

The Daily Break, CD Review >>

You're a young Romany (Gypsy) musician in former war-torn Serbia. What do you do? If you're theater producer/musician Dragan Ristic, a noted promoter of Romany pride, you start a cutting-edge Eastern European outfit capable of tearing the roof off the Balkans, and you name your sextet Kal, the Romany word for "black."

But there's nothing remotely dark about this band's violin/twin accordion attack. Bolstered by Ristic's songs and guitar and a nimble rhythm section anchored by Dragan Runic's exceptional double bass playing. Kal presents traditional Serbian Romany music zapped by waltz tempos, Serbian rap, Hawaiian guitars and melodic romanticism.

The session was recorded at Ristic's Belgrade apartment studio and overseen by European producer/arranger Mike Nielson, who filtered the swaying Gypsy gyrations through electronic rave-up rhythms.

Songs burst with hyperkinetic energy, giving the session a sound like an explosion at an Eastern European music factory. Among the highlights is "Gurbetski Tango," which sounds as if a Buenos Aires combo took a wrong turn in Eastern Europe.

This is a passionate, joyous session that's sure to put the bounce in the Balkans. 06/02/06