



One of the most unusual albums I ever had the pleasure of reviewing, Ersatz Musika's debut album is a strangely compelling mixture of Russian folk songs from the 'underground' full of longing for times past, loves lost and missing friends.

With an air of the Burlesque the lead singer and leader of the 6 piece band Irina Doubrovskaja, who also plays the accordion and keyboards, takes us on a surreal journey through the Russian left-field, where friends from the former Soviet Union would meet secretly, drink Ersatz coffee, (because the real thing wasn't available unless you were a member of the Politburo) and discuss the issues of the day. These friends would record songs onto tapes and pass them around the group creating their own underground music scene, hence the band's name 'Erstaz Musika'. The band members, now based in Berlin, keep the tradition alive and send this Voice Message to all their compatriots now scattered around the globe.

Effortlessly absorbing elements of waltz, polkas some blues guitar riffs, and even a touch of reggae-beat in one of the tracks, this is an album made in earnest with a lot of tenderness and without compromise. Packed full with atmosphere the music is never in a hurry to get anywhere, the pace mostly slow to medium, the songs sad but resolute; Voice Letter even has little of the Manu Chao about it, albeit in a Russian kind of way

After only one listening I was already whistling one of the tunes and attempting to sing the words (T12) Eh Kalina, always a good sign.