



KAL
RADIO ROMANISTA ([Asphalt Tango CD ATR2009](#))

I had this experience that I may have already related to you. I was watching the Taraf de Haidouks DVD and when it ended my television came on. It was tuned to PBS, which is the American Public Broadcasting station, and they were running an old Lawrence Welk show. (PBS schizophrenically tries to find an audience, so they run really creaking stuff like Welk but then they throw up Eric Burdon or Jim Morrison to try to snag a younger audience -- which is actually the up-&-coming geriatric crowd.) Anyway, there was Myron Florin playing his accordion, and other beloved characters, and I cannot tell you what I thought because it is potentially libelous. Welk and his 20-piece band played polkas and other Eastern European music that had remained popular in the USA but it was so devoid of life, so reduced to cartoon formulae, that it was just bland musical earwash. When you hear real gypsy music, like this new KAL CD, you realize how it is a living evolving entity, and so slippery you can barely grasp it. This is Rock 'n' Roma: punk energy suffused with the spirit of dispossession. Though are punks more socially alienated than gypsies? So it's doubly disconnected from the mainstream. There is great guitar (lead singer and guitarist Dragan Ristic), violin (Vladan Petrovic is outstanding) and two accordions, but also a clarinet shows up as well as other guests. I guess the Clash are an influence, not just from the title: You can hear it in the vocals, some of the tempi, and Goran Savic's drumming. It's been three years since Kal's debut CD, which featured lots of guest vocalists, and they went from being an obscure Belgrade bar band to touring ceaselessly, playing festivals in Europe and the USA, but it paid off because now their sound reflects three years of pushing themselves to explore and excel. This CD represents their live sound and their diverse and highly original repertoire.