

## **Quiet Color, Serbian Gypsy >>**

*Marc Amigone*

Kal, the funkier Serbian Gypsy band on the planet, will be hitting the stage at Drom Monday September 22nd, at which point a serious dance party will unfold. Kal's music is a diverse mix of influences

and sounds that only the well traveled Gypsy, or Roma people as they prefer to be called, could produce. They mix bhangra beats, Argentine tango, waltz, Balkan blues, Montenegrin rap, accordion, flamenco guitar, Middle Eastern rhythms, and Turkish clarinets, with a dancefloor shaking mentality.

The band takes its name from the word for "black" in the Roma language, evoking the historical and contemporary struggles of their people—racism, exclusion, prejudice, persecution. Since the time their ancestors began wandering west from northern India over 1,000 years ago, Roma have been persecuted yet romanticized, treated as magical yet dangerous. Kal seeks to eradicate prejudice through their music. They are extremely proud of their Roma heritage, and use their music to promote Roma culture.

Kal also seeks to establish a higher standard of quality in Roma music. Blending music from Bosnia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia, the Belgrade based band adheres to a higher benchmark than most popular music in their part of the world both in production quality and depth of character.

"Kal aims to set an example to the young Roma musicians across the Balkans that you can be both modern and roots at the same time," says Dragan Ristic, who founded the band with his brother Dushan. "So many young Roma are just making pop crap because Balkan society, especially Serbian society, has, after the collapse of communism, allowed the lowest common denominator to rule. Many good young musicians compromise their music because they can't imagine that anyone wants to hear anything but turbo trash. I hope we set an example of young Roma musicians using beats but staying true to Romani culture and music."

Kal's self-titled debut album came out in March 2006 on Asphalt Tango Records and has been shaking asses at dance parties worldwide since. Their sound is a deep mix of Balkan sounds mixed with house beats and Roma lyrics. They're something you won't hear often. Come check them out at Drom, Monday September 22nd. I guarantee it will be cooler than what you were going to do on Monday night.

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