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Here comes a sound that you probably haven't ever heard. They are called KAL and were formed by the brothers Ristic, Dushan, and Dragan. They are Romani Gypsies from Belgrade, Serbia who have blended their traditional Balkan Gypsy sounds with the more contemporary music of what they listened to in the clubs of Belgrade and Budapest.

With energy to spare, KAL has an exotic sound all their own, and this self-titled CD packs 12 incredible tracks that bring you into the traveling troop of Gypsy life before turning around and booming you out into the stratosphere with hard beats that keep the party going.

The Ristics wanted to keep their traditional music alive, yet they were also influenced by the techno and house music that was thumping out of the discos in Eastern Europe. While growing up in central Serbia and feeling the repression that all Gypsies feel, they formed a band to bring to light the harshness and discrimination the Romani Gypsies felt after Yugoslavia was broken up when Tito fell. I don't speak Slavic or Gypsy let alone Romani Gypsy, so I can't understand what they are saying, but their groove is unstoppable.

"Duj Duj" is the first track, and it starts out with a single guitar and a double bass, that brings to mind images of Ali Baba and the forty thieves. Its percussion beats are hypnotic and the blending of the clarinet and the accordion create an aura of mysticism. The whole CD has that mystic root to it, the root of the Gypsies, the root of surviving. It's followed by "Dvojka", which sounds like Gypsy-ska combined with whatever Dragan is singing. He creates a "Squirrel Nut Zipper" sound with a Gypsy scat halfway through the song.

"Boro Boro" is another hypnotic track that gives you the feel of the old caravan, as the sole voice sings out the cries of what could be anything. I figured it might have to do something with a lost burro, but like I said, they could be saying, "Kill you American pigdogs" and I honestly wouldn't know. The sound is sweet and the music has a trance-like rhythm, as does the whole album.

There are also a few "love songs," I guess you could call them, or should I say "romantic" songs. "Djelem, Djelem" is one that seems to have a bit of a '70s soft-rock underbelly with Dragana Berakovic's voice slowly caressing the words as she evokes the warm summer days on the Mediterranean coast. With the accordion joining in, all I can picture is stone white houses set upon rocky hills facing a blue sea.

KAL hired Mike Nielsen to produce, arrange, mix and find new beats for this album of 21st century Gypsy soul. Nielsen's experience involves everything from mixing Dizzy Gillespie's live sound to working with Maori and other Turkish music as well as producing bands like Underworld, Jamiroquai and Natasha Atlas (She is another great sound coming out of that area of the world).

When all is said and done, KAL has a great sound that transcends through the generations and brings about the new soul of Gypsy music while holding onto the old traditions. The blended sounds mirror the spirit of the Gypsy. The fire has been rekindled and the young Gypsies have grown up, bringing a new perspective to the old stories, so join KAL and travel where ever the road takes you with a new band of Gypsies.

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