's worse - being hated or not being cared about at all?

How does it feel to lose your life – figuratively and literally – to someone who feels nothing when looking at this sushi bar sign? Who would even rejoice when seeing the cars in Irpin? Who sees a successful operation in this town instead of people? No towels hanging in some windows? No book shelves behind destroyed walls?

Who aren't able to differentiate between problems that are worth thinking about and problems which are nothing more than arrogance and selfishness. People who bear Russian flag and want Ukraine to "give in a little", to be a bit more diplomatic.

I feel useless, I feel as if I don't matter at all. A voice in my head tells me to get back to the car and stay there – this might be too much for me. I fear what I might see next. But I want to matter. I want to be useful. And the least I can do is to not close my eyes, in order to be able to tell about what I've experienced when I'm back home. Yes, you can decide to be strong – if the impulse for that decision is strong enough. Which impulse could be stronger than this?

After Irpin we go to Bucha and Borodyanka - I can't tell the differences. It's only my photos meta data that helps me to pinpoint where exactly I've seen what. Someone shot a statue of Taras Schewtschenko in the head. We see remains of exploded grenades. Asphalt that has molten and hardened again - looking like a milk bag thrown on the floor. Massive destruction at a local cultural center – again, people have painted sunflowers onto the destroyed buildings. I've seen the reports - in the woods behind this town families have been executed by the Russians in order to demonstrate strength. Women have been raped. Children killed. Here. Here. HERE. This happened here. It actually happened. This is fucking reality. And it's not over yet.



Later on we'll see more Russian vehicles. Not as part of an exhibition, but burnt down along the streets. We're ordered to be careful when we get there in order not to step on landmines. And yes, we've seen them – marked with small flags by the military.

But before going there, to the Antonov airport and back to Kyiv, we'll go into the backyard of some bigger buildings. There's a lot of garbage lying around and maybe what I'm about to see might be the worst I've seen in my life so far. There's the packaging of a smartphone. Did some teenager try TikTok with it? A beauty product, something with collagen. Did it belong to a woman who liked styling herself? A Polaroid photo of some people sitting together. Who were they?

Can you imagine standing among the remains of a house, finding children's toys? I hold a yellow beach toy in my hands without understanding what it's supposed to be. Much later I see that Alex took a photo of me at that moment. On it I look like a child that found something indescribable. Next to it there are more. Are they supposed to be fruits? I immediately forget it. I find some Lego bricks. A Lego minifigure. It has a small round brick instead of a head. I remember: when I was very young, I was fascinated by the idea that bricks and heads were interchangeable. The figure has only one arm. How many arms does the child have left that used to play with it? Where is it? Gone? To Poland or Georgia? To Germany? Or just dead? Children building sand

castles. Rockets hitting living rooms. People on the run. The remains of a whole life in a suitcase. Where are my toys? Doesn't matter, we have to go now. 2 degrees colder in winter. Diplomacy. Nato. Provocation. Lack of gas. Air defence. Heavy weapons. Higher prices for gasoline, Germany's outraged. Social tourism. Not our war. Priorities. Where are my toys, mama?

We go back to Kyiv, to Maidan, where we meet up with Igor, his wife and some friends for a final get together. The city is pulsating with life. Some teenagers have erected loudspeakers for an improvised open air disco. Musicians are playing live and people are dancing and cheering around them. Some hold hands, they look happy, enjoying their lives. There's a happy atmosphere in our restaurant, even though the impending goodbye looms above us. I have a Kyiv Mule – which is in fact a renamed Moscow Mule – and some toast with my new friends. I remember my promise from the day before. I want to see these people again. I like them, I like their city, I like the openness and friendliness I've experienced here. And their attitude: these people want to fight. And I want to come back one day. Later I tell that to Alex: whatever it takes, I want to join him when he returns. We have a beer with a Russian soldier depicted as a warthog on its bottle. I get my stuff ready and go to sleep – surprised by how intense my desire to stay longer is – or at least to return soon. But I also want to tell my friends at home about all these experiences.

Monday, September 26th and Tuesday, September 27th Kyiv, Przemysl, Kassel, Bochum

In the morning hours of September 26th it's a simple and boring reality that keeps our mood down: two more days of travel until we'll finally be in our own homes. Igor says goodbye at the Kyiv main station from where we head to Przemysl on a very modern train and where I buy a bottle of Ukrainian vodka with a soldier on it. Ten hours of travel for the first part, but we don't talk much. I listen to an audio book and watch some streaming videos for as long as my Ukrainian SIM card works. Midways, we meet Ruslan and his wife in Lviv for another goodbye. He has a present for Alex, we hug and and handshake. We're moved, Alex later says that this was one of the most beautiful presents he ever received.

Near our destination our passports get checked by one of the female soldiers on the train. We notice how beautiful these women are, or rather: that they apparently put quite some effort into their make ups. It's quite a contrast to the bulky uniforms – a befitting anecdote in this country. These women don't let this get taken away from them. Why not use make up, even though you now have to wear uniforms and carry weapons? "Our" soldier smiles when we tell her about our trip and the concerts – she even thanks us for our support. It's a touching

smalltalk, a little ray of light amongst all the sad reasons for which people are on this train.

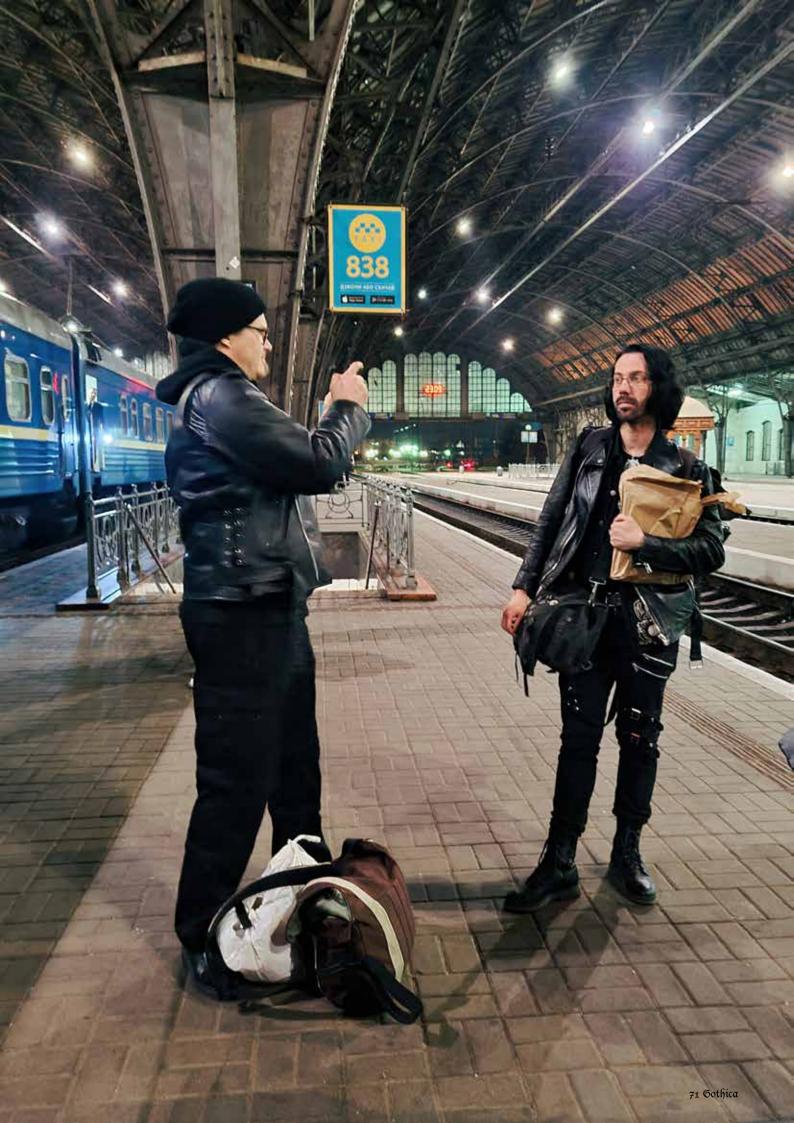
In Przemysl we sleep in a hotel where I once again have to eat meat, even though I'm a vegetarian – I'm just too hungry. We sleep in two rooms – Alex complains about getting a dirty room with broken furniture, Michael and I have been lucky with our room.

After that it's ten more hours by car from Przemysl through Poland and Germany. We talk a bit more than the day before, about the German comic market, Alex's comic publishing company Insektenhaus, about new songs for Samsas Traum. Michael misses an exit, causing a one hour delay for us, but we reach our destination in time. It's only the very last part of the journey on which when I face some issues: the short distance from Michael's hometown Kassel to Bochum takes four hours instead of two.

At half past midnight on Wednesday morning I arrive in Bochum. Ironically the first thing I notice is a sign that points to support for Ukrainian refugees. I walk home, it's raining, I see my comic book store across the street. It's the same way I walk home every day. Unlock the door, feed the cats. I have a doctor's appointment the next morning, and after that I have to go to work. I'm happy to meet my employee and my friends again.

Everyday life in a safe country. Everything is normal. Everything has changed.





Aftermath Bochum

When we said out goodbyes in Kassel, Alex asked me if this trip was an adequate replacement for the missed Iron Maiden concert. No, it wasn't. Iron Maiden, that would have been an interesting, fun and exciting vacation. Instead I got an experience that changed me. I gained a new perspective only a few people here have. The more time passes, the more I understand what this week has changed about me.

But it's two contradictory things: in Irpin, Bucha and Borodyanka I've seen the worst I've ever been confronted with. For the first time I've seen the horrors of war. I could have looked away. I could talk about it in therapy or just try to forget it. I could be happy to be back home safely. Instead I want to keep the memories of touching the rubble of bombed buildings. I never want to forget what I felt when I saw that Polaroid, or the Lego figure.

And yet, there are so many positive memories. That enormous hope, optimism and the will to fight and win. You can feel it when talking to Ukrainians, see it on posters, hear it in their music, the children's voices and in the ever present greeting "Slava Ukraini!". Even while facing the enemy they are not only fighting, but also dancing, laughing and celebrating. In the streets, in clubs, in the apartments of rock bands from Germany.

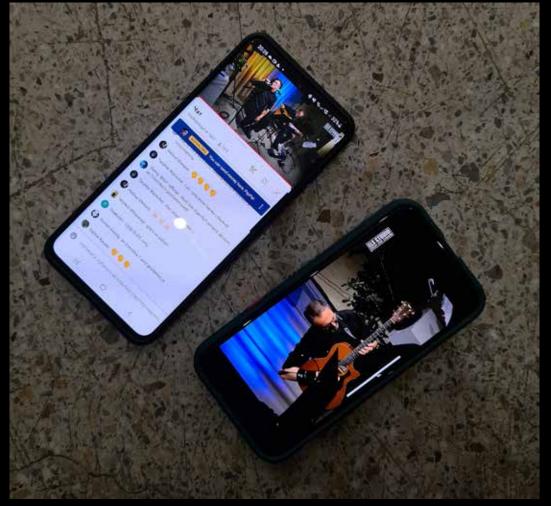
I never want to forget or ignore what happens in this world and that it's our duty to fight misery wherever we find it – everyone according to his means. Some play music, some have parties. Others draw caricatures or report for the international press. Some donate money, and some are only capable of showing symbolic gestures. A Facebook profile picture, a button on their shirt, or by taking part in a pro-Ukrainian demonstration. Some have a flag in their windows, and some comic book shops play Ukrainian rock music.

I want both: Keep my eyes open for the suffering of others. Help them, whenever I can. But I also want to enjoy my life. Not just when everything is fine, safe and clean, but especially when the rockets

target me – figuratively and literally. In the end, a final contradiction stays with me: I need to take myself less seriously, being aware of what other people have to endure. And I have to take myself much more seriously – it's the only life I have.

Less than two weeks later I wake up to a message from a friend in Kyiv. The young woman, with whom I danced, talked and partied only days ago is sitting in the basement of her house. Rockets have hit her neighborhood, now she's without electricity and water. She's afraid.

Reality hits me once again.







13/01 Helanki 02/03 Millan 14/02 Wersaw 03/03 Munich 15/02 Kealow 04/03 Budapean 15/02 Berlin 07/03 Esch-sur-Al 18/02 Hamburg 08/03 Cologae 20/02 Amsterdam 08/03 Cologae 21/02 Prankfurt 10/03 Eschost 21/02 Prankfurt 10/03 Eschost 24/02 Barcelona 13/03 Glasgow 24/02 Barcelona 13/03 Glasgow 25/02 Madrid 14/03 Monchester 26/02 Lisbon 15/03 London 27/02 Porto 01/04 Philadelphia OUR 2023

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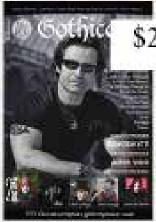
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