



Synesthesia: Moscow’s EXIT project Evokes the Wildest Stretches of Global Bohemia, While Reinventing the Album

Enter Russia’s **EXIT project**, and you’ve tumbled into a fantastic loft party, where Buddhist bodhisattvas dance to swirling violin lines, where club-ready beats morph into evocative, freeform soundscapes. It’s like the Art Ensemble of Chicago and John Zorn invited The Orb over for a romp through the wild fields of bohemia.

With *LiveSplashes* (available on CD, for traditional download via <http://exitproject.org/albums/livesplashes/> and in **3plet format**), EXIT project opens their world wide with a groove-based, globally inflected set that departs from the group’s previous experiments. It’s a vivid trip that chronicles several decades of Russian art music evolution, as well as the increasing interpenetration of genres from jazz to world music to EDM.

Part of an unsung Moscow scene and at the vanguard of a digital distribution revolution, EXIT project proves that openness and the willingness to accept radical change and unexpected solutions leads to hard-grooving musical bliss.

{full story below}

The broad-thinking band sounds like where they got their start: an old loft overlooking downtown Moscow’s elegant streets. There, the band’s first iteration gathered, turning architecture and geometry, psychology and wine, into increasingly complex jams. Bohemian fellow travelers wandered in and out, unconventional instruments appeared, curious characters and sounds came and went.

“Imagine an architect’s atelier, in the heart of Moscow,” EXIT project multi-instrumentalist and producer Oleg Smirnov describes with a smile. “There’s this fresh, exciting feeling of magic, of the discovery that you will make when you enter the thick wooden door, when you hang out at the worn kitchen table, with always new and interesting creative people coming to listen... It was pure bohemia from the start.”

But EXIT project took it far beyond mere hip noodling and cool hanging. Finding a

variety of sounds and a plethora of inspirations—from year-long stints in India and Congo, from musicians like avant-jazz player Sergei Letov (of jazz legend Sergei Kuryokhin’s band), Auktyon’s sax whiz Nikolai Rubanov, and folk icons like Inna Zhelannaya—the ensemble grew into a creative juggernaut, packing festival halls and distributing nearly a million total copies of their work.

Along with Smirnov—a tireless arranger and producer jokingly dubbed “Delay” for his skillful deployment of a lush range of effects live—and jovial, spot-on drummer Vladimir “Big” Glushko, EXIT project members can leap from traditional to tribal, from precise jazz to rock intensity.

LiveSplashes reveals this nimbleness in all its glory. Violinist Maria Logofet plays everything from rock to Sephardic music, and whips out gorgeous, sinuous lines on pieces like “Inner Monster.” Alto sax player Anastasia Bogoslavskaya has gained a serious reputation as a jazz performer, but knows how to cut loose into new territory (“Color Splashes”). Percussionist John Kukaryamba has a globally tuned ear and an uncanny knack for mythical storytelling using his voice and his international instrumentarium (“The Walk”).

There are moments of downtempo and edgy jazz (including a creative reinterpretation of a John Zorn tune, “Meholalot”). Moments of cosmopolitan sheen and deep, East-meets-West Russian soul.

“We’re part of the contemporary cultural underground here in Moscow and in Russia, art-fusion as we call it, that has never tried to be fashionable or sexy,” explains Big. “The aesthetic behind it is quite eclectic and combines jazz, ethnic, electronic, classical and experimental artists together in the true creative pursuit. What we do falls out of any stylistic mainstream.”

The emphasis on creativity, on shifts in sound, have helped EXIT project navigate the rapidly, constantly changing music world with aplomb and imagination. In addition to offering all their music free online, they have joined up to release their work in a new, multifaceted format, 3plet, which unites music, text, and graphics to present a fuller experience of a thoughtfully curated musical grouping.

It’s the evolution of the album, a deeper, more flexible means to convey the artistic depth that has gotten lost with the advent of scattered, individual singles and random mp3s. Every track comes with a slideshow, song texts, artists statements and bios, and places for listener comments, as well as an easy means for sharing material via social media.

“It’s an obvious and simple idea to unite three elements—music, graphics, and texts—into a unified format and try to reach a new level of artistic quality based on that union,” notes EXIT project manager Valery Mifodovskiy.

3plet is a natural fit for Russia, which rapidly skipped over physical infrastructure and CDs in favor of filesharing and digital avenues for music dissemination. “In Russia, CDs have turned from a means of mass musical distribution to a mere souvenir or promo item,” recounts Mifodovskiy. “Russia’s largest retail record chain closed almost all its stores last year. The age of the CD is already over here.”

Yet 3plet also promises benefits to musicians around the planet, addressing the complexities of today’s multi-platform world and the difficulties of an international simultaneous release. “Our goal is to create a universal format that works across platforms like iOS, Android, Windows, and BADA, and that is able to replace the CD,” Mifodovskiy continues, “while giving musicians the possibility to release an album on

all platforms on the same day worldwide. That's no easy feat."

Challenges aside, 3plet gives carte blanche to the free-range creativity of groups like EXIT project, whose accompanying words and visual elements are as intriguing, thoughtful, and psychedelic as their sounds. "We have made radically different music," muses Smirnov, "but this time around, we wanted our work to be intricate and artistic on the one hand, but also comprehensible and accessible for as many listeners as possible, on the other. And so came *LiveSplashes* and 3plet."



<http://exitproject.org/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exit_Project

<http://www.facebook.com/exitprojectrus>

<http://www.reverbnation.com/exitprojectrus>

<http://soundcloud.com/exit-project>

<http://www.3plet.com/en/>

<http://www.lastfm.ru/music/EXIT+project>

http://twitter.com/#!/EXITproject_rus

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