

SOVIET ROCK

+ 25 years in the underground
5 years of freedom



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
The Archive of Contemporary Music



*Just wait a little and the dream will come true,
Our folks will take up the seats.
Under threat of severed arms or legs
We will all be listening to nothing but rock!*

Aquarium



SOVIET ROCK

25 years in the underground
+ 5 years of freedom

Edited by Igor Zaitsev
Designed by Alexander Yefremov



Progress Publishers
Moscow

Translated from the Russian by *Mark Buser* and *Dmitry Linnik*

Советский рок

На английском языке

Photo: Boris Asriev, Andrey Andryuschenko, Edward Basilaya, Valentin Gdiyarov, Leonid Gusev, Boris Korovin, Aleksey Melnitsky, Andrey Usov, Alexander Shishkin

© Progress Publishers 1990

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher.

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

C $\frac{1101000000-274}{014(01)-91}$ 44-90

ISBN 5-01-001983-3

C O N T E N T S

AUTHORS

11 THE ROOTS

Soviet avant-garde music of the 1960s and rock music of the age of *perestroika*. Musicians of two generations reveal similarities in musical lingoes and motivation. Social parallels are apparent in the lyrical idioms of avant-garde artists of the 60s and rocksters of the 80s.

Read into

recollections of obscure Soviet avant-garde musicians Mamleyev, Golovin and Grazhdankin reflections of the impact of avant-garde on contemporary rock critique of the tragic and the absurd as an aesthetic nucleus of rock artistry profiles of predecessors of currently popular Center and Va Banque

29 THE TREE

history of Soviet rock retold by those who made it
Focus on
existential cataclysms of Soviet rock musicians
barriers in the way of artistic freedom
the "human factor" in Soviet rock music

63 THE CROWN

a map of currents in the Soviet rock movement, a virtual model of society
Open your eyes to
who is left, right, centrist and extremist in it
what is Soviet New Wave
why problems of style are elevated by Soviet rocksters to the status of problems of social justice
a credo of a rock ideologist

WHAT IS ROCK?

A stumbling block of philosophical and culturological arguments?
A display of untethered instincts of the youth?
A new religion of collective hypnosis?
An Innocent form of youthful revolutionary fervor?
A new aesthetic reality?
A relapse into primitivism?
A pinnacle of musical evolution?
A rape of culture?
A philosophy of an unconventional mind waiting to be cognized?
Or all of the above?
Many of these questions have found answers.

WHAT IS SOVIET

This book is an attempt to find an answer to this sole question.

ROCK?

C ontents

110 ROCK AVANT-GARDE

new discoveries made by Soviet proponents of the Action and Performance style
Find out about
why Soviet avant-garde rock is an extreme form of social modernism
what is Soviet punk rock
does rock avant-garde have a future

139 ROCK PHILOSOPHY

interviews with Soviet rock culture proponents who claim a theoretical understanding of the "youth rebellion"
Introduce yourself to
ideas of rock-hippies
the credo of a rock punk
the views of a rock New Waver
the philosophy of a heavy metal fan
the concept of folk rock

157 ROCK DANGER

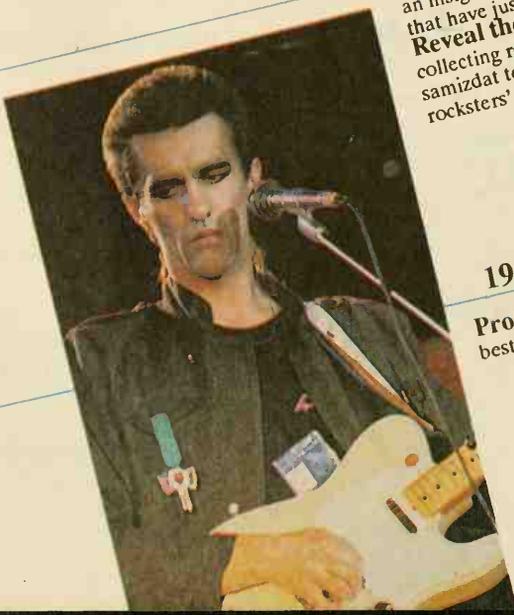
a guide to the viewpoints of opponents of rock in the USSR, among them officials and clergymen, members of fringe groups and Philistines, fans of classical music and easy listening
Acquaint yourself with criticism of rock from the standpoint of
ideology
bureaucracy
mysticism
culturology
psychology
music theory

173 ROCK JOURNALISM

an insight into a little-known world of rock-magazines that have just emerged from the underground
Reveal the secrets of
collecting rock info
samizdat technologies
rocksters' letters to the editor and back

197 ROCK STARS

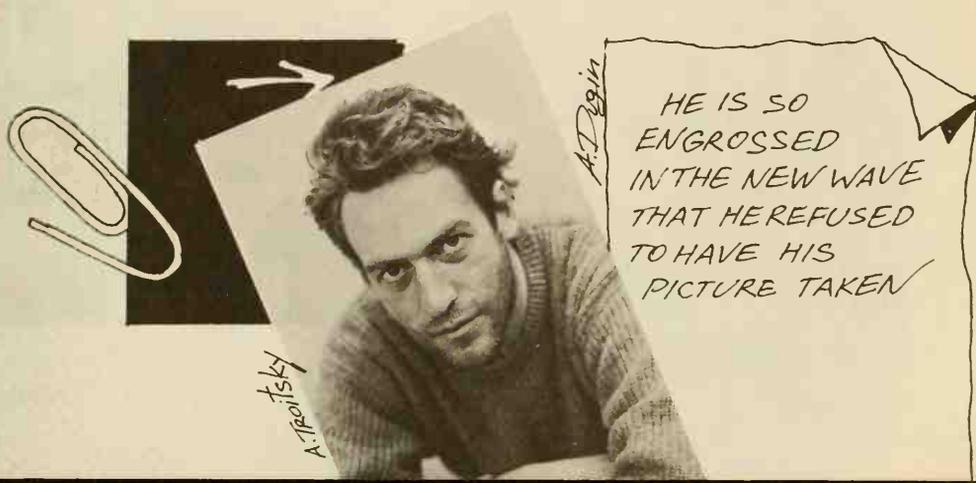
Profiles of
best known groups and solo artists



AUTHORS

Artemy Troitsky, 35, the Soviet Union's most prolific rock critic, he has written hundreds of articles and a book, unique for its solitude, *BACK IN THE USSR. The true story of rock in Russia*, which has shot to the ranks of best-selling books in many countries of Europe and seems likely to be published in Moscow – sooner or later. He penned his first article – about Led Zeppelin – in 1975 and, quite unexpectedly, found himself to be the first legal rock-writer in the USSR, after which he got bogged down in a life full of adventure and trauma. Troitsky was banned as an “advocate of rock” in 1984, has received official status in the years of *glasnost*, but still prefers to remain a freelance. He goes on European and American tours now and then, but is more often involved in organizing rock seminars, rock festivals and gigs. His name is a guarantee of admission to the deepest rock underground in the USSR. In his free time at his dacha out in the country Artemy is writing memoirs of Soviet rock culture that may be released some time in the future in a separate collection.

Alexander Dugin, 27, a freelance journalist, is reputed to be an expert in youth avant-garde culture and is a fan of New Wave, which attracts both his theoretical and practical interest. Married. Alexander loves the absurd, as well as conservative political movements, hates sports, and is lukewarm about rock, therefore considering it his duty to write about it. Dugin is haughty and speaks several languages, he tends to defend whatever is attacked by all and attacks whatever everybody praises. Alexander quotes Lautréamont and Benn from memory, he stands a chance of making it big in journalism unless he chooses to study Medieval Taoistic treatises.



Geydar Jemal, 41, a thinker and specialist in avant-garde aesthetics, has written a string of articles on metaphysics and ontology. For 15 years has been subscribing to the *International Military Review* magazine, speaks a host of Oriental and European languages. His favorite philosopher is Martin Heidegger. In rock music Geydar has a soft spot for intellectual extremism and provocativeness, rates the Swans to be above Pink Floyd or Genesis, and Nochnoi Prospekt and Narodnoye Opolcheniye – above Aquarium or Kino. In dealing with people he is polite but reserved in the extreme. Geydar can explain anything under the sun. Is a personal acquaintance of some of the legendary heroes of the Soviet democratic movement of the 1960s. His stories about something he has never seen are more captivating than the most detailed witness accounts. He is certain to lose no time in taking his place in the ranks of contemporary giants.

Nikolai Vasin, 43, is a native Leningrader and has known the city's rock scene since its swaddling clothes. Nikolai is a happy owner of the Leningrad Rock Club membership card No. 001. For the whole of 1971 he was the President of the Leningrad Pop Federation, but was stripped of the title on its demise. His favorite band of all time is the Beatles. At one time Nikolai took up the job of editing a samizdat *Roxy* magazine and was pals with Boris Grebenshchikov. But that is all in the past. Now he only organizes gigs on the birthdays of the Liverpool Four. His sentimentality is perhaps the most notable item in his own rock museum, the only one of its kind in the USSR.

G. Jemal



Kolya Vasin



Andrei Gorokhov, 27, is a mathematician, abstract painter, and a classical music fan. Has a soft spot for punk and industrial rock, reads books on Zen Buddhism, structuralism and surrealism, likes Spengler, and tends to distrust everything. He still listens to Deep Purple recorded 14 years ago. Is scornful toward the establishment and doesn't think unofficial political movements have any prospects. His favorite Soviet band is DK. Andrei believes his interest in rock to be fallacious, particularly with regard to Soviet groups. He is inclined to be fond of the detail. Divorced. Perhaps that accounts for his pessimism. Has been toying with the idea of altering his artistic style but somehow has not found the time to do so. Andrei is perfectly modest. At rock concerts he whistles and is apt to gesticulate.

EAR
A.G.



Igor Pankratiev, a sociologist, is a specialist in Soviet counter-culture and unofficial political movements and is likely to be encountered at meetings of the Popular Front and the Democratic Union, in a company of punks or devotees of the Pamyat (Memory) society. Igor is fond of comfort and philosophy: his younger son's name is Plato. Igor wears a formal suit, a tie and a beard, believing this to take care of the "Russian intelligentsia" style. He is also with a Cossack folk group called Krai (Land). Igor feels the salvation lies in a combination of folk roots and modernism, although he is not quite certain what or who is in need of the salvation. He is liable to make a good essayist and a faithful spouse.

Dmitri Pchelkin, 25, an architect, knows all Soviet rock stars, is shy and friendly. Being a true expert he doesn't publicize his affections in rock. Unlike rock fans he never pounds on anyone. Dmitri is not disposed toward generalizations or intimate conversations. His clothes are modest and clean, he wears three badges of Lenin – as a child, youth and adult. Dmitri lives in Moscow's loveliest house of the Stalin architectural classicism. He has a wife, twin daughters and a beautiful collection of rock music.



IGOR PANKRATIEV

Dmitri Pchelkin



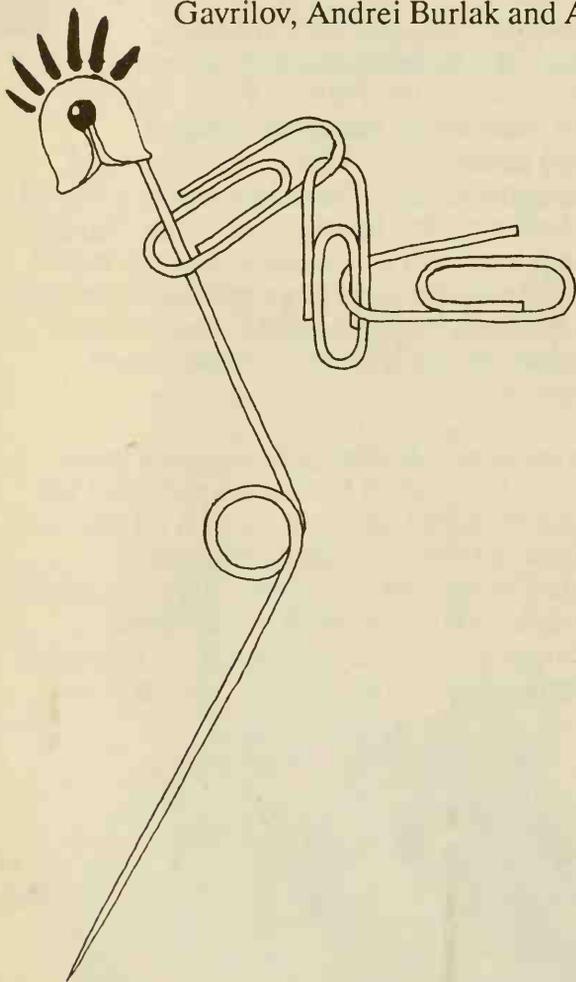
N.M.
SHE IS SO
AVANT-GARDE
THAT SHE
WOULDN'T LET
US TAKE HER
PICTURE
EITHER

10
A
U
T
H
O
R
S

Natalia Melentyeva is a specialist in contemporary American philosophy which she studied at the Philosophy Department of Moscow State University, is married and speaks English. Of the English-speaking countries she prefers Britain to America and of Far Eastern nations she prefers Japan to North Korea. Natalia is a philosophy lecturer in college and an expert in counter-cultural youth movements. She is fond of tennis and swimming. Believes civilization has no future. Otherwise is an optimist. Has been interested in rock since childhood, her favorite bands are Talking Heads and Nicolai Copernicus.

●

With invaluable assistance from Alexander Lipnitsky, Andrei Gavrilov, Andrei Burlak and Alexander Startsev.



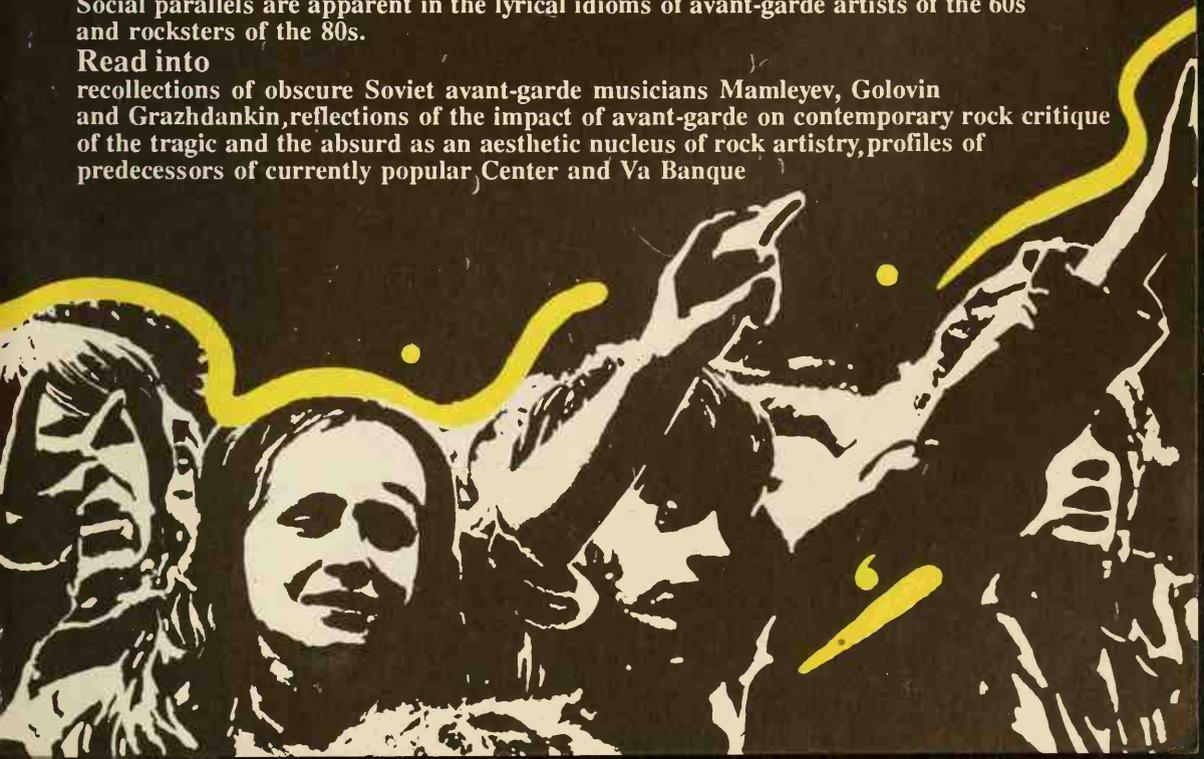
THE ROOTS



Soviet avant-garde music of the 1960s and rock music of the age of perestroika. Musicians of two generations reveal similarities in musical lingoes and motivation. Social parallels are apparent in the lyrical idioms of avant-garde artists of the 60s and rocksters of the 80s.

Read into

recollections of obscure Soviet avant-garde musicians Mamleyev, Golovin and Grazhdankin, reflections of the impact of avant-garde on contemporary rock critique of the tragic and the absurd as an aesthetic nucleus of rock artistry, profiles of predecessors of currently popular Center and Va Banque



12 THE ROOTS OF SOVIET ROCK

It's now a fact — Soviet rock of the 1980s is a phenomenon all its own. A mere 20 years ago most Soviet bands towed the line of the Anglo-American tradition, doing in English classical hits of the Beatles, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, and Rolling Stones. Only the boldest included a couple of their own songs in their programs. The big change occurred in the early 80s when for the first time leading bands began to make up programs of totally original material.

The 20-year pregnancy of Soviet rock, weighed down by quite a few complications, ended in the emergence of a creature whose psychology can hardly be grasped without an acquaintance with its parents and godparents, without unearthing its cultural roots, without getting immersed in Soviet mentality, and finally, without grasping the Russian aesthetic tradition that gave birth to Soviet rock of the 80s.

For starters, however, let us take a closer look at three basic features that can be seen with the naked eye, that provide the genetic fund of Soviet rock and that are a virtual matrix from which all of its trends and styles are molded.

PRIORITY OF SPONTANEITY AND SINCERITY OVER PROFESSIONALISM

What is meant here is actually musical amateurism.

Irrespective of the professional musical level — which can be first-rate — the effect of sincerity and compassion almost inevitably drowns out the technique. The point is not only that until quite recently rock in the USSR was purely non-commercial and only existed thanks to the enthusiasm of its performers and fans. The main thing is in basic orientation. When society is in need of comfort, technical mastery prevails over sincerity, technical luster gets

to be the optimal psychological vehicle of comfort. Conversely, Soviet rock possesses an inherent anti-comfort impulse, in fact it was born out of discomfort. But deception is possible: false pretense, outrage, psychological provocation imitate discomfort, while in fact only adding a bit of pep to the plateful of plenty. But again, the note of discord can be easily caught.



True discomfort is allied with profound existential discomposure. Between sincerity and discomfort there is a link, evident to intuition, but unexplained so far on the level of consciousness. At least this link has long been toyed around with in aesthetics. The Russian tradition, particularly aware of the morality of the beautiful, has elevated artlessness, i.e. the primacy of ingenuousness over mastery, to the rank of a special aesthetic category.

PRIORITY OF LYRICS OVER MUSIC

Here we touch on Soviet rock's relationship with poetry and literature in general. Historically, the aesthetic center of gravity in Russia has always been closer to the word, rather than the tune. Moreover, too much has been done in rock music by now – if not everything. Many experts contend the musical potential of rock has now been exhausted. At the same time the social and psychological impact of rock on youth is tremendous – just as is devotion to it. This inevitably makes rock lyrics a special form of public opinion.



14 ENERGY LEVEL

THE ROOTS

There are two ways of rock energy realization. The first is compensatory, whereby energy is displayed in terms of quantity, as a sound, a rhythmical and gesticulatory attack. It is intended to compensate for a shortage of real drive. The second way is precisely what is termed "drive" – or guts? – inherent in a band. A gutsy band can be naive in lyrics and primitive in music, but it will not succumb to compromise, it will not conform. Rock's principal social value in the USSR is not a collectivist impulse – like is the case in the West with its individualistic tradition – but non-conformism. The ideal of gutsy rock is intellectual personalism, sometimes with a tint of neo-romanticism. It is an ideal pursued in practice by only a minority of groups. Besides, this framework leaves out heavy metal rock with its collectivist, anti-elitarian impulse.

High energy level, sincerity and verbal power are reflected best in such bands as Nautilus Pompilius of Sverdlovsk, Televizor of Leningrad, and Nicolai Copernicus... The contours of the above-water part of the rock-iceberg were perhaps most stark in Moscow's Brigade S which developed its powerful verbal message into a powerful gesture, turning its every appearance into an explosion of bodily energy:

However, a "mass culture" impression disappears as soon as one gets a glimpse of the under-water part of the rock-iceberg. A devoted student of all those "new physicists" and "new romanticists" will come across a throbbing interest in problems that form the hub of elitarian consciousness in what is termed a "new era".

How come these few young people are so deeply committed to global issues?

It is hard to grasp the aesthetics of Soviet rock if one ignores its most important spiritual predecessor, the so-called schizoid culture. Schizoid culture which emerged 30-35 years ago is hardly known outside the circle of its protagonists. Paradoxically, it is schizoid culture that has been exerting a most profound influence on rock culture, primarily on New Wave. The obscurity of schizoid culture can be explained by the distaste that mass avant-garde feels toward "schizoidism". The same holds true for the various trends of "soc-art", not to mention liberal art (Yevtushenko, Voznesensky, Ilya Glazunov).

To avant-gardists, liberals and democrats, schizoid culture has been the epitome of metaphysics in the most obscene sense of the word. Besides, the schizoid phenomenon emerged and existed as extreme marginalism. It has been eccentric with regard to art that was itself eccentric from the official point of view. From its very outset, schizoid culture was an attempt to break the bounds of common sense. In a narrower sense, schizoidism is an anti-thesis to the conventional.

In avant-garde, the quest for the unconventional is an absolute precondition. Paradox, misplaced proportions and outrage are the program methods of artistic liberalism. Obviously, an avant-gardist sees himself as a David confronting the Goliath of the routine. Common sense is to him the hallmark of conservatism, dogmatism and stagnation. To a schizoid, the conventional mind is a product of censorship. But the schizoid imparts a clear-cut metaphysical accent to the notion of censorship. Censorship walls off the individual from reality by fostering the conventional mind — a fortress with walls and towers of salutary lies, protective hypnosis, all manner of mental cliches, run-of-the-mill wisdoms, spiritual idols and mental taboos without which a normal person would be unable to exist. The fundamental principle of the schizoid culture is that reality is horrid, destructive and infinitely inhuman — but that is precisely what makes it irresistibly haunting and spiritually attractive. It should be stressed that such a stance is not a result of much philosophizing but an inborn instinct of the "schizoid personality" which can be traced back through Mandelstam, Pasternak and Akhmatova to Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* and Sologub's *Petty Devil* in the Russian context, on to *Mal d'horreur Songs* in the Western context and perhaps even farther still...

The emergence of the schizoid culture, without a doubt, is directly related to the thaw that blessed the Soviet Union after Stalin's death in 1953.

Its inception in 1954 is associated with two names, remembered now only by several devotees — Chilikin and Barashkov. Chilikin is a critic and literary historian, Barashkov —

a philosopher-psychoanalyst and initiator of psychodramas, in which those involved learned to shatter illusions. These two people were concerned with the main spheres of schizoid culture — artistic and theoretical creativity and psychodramatic technique of living.

Similar spheres exist in rock culture. And what's more, in New Wave the technique of living reaches full bloom in what may be described as "neo-dandyism".

But 20 years before New Wave ever got to be the prime-mover of Soviet rock, the philosophy and aesthetics of classical dandyism caught the eye of schizoid culture. The schizoids learned the names of Barbey d'Audrevilliy and George Brummel. In the schizoids' view, historically dandyism was a flash of the phallic revolt against the feminism of the post-aristocratic society. Similarly, rock is another flare-up of the same revolt and, in the final count, the aesthetics of the "gutsy" and "cool" in rock joins hands with the aesthetics of the dandyist challenge of 200 years ago.

MAMLEYEV AND THE EXISTENCES OF YOUTH FAD

"I believe in the absolutely alien." —
Mamleyev

One of the most capacious boosters of schizoid culture was the writer Yury Mamleyev. His father, a psychologist of the Yermakov school (Professor Yermakov was the chief proponent of psychoanalysis in the USSR in the 1920s), got lost in Stalin's camps. Yury Mamleyev was a pivot of the "lunatic fringe"

of the Khrushchev and early Brezhnev epoches. His authority in the tense and often intolerant milieu was tremendous. What made him charismatic? After all, the Khrushchev thaw unbridled many people of talent who seemed to have been immune to authority since childhood.

The point is that Mamleyev combined immersion in his inner world with communicability and regard for others.

The combination of friendliness and "supracommonality", "suprahumanness" turned him into a model of "schizoid

emancipation” of spirit, which was sacred to any of the “lunatic fringe”.

Yury Mamleyev now lives in France and is a writer of international renown. His works have been published in the United States and Western Europe. At the same time, his spiritual legacy is still felt in the land of his birth. His novel *Loafers* rings a bell to the rock bands Nicolai Copernicus, Vezhliy Otkaz, Center and Zvuki Moo — the cream of Soviet New Wave. The novel has lately caught the fancy of punks in Moscow and Leningrad.

Amazingly, Mamleyev precipitated the paradigms of most energy-filled trends of the rock fad — and he did it in the “beat generation” epoch, before the appearance of the first hippies who, in terms of unofficial sociology, were the heralds of contemporaneity. One is apt to get a fuller understanding of the New Wave and punk with the help of Mamleyev’s works.

A reader, acquainted with Mamleyev’s works but unaware of their underlying anthropological message, may be surprised at a juxtaposition of the writer’s ideas with rock culture ideology. On



the one hand, there is paradoxical metaphysics, expressed in piercing personalism, on the other — the fad of a counter-cultural way of life. If one finds a connection between the two poles, there emerges a creed formulated, perhaps, by Mamleyev — a fad is a result of human existential drama. In other words, the style, tastes and ideology characteristic of a certain fad are in essence signs of the times and are rooted in the thick of being. That is why viewing a fad, in particular, a rock fad solely as some sort of “social show” seems a delusion. But then, how can one account for the similarity between the ever-changing fad “shows” and manifestations of objective tradition? For instance, the hippie movement bears a striking resemblance to the Essenic sect in Judea. The punks have something in common with the Cynics of Ancient Greece and, to an extent, with the Moslem sect of Malamati (people of shame). New Wave embraces a wide range of features, including even a hint at the Moslem *takyia* technique — the perfection of one’s spiritual opposition to the environment by imitating it.

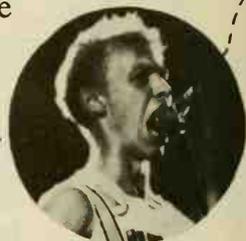
The main character of Mamleyev’s story “Fighter for Happiness” (1962), Seryozha Ikov, “worked sleepily and sullenly ... in some administrative office as a bureaucrat... He was awfully

businesslike but did nothing, had great self-respect but without requital. The greatest thing Ikov strove for all his life, the sole and cherished goal of his dreams was called happiness. There was nothing Seryozha wouldn't do for happiness." These few phrases denote the paradoxical drama of a being that Nietzsche described as the "last man".

But how does Ikov get hold of the "key to happiness"? He gets enrolled in a correspondence college and gets all A's for his exams. The Assistant Professor, "weighed down by his own importance", shakes his hand. And Ikov finds he is happy for the first time. He chances upon a "revelation": "What if I do this all my life? Just take the same exams over and over again and rejoice." "Ever since that day Ikov began to lead a new life of fancy." Up until an examination session he is "quiet as



a mouse", he spends time at work "punctually, studiously and furtively". But he bursts into full bloom during the exams. For four years running he takes the same exams (a fantastic admission, accounted for by the presence of an uncle who was the dean), and when he gets another A, Ikov "hears a singing... His



life now had a profound inner meaning." The most

surprising thing about this paradigm, consciously reproduced by the New Wave, is the horrible interpretation of the myth about the "perennial comeback".

The Nietzsche concept of the "superman" striving to recreate the ever-recurrent "golden moment"; the neo-pagan reworking of the Faustus drama is presented here in the guise of the similarly Nietzschean "last man" with his delirium of euphoria. Classical humanism, neo-paganism and existentialism get locked via Seryozha Ikov into a circle of a self-mimicking nightmare. Such is the net result of despair construed as virtue, the result of the New Wave philosophy.

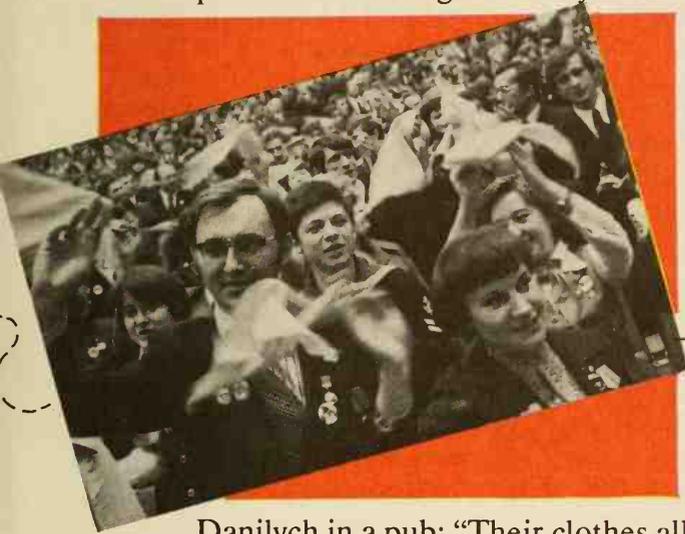
Mamleyev's early stories include "The Horsetrot Man" (1963) revealing a most important feature of punk-ideology — cracked-up, destructive exhibitionism. It is revealed not through an estranged description, but in the form of notes in the first person.

"The hero of those notes was a huge ... clamorous, insistent creature... A resounding voice, swift horsetrot, big meaty arms

and a red, frightfully impudent face.” The hero’s undersong slogan is: “Oh Lord, where should I go...” His confession strikes one as a mental case story in which there is no pathology. There is no delirium, mania or fixation – none of that. There is a reflection of the outer world in a complete absence of ego: “people all over the place ... don’t get to see any trees, just trolley-buses ... an awful crowd queuing up for onions ... trucks swarming up near a courtyard...” And suddenly, amid this stream of consciousness, a sudden intellectual explosion: “I was born on the wrong planet.”

The existence of Vanya Danilych, the horsetrot man, is the inner essence of an “extreme punk”, interior psychological obscurantism, finding its source in hatred for the object and in profound suffering caused by the necessity to reflect the outer

world. One of the “extreme punk” movements proclaimed the slogan: “I am a dope, remember nothing.” The world of an “extreme punk” Vanya Danilych is determined by four fundamental categories: attitude to people, attitude to children, attitude to father



and ... attitude to God. People are something extraneous, indifferent, obtrusive. Here they are crowding around Vanya

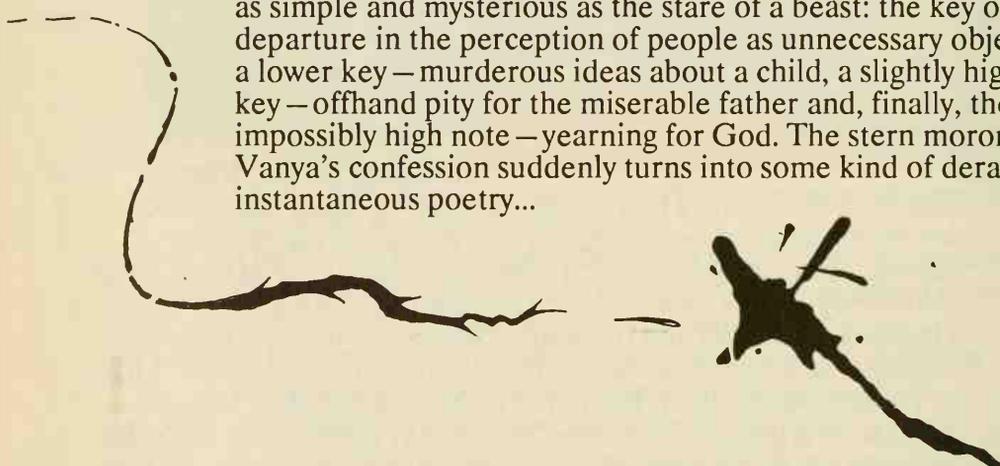
Danilych in a pub: “Their clothes all thrown open, the stink of intestines all over the place, and everybody staring, staring, staring... Like trying to bore a hole... But that’s only at first... And then everybody is on his own, like comatose...” Of course, Vanya Danilych is not scornful of people. Scorn is to him an outlandish feeling. He simply does not let them witness his existence: “I like to caper now and then. But never in front of people – before a house or a truck.” Sometimes people pay attention to him. His gestures are so weird or hideous they make others laugh. Vanya Danilych explains their reaction as a pure punk: “The folks are in stitches, but them are no folks, them are movie actors... Just a regular flicker...”

Children... Children are perhaps a serious provocation. For a moment, their insignificance inspires in Vanya Danilych an obscure premonition of revenge. “I came up to the kid... My hands are huge like beer mugs, my fist is bigger than his head. ‘This is what I am living for,’ I thought. With my monstrous fingers I grab him by the throat... The foolish child is watching

the fly on the ceiling... And I want to do it so much, I want to do it." But Vanya Danilych is suddenly scared: "So I'll strangle one, then another one and another... And then before you know it you'll strangle yourself in front of the mirror. Got kind of chicken, I have." A suicidal tendency, even if just stated, is a must in punk ideology.

So children are the only object of the genuinely negative, for Vanya Danilych is sorry for his Dad — but in a very special way: "I pity my Dad. He is poor dog, dirty and in rags. An old man, but snot-nosed like a kid. And his eyes are clear. And I treat him bad." Vanya's pity for his Dad bears a tint of sadism: "I like to wash my Dad in a tub... So I wash him real clean, and work with my fists on his ribs a bit... I wrapped him up in a bed sheet, flung him on the bed and covered him with a blanket... Snap out of it, dearie." Dad is the anti-thesis to the kid. "If I had a place to go to I would have pitied him for real": this punk confession is a footnote to the main thing: "Oh Lord, where should I go..." In his monologue Vanya Danilych suddenly strikes one down: "I love God, only I seldom get to notice Him." It turns out that God is sometimes reflected in the void of the missing ego. And the void itself, booming with its "What for? What for?" to everything, unburdens itself in the shrill: "Oh Lord, when will I fly to you?!"

This is it, the inner code-phrase of this creature. A code-phrase as simple and mysterious as the stare of a beast: the key of departure in the perception of people as unnecessary objects, a lower key — murderous ideas about a child, a slightly higher key — offhand pity for the miserable father and, finally, the impossibly high note — yearning for God. The stern morosity of Vanya's confession suddenly turns into some kind of deranged instantaneous poetry...



So idiocy, the eclipse of personality and extreme idiosyncrasy are the fringe subjects of Russian literature. (Note Dostoyevsky's *Idiot*.) But Mamleyev was perhaps the first to concentrate on them, to put them in the limelight and give them their true name. Despite their paradoxicalness and monstrosity they turn out to be a skin for a fair share of a whole generation and even a whole epoch.

21 GOLOVIN AND ROCK POETRY

“The outer world should be received as a blow.”
Golovin

Whereas Mamleyev plunged into the infernal depths of the schizoid culture, Yevgeny Golovin, a Moscow balladeer, preferred to scale its vertical peak in the belief that sooner or later it is bound to reach the infinity of the spiritual cosmos. In the mid-60s Golovin originated a whole aesthetic trend that came to be referred to as “intellectual black romanticism”. An accomplished elitarianist and misanthrope, Golovin never gave any concerts or appeared in public. For several years he had been studying Western hermitism whose influence is to be found in many of his poems that precipitated Soviet rock culture. Since the early 80s Golovin devoted himself entirely to rock. He became an artistic director and aesthetic tutor of Moscow’s Center, a band that later spawned Va Banque. The two groups’ leaders, Vassily Shumov and Alexander Sklyar, have the honor of having been among the few of Golovin’s disciples. Together with him they were involved in some risky, alcohol-fumed mystic adventures and rounds of Bohemian and alluring spots of asocial Moscow. Many of Golovin’s songs formed the hub of the Center’s program. The band owes its popularity and enviable status in the Soviet rock medium to Golovin. Via Center and Va Banque, as well as his fans of the pre-rock era, the world of Golovin’s songs exerts a tremendous influence on the consciousness of the Soviet avant-garde elite. If one proceeds from the assumption that, besides an overt, any phenomenon also has a covert meaning, Golovin’s aesthetics embody the esotericism of Soviet New Wave rock. One of Golovin’s favorite characters is Hans Christian Andersen’s Kai, a boy who prefers the Snow Queen’s affinity to the banality of mortal human warmth, embodied in Gerda. The taste of Golovin’s aesthetics is that of cold, the sensation of cold, the covert meaning of cold. The image of eternal femininity – the core of romanticism – is developed by Golovin from the “snow queen” to:



*Far away from the ocean
Like an evil Lesbian
Naked Antarctica lies sprawling...*

A romanticism of cold is transformed into a romanticism of cruel and sterile opposition. But the opposition is a more profound and lofty expression of love, rather than enthusiastic striving for procreative confluence.

For Golovin romanticism is a conscientious and stern method, rather than a state of mind. It is a way for a force opposing everything instantaneous, conventional, inert and weak. It is a way of love, construed as a strength, not a weakness, a love opposing the entire Russian Christian tradition and even Dostoyevsky, whom Golovin, incidentally, deeply reveres as a great intuitivist.

However, his romanticism was different at first. The cosmic mythology of “flame and ice” was preceded by a juvenile unacceptance of banality.

*The end of the road is near, my friends,
Another two steps, and then,
Tall and clad in velvet,
The executioner's block will emerge before us.*

*Three centimeters to go
And two decades behind,
Our hair is still drunk with the wind
And the carcass is lazily agile.*

*And though we look frantic
And try to bellow our songs
For this cause, the just cause
We are awfully scared to die.*

*And only when our heads
Are successfully stuck on poles
We will finally see the meaning
Of that fearful word — freedom.*

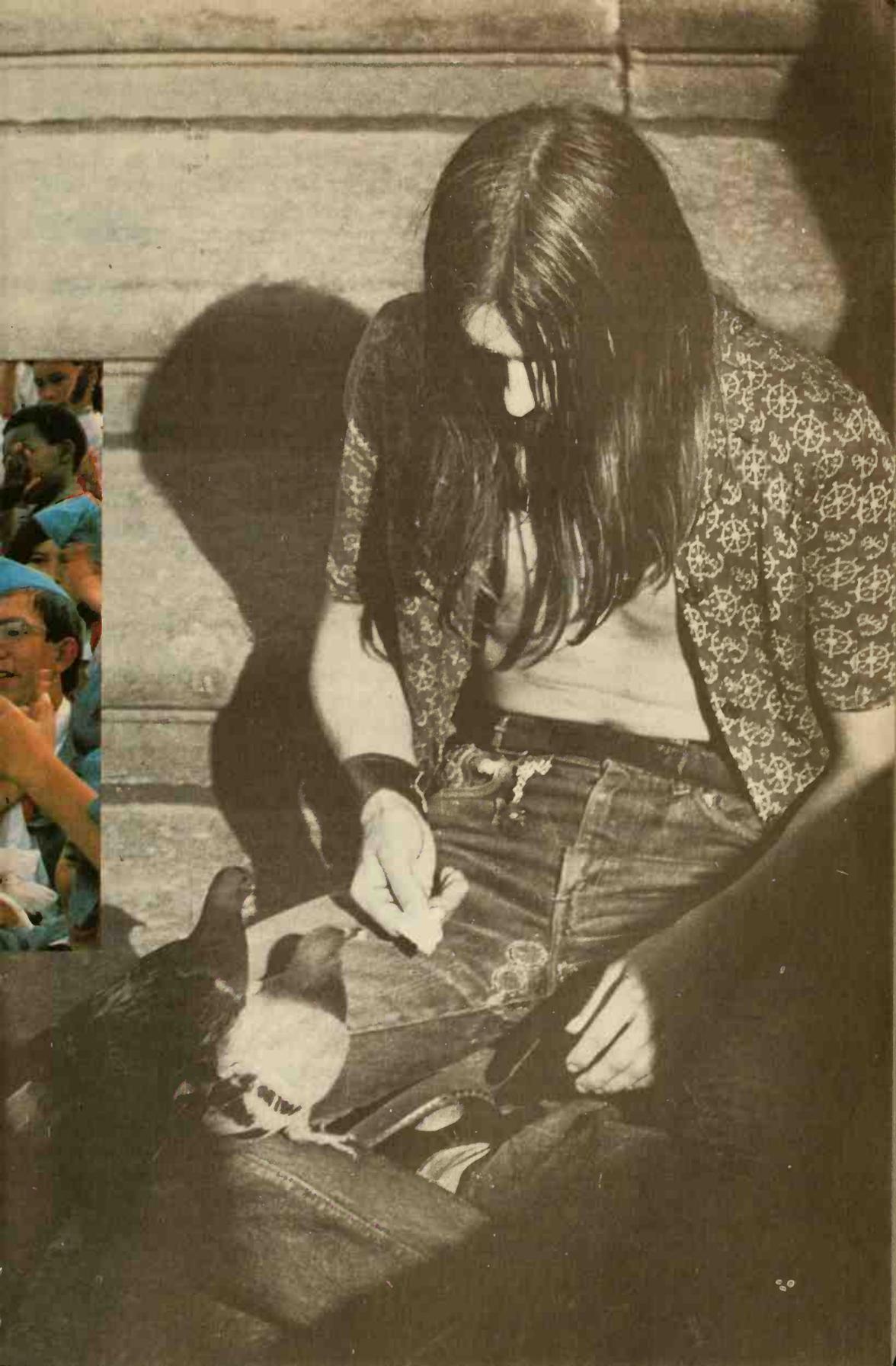
*And then with the submissiveness of cows
They will carry our rags in bundles
They will soak them with our blood
And will hang them on black mirrors.*



This poem, written around 1958, hints at the basic trends in Golovin's poetic ideology.

It is precious aestheticism that develops in his works in the 70s and 80s under the influence of French 17th-century précieux poetry.

It is a theme of death and tragic end. Golovin is sincere in his poetry. He makes no bones about admitting: “For the just cause we are awfully scared to die.” In the 60s he wrote in a more terrifying, existentialist poem: “Instead of a final oration let me throw up!” In the 70s: “And when my body grows cold they will throw it no matter where!” In the 80s the theme of personal



demise in his lyrics gives way to gigantic images of ice, cosmic play, alienation and, finally, merciless “macabre” irony: “Listen, drowned man, listen!”

It is Golovin’s most important theme of magic surrealism, of the occult, expressed in archetypal images. In general, the symbol of a mirror is near Golovin’s heart: “A mummy swimming in the mirror”, “Lilac sparkles in black mirrors, rats crawling in black mirrors”.

The triad – aestheticism, death and occultism – forms the pillars of the schizoid culture, which support the entire experience of overcoming the conventional mind.

For early Golovin the problem of social protest is a very real one. The “schizoid” romanticism is confronted by a “normal” society. The incompatibility of the former and the latter is obvious and irreconcilable:



*Both them and us are painfully tired
They are tired of us and we are tired of them
We hate the production of steel
They hate crazy poetry.*

Any artistically-inclined individual outside officialdom today would readily endorse this statement, written years ago. (True, lyricists of heavy metal rock may be an exception; they seem to have reconciled their inspiration with problems of the steel industry: “The country is in need of metal!”) However, in the late 60s Golovin reacts no longer to the “social”: he won his inner struggle for the right of primogeniture and for him society ceases to exist as a problem.

The “social” in the foreground is replaced by the “existential”. Incidentally, Golovin is an expert in Western philosophical existentialism of all trends – from Jaspers to Fromm. But Heidegger occupies a special place in the poet’s system of ideas. Heidegger’s concentration on death as the central criterion of genuineness is a marginal expression of existentialism and is also akin to the traditional “taste of death” in the “schizoid” world view.

Golovin’s existentialism is directly related to the experience of infernal horror, of the black paradox that is closed from the conventional mind by mental “censorship”. The existential is only one dimension of true space in which the “schizoid” has been cast. Other dimensions of the “schizoid” include the macabre, the absurd and the phenomenology of the extrahuman... “Schizoid” consciousness does not interpret the absurd from rationally humanistic positions. To Golovin the absurd is the specifics of the magic that crops up when certain normative borderposts are torn down. The absurd is the way it is in reality.

*Who are we? Where are we?
Queuing up for vodka in a shop
And a man behind us
With long fingers, sharp teeth
And hairy eyelids trembling*

*Next thing your know — no mercy —
he will sink his teeth in your neck
And will suck you white
My God! This passer-by
Is my very own father!
Who are we? Where are we?*

In talking about Golovin's songs one has to mention his "The Lives of Remarkable People" cycle.* A special brand of "black irony" is employed as the ideology of the "ZhZL". Aesthetically and ideologically the cycle is akin to the irony-oriented New Wave, to the ironic ideology of contemporary rock:

*Academician Stepan Elektrichkin
Used to race electronic pigeons
Suddenly he kicked his habit
And got to thinking about his life
The thing was that his wife Motya
Was a frightfully eager lover
The Academician was burning himself down at work
And could find no peace at night...*

The Academician, utterly exhausted, takes up with his secretary who, in a beneficial contrast to Motya, is quite restrained. However, in a moment of intimacy, the Academician is shocked — "instead of a lady fair he saw cod fillet show white in the dark!" The startled scientist is first concerned about possible social repercussions: "Now they'll never let me race my electronic pigeons at work." But the poet wraps up the story with a jeering derisive happy ending:

*Growing yellow or blushing with shame
He reunited with his family
And had his secretary fried
In good olive oil.*

Just this one example is enough to show the long road that was covered in its quests by that trend of contemporary consciousness that we refer to as the "ironic avant-garde". The New Wave irony, one leg of this road, does not quite reach Golovin's level either in tragedy, or in "cold", or in the distance that separates the artist from the "overly human"...

Practically all of Yevgeny Golovin's songs in the "ZhZL" cycle were written before 1978, i.e. before New Wave emerged in the West.

* Golovin borrowed the name of a book series (the Russian acronym for the series is "ZhZL"), published by the Molodaya Gvardiya publishers. Just can't do without irony.

GRAZHDANKIN AND THE "TASTE OF NEW HUMAN RELATIONS"

"From a warm bath to the Last Judgement."
Grazhdankin

The "schizoid world" and its atmosphere are inconceivable without this man. In the final count, stars and planets are moving in space. Sergei Grazhdankin epitomized the space of a fantastic cosmos that emerged in the heart of Khrushchev's Moscow. His artistic mission lay in creating a special link between the citizens of the "schizoid" world. Therefore, the main thing to him was the aftermath of a new, emancipated relationship.

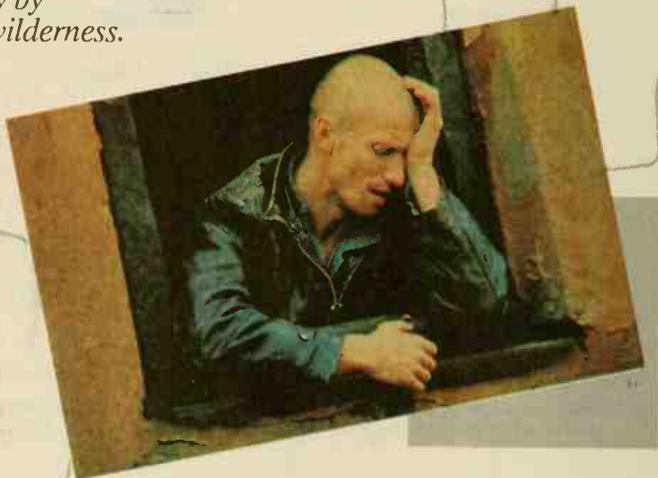
Grazhdankin pioneered the "schizoid ballad". His lyrics were accepted unhesitatingly, for such was the magnetic force of something that facilitated a transition from the geometry of normal life to the schizoid dimension.

Typical of Grazhdankin is a poem projecting the existence of another person. In such a case he would say bluntly: "I am not the author, he is the one that stands behind it."

*I will never again tread the grass with my bare feet
Never again will I catch butterflies
I will never again punch a fat bourgeois
With my big proletarian fist*

*I don't want to do guessing
About when I die here
Tomorrow I'll set off a bullet in my head
And in the morning*

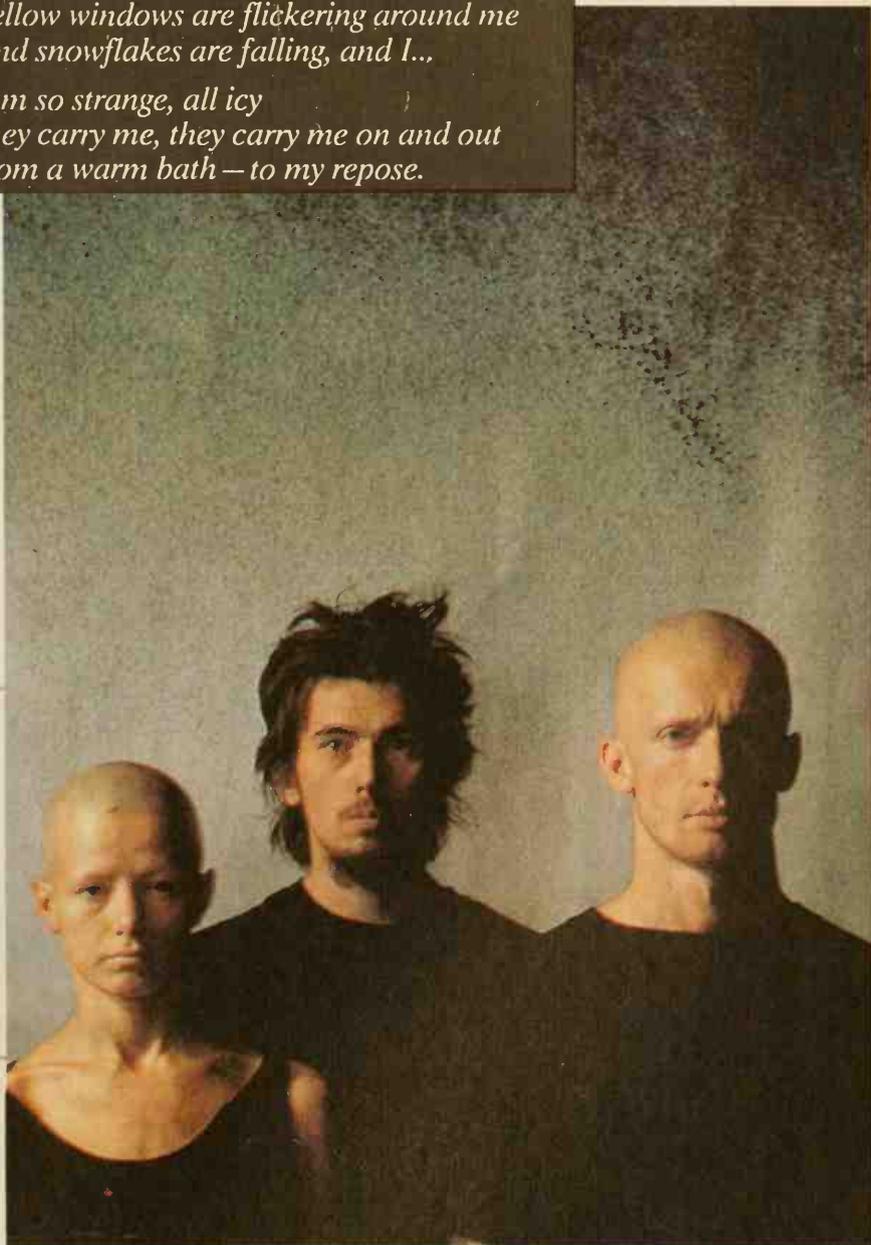
*A bear will ramble onto my place
He will sit down at my piano
And a plane will fly by
Into the silly, silly wilderness.*



Of course, this is “Mamleyev”, only refracted through Grazdankin’s sentimentality with his acute sensation of special childish loneliness. His intuition of the infantile leads the poet to an understanding of fear and spiritual disintegration. True, Grazdankin’s plunge into existential depths is always assuaged by a special mental warmth that bears a tinge of hallucination:

*In winter, when the trees are asleep,
I lay dead on the snow
Yellow windows are flickering around me
And snowflakes are falling, and I...*

*I am so strange, all icy
They carry me, they carry me on and out
From a warm bath — to my repose.*





Grazhdankin consciously exploits a kind of egocentrism that exists in the mind in the form of ready-made images. What drunk, pitying himself, lying on the snow and holding up his face to the falling snowflakes, hasn't pictured himself as dead? Grazhdankin employs sentimentality with muffled irony. This is especially evident when he resorts to jubilant, lucid sentimentalism:

*On a hot summer we'll fly off to the lake
To take a swim in it at dawn
You – as a mermaid with your rosy flesh
I – as your azure stallion*

*Oh leave me alone, sorceress,
I will set out into the golden wilderness
I, so tired on these stairs
I, a piece of crystalware that your broke.*

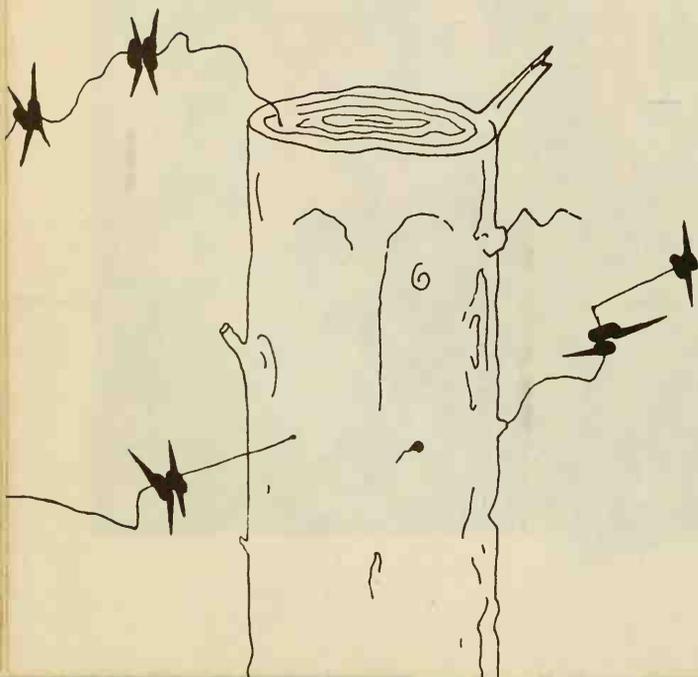
The sustained sentimental elation grated upon the schizoid's inner ear with the vulgarity which was only soothed by a delicate hint at the absurd.

The demi-haut monde coquetry of the infinitely mellow and fragile poet also masked intolerance toward the conventional mind.

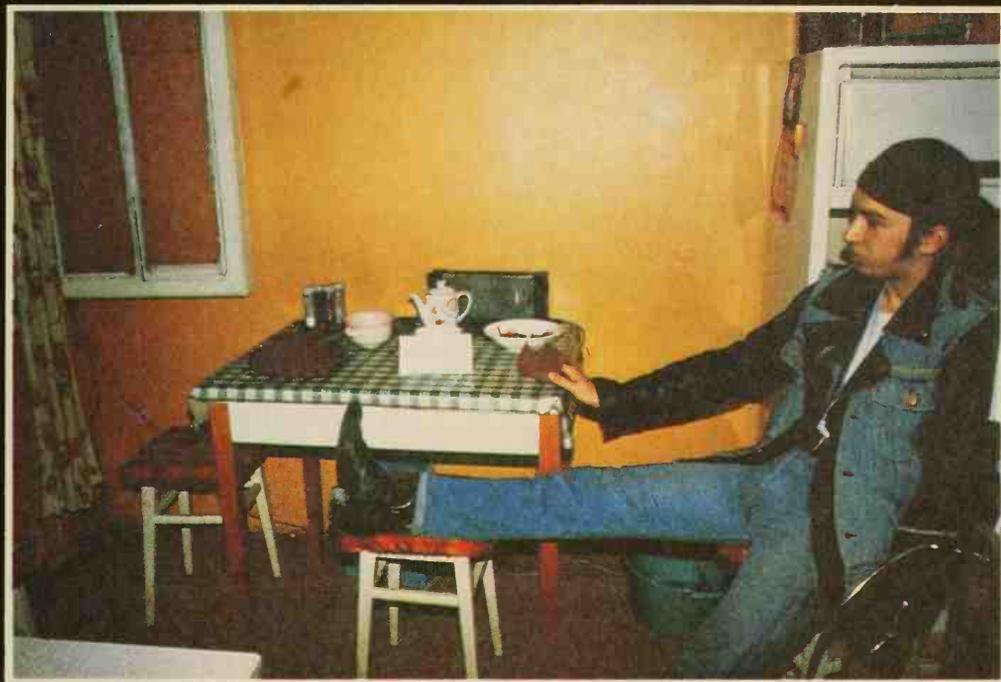
An adherent of the schizoid culture, Sergei Grazhdankin attempted to explain it by a "new taste of human relations" which only revealed itself when one "turned to face the absolute spiritual freedom".

Was that the key that opened the door to Soviet rock?

Geydar Jemal



THE TREE



history of Soviet rock retold
by those who made it
Focus on
existential cataclysms of Soviet rock musicians
barriers in the way of artistic freedom
the "human factor"
in Soviet rock music



NOTES FROM A ROCK MUSEUM



It began long ago. Bones and rusting cartridges from the Second World War were still laying in field in Russia, when a pudgy man with a round head began joking from the big respect-inspiring tribune. It was Khrushchev. Still wiping away its tears, Russia laughed. "Anti-party group", "*stilyaga*" and "rock and roll" became the most popular words. A very little time would pass before an illogical connection would appear between these words. It was clear that there was a hole somewhere and a draft appeared. There was a draft from

America. This was the foreshadowing.

I was in the sixth grade in Leningrad when records "on the bones" appeared at my house. This was the symbol of those times, recordings done on X-ray film. On each of these pieces of plastic with a 78 rpm which had been recorded in primitive underground conditions was sure to be the inscription "Rock Around the Clock", "Jail Rock" or "Arisona, Texas". These were the first cuts of Bill Haley, Elvis Presley and Little Richard. I was in heaven when I listened to them – was it really possible to sing like that? Were those really human voices? Really!!! Soon I heard rock and roll in Russian:

- Ziganshin Boogie*
- Ziganshin Rock*
- Ziganshin ate his boot-leg raw*
- And Poplavsky, wild Rock*
- Used his shoe string to catch fish*

was what some kid sang during a break at school to the tune of Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock".

It was fun. The party had started. It was at that time that Bill Haley's hit became the anthem of Rock and one of its first slogans which was taken up by more than one generation of the youth on both sides of the Atlantic and on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

It was the unforgettable year 1958. Russia was hit by a completely atomic American bomb called rock and roll. Afro-American rhythms were heard in the bowels of Communism. A non-governmental bridge was laid between America and Russia.

PERISHED FROM PRIVATION. THIS IS A CLEAR REFERENCE TO THIS EVENT THERE WAS SUCH A FUSS ABOUT THEM AND HOW THEY ATE THEIR BOOTS AND BELTS. THAT EVERYONE WAS SICK OF THESE STORIES AND THEREFORE THIS SONG WAS NOT TAKEN AS BLASPHEMY, AT LEAST BY YOUNG PEOPLE



THE NAME OF ONE OF MARKOINED SOVIET SAILORS WHO WERE SAVED BY AN AMERICAN SHIP IN THE 60'S. THEY HAD NEARLY

Enterprising young guys ran around the streets of our town with shoe boxes filled with recordings “on the bones”, but their time would not last long.

The era of tape recorders began — the first miracles of the sixties, “Aidas” and “Gintaras” had already come out. A wave of captivating dances rolled in. The ‘twist’, ‘boogie-woogie’ and the ‘shake’ forced teachers to turn off the music at school dances. The students met this with cat-calls ... but that time passed also. The recently popular Paul Anka, Pat Boone and Cliff Richard that we played on our “Aidas” got old. Only a few months ago I practiced the twist like I was looney in front of a big mirror in my parents’ room when no one was home, and now I wanted something new. I felt that this was the nature of rock and roll (and my nature), an inclination for change. This was natural and therefore rock and roll and pursuing it was such colossally vital entertainment. My group of friends and I watched the black market and listened to the broadcasts on the radio. By then we had already broken with the dreary social life and were heart and soul stuck on the music which would be called a few later “a sub-culture or counter-culture of the 20th century youth”. This label, by the way, is accurate only in so far as any thing new is “counter” to what preceded it. We simply loved rock and roll, we didn’t want to offend anyone.

A friend came over to my place in the spring of 1964 with a copy of *Krokodil* and asked me if I had seen the “Beetle-Drummers”.

“Look,” he said, “a super group.” I took a look. There was a small photo of some right-on dudes with bangs. I liked them right away, but did not read the article — what good could be written about them? It was already clear by that time, 1964, that if the press railed against something it had to be a good thing.

Another article, to hell with it. I might have forgotten about it, if articles about the Beatles hadn’t started pouring in from all sides. *Ogonyok*, *Family and School* and the very same *Krokodil* were tripping over each other’s feet in order to spit on them. This was amazing. I had never seen an article about Elvis or Chubby Checker, they had been ignored but not the Beatles.

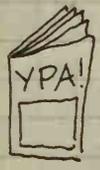
I finally heard them. I got a tape recorder and a reel tape of their recording and perked up my ears. It was a completely new sound and I was not ready for it. But for some reason I kept playing the tape over and over, I was drawn towards the Beatles. They began to turn me around. I was elated but did not comprehend the feeling which they woke up in me. It was a geyser that I sat on and started going up...

That was how it started, with a mention in the magazine *Krokodil*. What do I have to show for it now at the end of the eighties?

I have all the Beatles records including 45’s — solo and together. I have 37 books about them and 22 large “family albums” with clippings and photographs that I compiled myself which include



RUSSIAN SLANG IN THE 1960'S FOR A CHIC, WELL DRESSED YOUNG PERSON. - T.



A SATIRICAL MAGAZINE IN THE USSR.

AT FIRST, THE WORD "BEETLES" WAS TRANSLATED IN RUSSIAN AS "BEETLES"



everything about them. There are about 1,200 so called units of information. Plus, a very big plus, I have a record which John Lennon sent me in 1970 signed by him and Yoko. Plus a postcard sent to me by Paul McCartney in 1987 and a postcard sent by Yoko the same year. Both postcards have signatures and their regards written on them. And one more plus — Lennon's T-shirt which I got after it had changed hands rather often. This is my museum. I'll bet that there isn't another one like it in Russia. The Beatles became an invisible part of Soviet rock because they themselves brought it to life. The Beatles are very important for the Soviet Union today for they only bring love, honesty and artistic freedom.

Since 1976 there have been concerts that are dedicated solely to the Beatles. Many musicians and groups have participated and continue to participate in them. We get together four times a year on their birthdays and sing their songs. This has become a tradition and a spiritual need. I should add that this happens only in Russia. It is said that there is nothing like it anywhere, either in Europe, or in America.

Yes, it was the Beatles and the first wave of British rock that brought our rock to life. Pop-rock groups with Russian names began to appear in Leningrad like flowers growing out of the asphalt — the Forest Brothers, Argonauts, the Vanguard, the Favorites, Lire, Flamingo, Wave of the Neva and dozens of others. They all flung their hand with unearthly enthusiasm into making guitars, amps and speaker columns. They played the music of the Beatles, the Stones, the Kinks, James Brown or whoever else, like it was their own. Anything, but please not "Mishka, Mishka, Where's Your Smile?" or "Moscow Suburb Nights". Thus in 1966 began the era of our own groups which were never sanctioned or recognized by anyone at anytime for twenty years!!! For about twenty years, a generation of our rock groups played underground staging holidays of the spirit for young people in the midst of a soulless society.

How was this possible?

The petty bureaucrats had nothing to worry about, the pop-rock groups played their rock and roll in little halls for three hundred people. These were the pathetic "Evenings for Youth Recreation" as they were called in the pitiful handwritten flyers. No more ... but what a response! I went to, or to be more exact, pushed my way into these "evenings" during the sixties. My favorite group was the Forest Brothers, they played real stuff and had outstanding vocals. They could sing! They sang as if they were at the Kirov stadium in front of a hundred thousand instead of in front of a hundred people at the cafe Eureka. Those were romantic days. We didn't drink wine at the time, but we got drunk on the music. The atmosphere was fantastic. It was real life; it was the beginning; it was the wound-up year of 1966.

THESE ARE THE TITLES
OF POPULAR SOVIET SONGS
IN THE SIXTIES AND WRITTEN IN A RATHER
SCRUPY STYLE. -74



I would take off from home and listen to my favorite music with a gang of people like me.

The concerts of the Forest Brothers and C^o were outstanding "live" experiences for us. For the first time young people got together at spontaneous unofficial pop concerts and let it all hang out. There was atavistic dancing, energetic "Tarzan" yells, foot stamping and clapping that drowned out the music. It was something freeing and was like a common denominator.

I participated in these activities and felt the music with the fibers of my soul. It was like acquiring cosmic consciousness. It seems to me that the spirit of the rock concerts in the sixties never disappeared in the following decades. It just changed and is changing altitude and trajectory, but the essence is the same – freedom!

Sometimes I ask myself several questions and begin to wonder ... what if Soviet Russia had experienced a revolution in the beginning of the sixties instead of a zig-zagging half-reform? What if we had the strength, then in the sixties, to get the publication of *Doctor Zhivago*, *Lolita*, *Cancer Ward*, and the Bible...

What if new recording companies appeared which would have put out complete collections of the songs by Elvis, Little Richard, the Beatles ... and things like this...

**WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE NOW?
WHERE WOULD WE BE NOW?**

I repeat to myself throwing my words to the wind: the sixties were the great years of the rock revolution, bloodless and beautiful. There was an unbroken chain of discoveries from 1963 to 1970: the Beatles – the Stones – the Animals – Dylan – the Cream – Hendrix – Led Zeppelin – the Doors – Jethro Tull – the Credence – the Deep Purple. It was too much! New styles and sounds, new music and poetry, new voices and guitarists. Every Beatle record was a subject for detailed analysis and every new group caused an outburst. We were interested in everything:

What kind of guitars did the Beatles use? What was a Wah-Wah pedal? Which guy from the Stones pleyed on "All You Need Is Love"? Who was the best bass guitarist according to Melody Maker? It was a school of Rock.

The Forest Brothers and C^o knew all the answers because they never missed this history lesson. They followed the events on the world rock scene and did not feel that they were separated from it although there was never a word about it in our press or on Soviet radio. But the thing is that the musicians and the fans had already dropped out of society and we had little interest in it and its demagogy. We were laughing at it: did you hear,



NOVELS BY BORIS PASTERNAK,
VLADIMIR NABOKOV AND ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN
RESPECTIVELY.

there's a new unit of measurement for musical banality, the kobzon.



IOSIF KOBZON IS A POPULAR
SOVIET SINGER WHO PERFORMS
OFFICIAL SONGS.

There was a revolution of the consciousness in the sixties and even the seventies. The jokes gave it to poor Khrushchev and later to rich Brezhnev and then ... it was inevitable that the Russian would end up to be the jerk in all the jokes. We considered this to be without question and were resigned to it. What could be done? There was no alternative, society didn't give us anything. Could we really believe that "the next generation of Soviet people would live in true Communism"? The youth did not listen to the hack public entertainers. They did not rely on their parents and threw themselves into earning the bucks for a tape recorder. Almost everyone had one by the time they were twenty years old. The boom was mind-blowing! It continues even today, but now the thing is to have a Japanese tape deck, whereas in 1967 it was prestigious to have a Dnieper-11 and jeans. Lee jeans and long hair became the symbols of rock. It was absolutely to have flowers in the hair also.

Things came to a head in the seventies. In 1971 an interesting group called Saint Petersburg appeared in Leningrad. Its leader was Volodya Rekshan and its music was good. It was the first time that I heard a group sing good lyrics in Russian and their show was also somehow Russian.

The leader and singer in the group, Rekshan, was hypnotic and a personality. He was the one who opened the gallery of Russian rock and roll personalities.

Looking back (or jumping ahead), I can name a whole chain of musicians that are our pride and to some degree our forbidden fruits: Volodya Rekshan – Kolya Korzinin – Yura Ilchenko – Andrei Makarevich – Zhora Ordanovsky – Boris Grebenshchikov – Misha Naumenko – Victor Tzoi – Grisha Sologub – Misha Borzykin – Kostya Kinchev. Correspondingly their groups could be considered the branches at the crown of the rock tree of the world. They were at their own times at the top in our country and left something about themselves behind that is unforgettable, most importantly music which is not bad. They are all rockers by nature, talented and non-conformist. They guided our music, and that means our society and made it pleasant and made the youth happy.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Well, what was Soviet culture up to at the same time? How was the esteemed Union of Composers getting on? What things had they created for the ideological front? Was the creative life in the "recreation zones" and the "red corners" winning? How many mommas and pappas, grandmas and grandpas were taught the "skaters' dance"? How many pairs of horn-rimmed and three-piece suits are in the arsenal of the "masters" of Soviet art?

SPECIAL ROOMS IN ENTERPRISES
WHERE MEETINGS, LECTURES
AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES ARE
HELD.



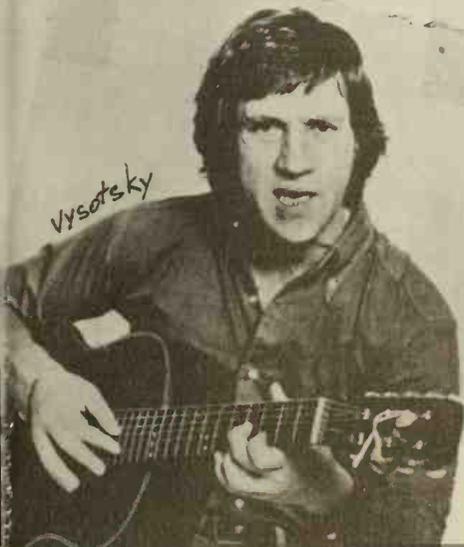
It's time to declassify these statistics! But I have the premonition that the "mafia" is eternal and that we will never know how many hundred thousand "kobzons" rained on our heads at school and at work from the loudspeakers. How many hundred Fradkins and Pakhmutovas and for how many decades have the youth been deprived of the taste for life with their hot air? What connection do they have with music other than pure "production"? Ask them something about the Beatles' musical experimentation, Jagger's showmanship, Hendrix's riffs, Alice Cooper's python, how the Who smash their equipment right on the stage or any other thing and then sit back and have a good time while they mumble something incomprehensible. Of course they will ask you in turn about the deaths of Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, John Lennon and Alexander Bashlachov. Yes, they will say, what about them. On second thought, they will not ask about Bashlachov, they don't know about him. OK, so some rock musicians while taking their turn under the big top fell, but while they were burning they lit up the world on the way down...

If the world is a circus, then rock is my favorite attraction!

By 1975, there were dozens of groups in our city playing their own stuff. It was often boring music, but was always fun and high keyed though sometimes reminiscent of other music. Saint Petersburg, The Big Iron Bell and Myths stood out from the rest. For a small sum they would leave the city and go to some village club and play for hours for their fans who would follow them there... Then one remarkable day in the fall of 1976 they were completely forgotten. On October 10th, there was the first concert of the Moscow group Time Machine in our city. The trio led by Makarevich began a new era in Soviet rock. (It later became a quartet when Yura Ilchenko joined the band.) It was the first time that a rock group became liked on a national level and approached the popularity of Galich or Vysotsky.

POPULAR SOVIET COMPOSERS WHO RECEIVED OFFICIAL RECOGNITION.
 KHARUSHCHEV SAID THAT THE BUILDING OF COMMUNISM WOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE 1980S

FAMOUS SINGER - SONGWRITERS WHO WERE DENIED OFFICIAL RECOGNITION FOR A LONG TIME.



Vysotsky



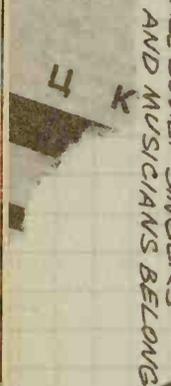
Galich

It looked like "Machine-mania". And for good reason. The music, lyrics, voices and instrumentation were so good that it was impossible to listen with indifference. Andrei Makarevich was so fascinating and musical that it was impossible not to adore him. His songs "The Battle with Fools", "Marionettes", "You and I", "Flag", "Captain of the Ship" and "Cafe Lire" will go down in the yearbook of Soviet rock when it comes out. Time Machine became the symbol of its time, a symbol of everything romantic and pure. It would have been strange and unpleasant if the press started to write about them and if they were given air-play, but this of course did not happen. The group was creatively productive on an underground level right up to 1980 when they were skilfully halted by being admitted into Roskoncert. After that everything went to hell: the music, the romance and the purity. Makarevich got rich and became a "variety act". His fancy clothes became too much. A total bummer. But to rag on Time Machine is unfair so I'll say no more.

*Let people call you an ass
but you were so lucky:
you seriously believe that good is esteemed
and evil is punished.
You believe that no one is deceiving us
and that the deception is a mistake.
The strong only have to beckon to you
and you'll go running to your master.
They want to turn you into a horse
and you'll obediently offer your back.*

→ Andrei Makarevich

...The headlines in the Yearbook will go to Yura Ilchenko's songs nevertheless. Machine tore Yura away from Myths during its first tour in Leningrad. A unique creative oasis was formed of Makarevich, Ilchenko, Margulis and Kawagoe. Outstanding songs came in a flood, it was like an explosion. For an entire year, Makarevich and Ilchenko balanced each other and kept an equilibrium. This undoubtedly was the reason for their success. They competed and Yura blossomed into a wild flower. He hit right on the mark, while Makarevich was softer and weaker. Yura's songs are nervous, lonely and beautiful and set your gut on fire. After hearing "Rain", "Boy, Boy", "Listen Singer" or the "Little Green Island", you want to go up to him, hug him and keep him warm. Yura literally suffered when he sang these songs, his throat howled like a caged beast. When he abandoned the oasis of Time Machine it was all over — he ran cold and after a year or two he dropped out of sight. Total bummer...



One time I was waiting in line to return empty bottles, and for an hour the line had barely moved. I didn't feel like dragging the bottles back home. Everyone was waiting with resignation and I waited. A man standing behind me who looked like he wasn't opposed to drinking suddenly said, "It won't get any better" loudly and clearly for the purpose of starting a conversation. The line remained silent.

The coercion that we grow accustomed to begins with something small. Isn't it so? It begins with the surveillance of our teachers, with the police, with any kind of suppression of personality in many different situations. It starts at birth and continues our whole life. We accept the sins of society as our own from birth — this concept is a bit abstract, but true. Why can't I lessen the pain I feel for those killed justly or unjustly in my country or in another? How can I lessen the pain caused by my own mistakes? Everyone asks himself these questions... Everyone answers for oneself in front of God. He is the measure of our pain, that is what John Lennon sang. This is true. It is the plain truth, guys! This truth is on your favorite record — put it on the record player and the pain goes away. Is this an illusion? It is very simple — "all you need is love".

The pop scene in Leningrad froze up towards the beginning of the eighties. No one was ripping up the place, ringing out or announcing some radical concerts. At least, I don't recall anything.

Then suddenly a Rock Club appeared on Rubinstein Street. "One more organization belonging to an organization in an organization of organizations," I thought. One more Directorate of Culture. But somehow, one musical sensation after the other that was connected to the Club rolled into the city. "Lord help them, I thought not having the time to see the great concerts that came one after the other. From 1982 until 1986 there was so much that was worthy of attention on the Leningrad rock scene, that I recall the first wave of British rock which reached the shores of the Neva from 1966 to 1970. This time it was New Wave, New York style, that was creating the storm. The border guards undoubtedly did not notice how the messenger of the youth's music hopped across the borders without any papers. This messenger had the valuable contraband of black Jamaican reggae, the white punk rock from London, the new rock of the Stray Cats, and everything else from anarchy to folk rock — all brought in pairs. This ark flew to the place where the winds of change were blowing, and the wind was blowing in the direction of the good old high. How could it have been otherwise? We all got together, like we did before at Time Machine concerts (Alas, they were already forgotten.) and



IN THE USSR BOTTLES HAVE A DEPOSIT,
BUT THE PLACES WHERE THEY CAN BE RETURNED
ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.

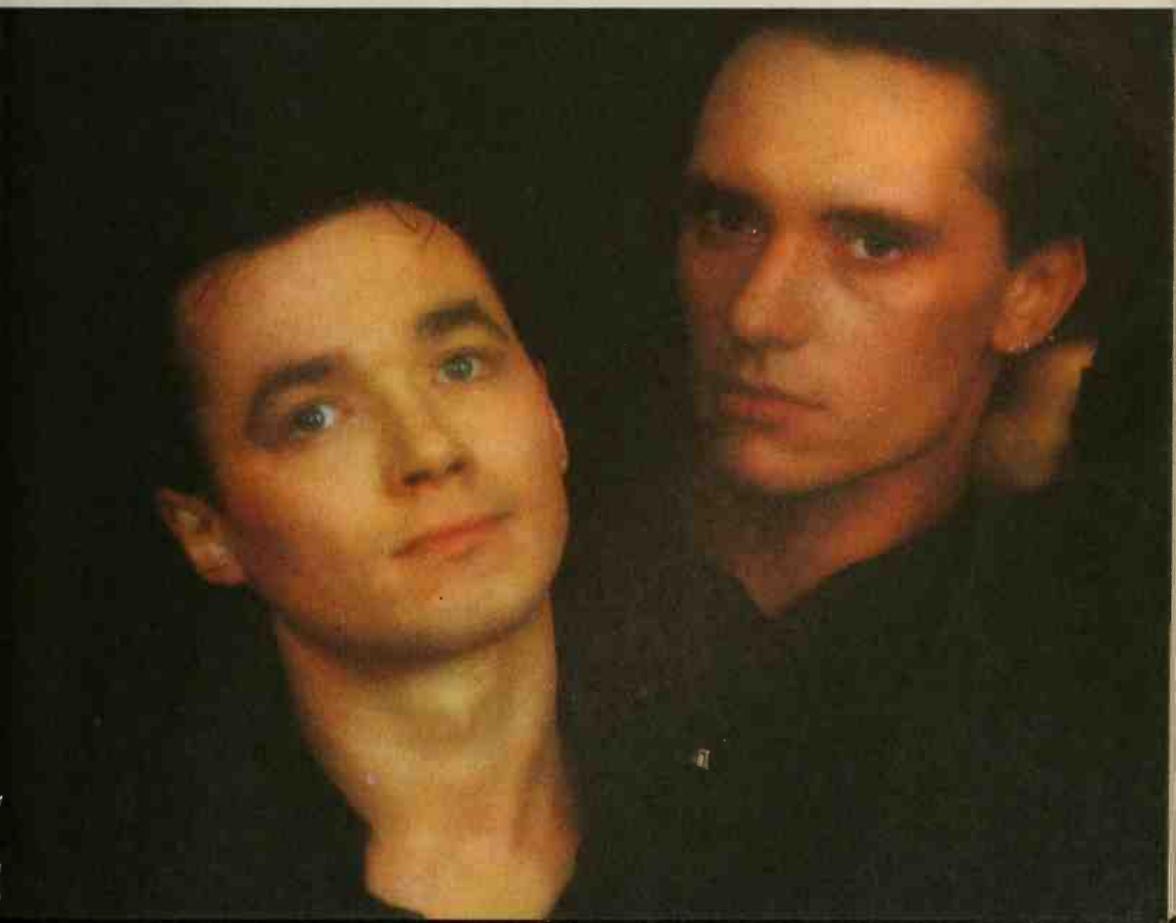
tripped out. We made new friends and hugged our old ones, drank wine and traded stories.

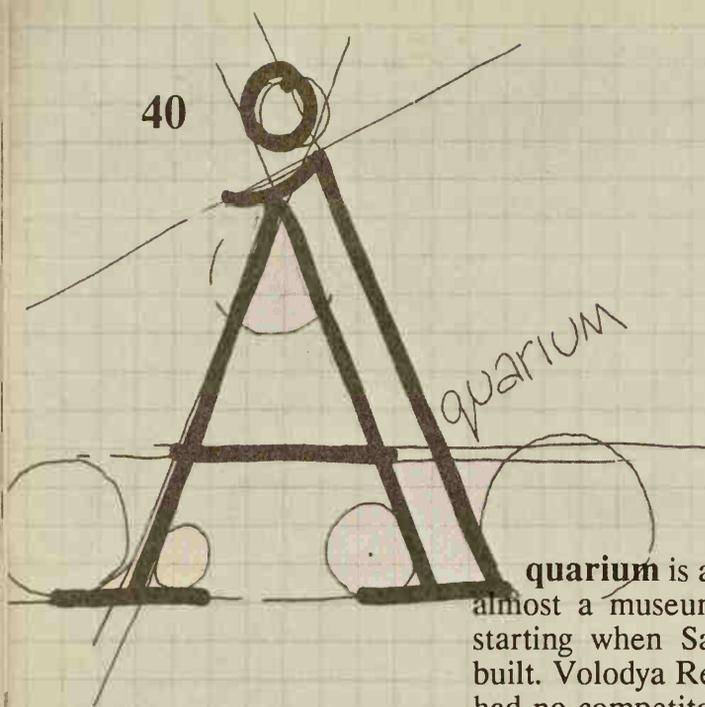
The appearance of the group Kino was very self-assured. In the beginning their music was not only interesting, but unique — it had good rock lyrics mixed with dark-humor and self-irony. It was true to life, there was nothing fake about it. “Cucumbers”, “Tranquilizer”, “Tree”, and “Commuter Train” were cuts that were internal and raging, but done with great taste. But later, in 1983, Kino shifted into a powerful, maniacal rhythm which drowned out the music and poetry. Tzoi’s voice became low and monotonous. He began to use make-up and act like a shaman on the stage — undoubtedly he thought that he was a prophet. In fact he became repetitious and repeated not only himself but something out of the New Wave. This is not a reproach, it is just a statement of fact — signed sealed and delivered. Without a rubberstamp.

*The commuter train is taking me
there, where I don't want to go.
On the platform it's cold but
at the same time warm.
It's filled with cigarette smoke but
at the same time there's fresh air.
Why do I keep quiet?
Why don't I shout?
The commuter train is taking me
there, where I don't want to go.*
Victor Tzoi



Mike (or as he is now to the rest of the world Misha Naumenko) appeared on the stage of the Rock Club in 1982. He is a big fan of Chuck Berry and drinking beer in the morning. He was finally able to get together a band after many years of sporadic music making and composed a series of happening songs which became very popular. He named his group Zoopark (the Zoo), staked out a plot of land on Rubinstein Street and took off. The group completely reflected the tastes of its leader and his image of being rock and roll jerk and "one of the guys". He was very knowledgeable of rock music, in fact a walking rock encyclopaedia. He pleasantly shaded the strongest influence of New Wave on Leningrad music with his own traditional sound. In my opinion his high point was the cassette-album *Provincial Town N* which is strict, uncompromising, fast rock and roll with biting lyrics. Who could ask for more? Mike's album understandably invited the criticism of the newspaper *Smena* (the only youth newspaper in Leningrad). The best specialists in town on morality work for it and thus moralizing is the paper's hobby horse. The criticism made Mike more popular. With time Zoopark lost speed and energy but continued to fill the concert hall, travelled the entire country and made a lot of money. They say that Mike had to buy a second-hand night stand to keep all this "cash" in.





Aquarium is a history-making group and is almost a museum piece already. They were starting when Saint Petersburg was already built. Volodya Rekshan was already a star, he had no competitors and the city was his territory, but Borya Grebenshchikov had just barely started building his A-frame house. Today, Saint Petersburg is on the banks of the Neva like before but Aquarium is expanding their building and is even opening branches across the ocean.

THE LETTER
"A" WITH
A CIRCLE ON
TOP IS THE
SYMBOL
OF THE
GROUP. - Tr.

THIS IS, IN FACT,
THE TRUTH,
BORIS HAS
A UNIVERSITY
DEGREE IN
MATHEMATICS.
- Tr.



Borya Grebenshchikov

rium. Since the mid-seventies Aquarium has performed everywhere and everything, including their own stuff. These were naturally mostly underground gigs and “apartment concerts” — comfortable, friendly and as native as communal apartments. It could have gone on like this for decades — Aquarium was noticed but did not shine, Time Machine overshadowed it, Yura Ilchenko was on a roll, but if you do not succeed at first — try, try again! Borya put down his guitar from time to time, took his slide-rule out of his denim bag and built on his letter “A”. And so late one night after some heavy duty work on his building, Borya had a spiritual seance with Hamlet I think it was. Hamlet asked Borya, “Will you be, or won’t you be?” Without dragging out the answer, Borya said, “Rock and roll is dead, but I’m not.” Hamlet kept his silence. In the morning Borya calculated on his slide-rule who the best musicians in the city were and the work came to a boil. Aquarium went up. And Time Machine went down. It is interesting that when Aquarium started Saint Petersburg was on the top, but when Aquarium reached the top of the hill, Time Machine was already at the bottom. There’s something to that. Could it be that Rekshan and Makarevich worked on Borya’s building?

In the beginning of the eighties, Aquarium was already a good stage act in which the appealing and made-up Borya de-

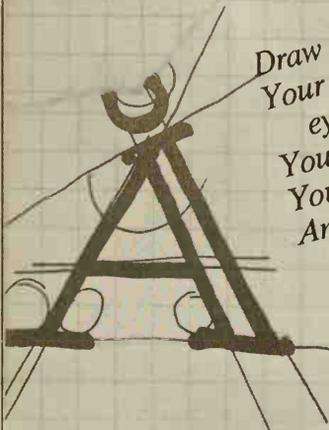


*EVEN NOW MANY LENINGRADERS
LIVE IN COMMUNAL APARTMENTS
WHERE SEVERAL FAMILIES USE
A COMMON KITCHEN, BATHROOM
AND CORRIDOR.*

livered his absurd teasing lyrics to the accompaniment of a powerful back-up group and the sound was remarkable. Aquarium's electric sound was inimitable and by about 1983 the building was built and adorned with the monogram BG at the very top. Henceforth Borya would be BG, but Sasha Lyapin, a guitarist of the Hendrix school and a registered member of Aquarium, just remained Sasha Lyapin and an unforgettable lead-guitarist who worked wonders on the stage and blew the minds of halls that were packed to bursting. Lyapin is a carbon copy of BG in spirit and if both of them were in "synch" on stage their interplay was mystical and wonderful. All of the musicians in Aquarium compliment each other, they were a group of personalities, but BG was and remains the first among equals, that is he was all this and a positive hero. Is it necessary to count up the minuses like the fact that some of Borya's stuff sounds like Jim Morrison or Bob Marley? Or that in the end he started to repeat himself or that melody won't suffice for him? Maybe these are pluses and not minuses?

In 1985 Borya suddenly threw the group's sound into reverse and went from electric to acoustical. This was a shift back to the apartment concerts of the seventies, only now to the horror of the neighbors about 500 people would cram into an apartment. I stopped going to Aquarium concerts.

Borya is on the top as before, although it's more crowded there. He became the singer of *glasnost*. The release of the two-record album *Red Wave* in America forced Melodiya to change its ways: three Aquarium LPs have already been released, which is more than any other Soviet group. Borya was given the opportunity to go to America. He met the heroes of his youth there and rubbed shoulders with Zappa, Bowie and Harrison. Is that fantastic or what? For Borya the trip to America was a mission and he returned tired, wise and looking good with his pockets stuffed with goodies. As before Borya is popular among the youth, but he's a hot shot—you won't see him running down to the store for a bottle of cognac. He does what he likes, and that is not rock and roll. Borya knows that rock and roll is dead and thus moves confidently onward.

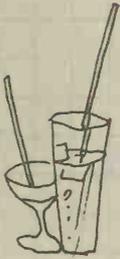


Draw on my wall that which isn't.
Your body is like the night, but your
eyes are like the dawn.
You are not a way out, but the best answer it seems,
And tomorrow and I am smiling,
will say to me:

"You're wrong, Master" and I will recall
your look,
And will tell him: You got it wrong,
my friend, in this life
I'm not mistaken.

Boris Grebenshchikov

Strange Games, a New Wave group which brought about a wave of fans and followers, became the real sensation of the eighties. It quickly appeared and just as quickly disappeared, but the memory for those who saw them on stage remains a euphoric pleasure. This group put on a show that was in keeping with their name. It was the only group without a leader; this was perhaps the strangest thing about it. If you wanted something new, you made your way to all of the Strange Games concerts, they were all good! The fun, witty to the point of idiocy and funny to the point of morbidity, continued for two years. The public waited on the edge of their seats for the hits "Metamorphoses", "At the Crossroads" and "In Our Little Town". This was really good music which was strange for a New Wave group, but unfortunately they were not followed up in this trend. Strange Games put on a powerful show which rolled easily along and turned into a picturesque madhouse. Grisha Sologub, the favorite son and prankster, was always the one guilty of creating the madness. He also doubled as a guitarist. One time he came on stage with a guitar on his stomach and light from a police car on his back! And both worked! Many girls mistakenly thought that Grisha was a little boy when in fact he was a Gulliver. It goes without saying that Strange Games were innovators. Although they were influenced by Madness and the Specials they were creators none the less. They sniffed the world from Leningrad to New York and found the roots for their works. They found the poetry in France, the style in America and the music in their souls. This was a typical example of how our young musicians worked then.



The foursome tore up Rubinstein Street, competing for popularity and leaving their names on the walls of the houses. Towards the beginning of 1985 they lost speed and a crack appeared in the group. After a little while we learned about the emergence of two new groups, Avia and Games which performed separately. There was one more group — that was good, but the strangeness was less — that was bad.

The cafe Saigon was blossoming at that time on the corner of Nevsky and Vladimirovsky. It became the center for information about pop music in the city.

The police, I should add, were also putting on their own "concerts" in the Club and in the Saigon. During these years it was free-for-all for the cops and the *druzhinniks*. There were searches on the spot, and dozens of kids getting hauled off before, after and during concerts became common place occurrences. Some retired Major with his uniform in his coffer will write about this — it is unpleasant for me to write about it, I don't want to rain on the parade of my recollections.

It would seem that there was a lull at the beginning of 1985. Then a rumor reached me that I should go to the Palace of Youth right

ARE FACTORY WORKERS OR IN MIDDLE MANAGEMENT. THEY HELP THE POLICE MAINTAIN ORDER

THE MAIN STREET
IN LENINGRAD.

A DIFFERENT NAME.
IN REALITY IT WAS

VOLUNTARY
"POLICE" WHO

away and listen to a new group. My buddies and I called each other up and went.

It all happened real fast: a good-looking guy walked out onto the small disco stage and stood with his legs apart in front of the microphone and moving his arms like Mister Kio and began to lay down the line. Right off, it was stunning. It was Kostya Kinchev and his group Alice. I am glad that I saw two of Alice's first concerts in the Palace of Youth in March 1985, they were hypnotic. Kostya created complete wonderful sensation of magic. He was a source of happiness. If you passed nearby him during a concert, you broke out in sweat. I experienced this myself.

WHO IS KOSTYA KINCHEV?

Voice: strong, rich and sensual.

Timbre of Voice: mellifluous.

Poetry: penetrating and noble.

Music: raging, expressive, expansive and tasteful.

Abilities: theoretically unlimited. Is able to compose melodic ballads and full on rock and roll.

Stage Image: exorcist. One more singer of the lost generation.

Image at Home: nice guy, cuddly.

Energy: atomic.

Tastes: healthy.

Partialities: the blackish red color and Mark Bolan's music.



Kostya's songs were smash hits. "The Experimenter", "Mannequin", "Juicer", "A Wave Is Coming", "My Generation" and "Bad Boy" are all examples of contemporary music that beckon you to fly up somewhere above the roof tops. I think that their first album *Energy* is the best record in Soviet rock

for the first and last twenty years. All of the data listed in the questionnaire is on this record which Melodiya felt worthy of releasing three years after it was recorded.

*A quiet time, subdued days,
Pain and joy brushed their teeth
and went to bed.*

*The sound which was once a scream
shut its mouth and swallowed its tongue.*

*The mold keeps its post
covering the scab-covered graveyard.*

*The mute dark water guides the shadows to the bottom,
as the flames of the public fires
lick the faces.*

Hey, sir, the recalcitrants are going to the ditch!

Sweat of powdered carcasses,

Fat mouths weave a lace of spit.

*The beast laps from the puddles
of the soul of those who bear the mark.*

Maestro, with flourish!

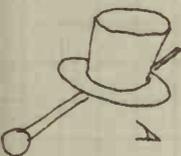
Kostya Kinchev

Thanks to Andrei Tropillo this record was released. He was the producer and even participated in its recording. He managed to record Kostya's spirit. Andrei is in general a good dude — he recorded all of our musicians in the eighties and one could say that he immortalized them. In the seventies there wasn't any such guy and as a result there is little left to listen to.

Rock gave a heat and courage to our country. It created a spiritual breakthrough. The love of music together with stubbornness and wild enthusiasm worked a miracle and we achieved inner freedom.

Our rock is a little over 25 years old, twenty of which were spent in partial underground. In spite of its inferiority complex, our rock endured illegal punches and the calculated pressure of the state bureaucracy. Slowly but surely it made up for its losses, kept its chin up and made the life of the youth interesting and contemporary, and did not allow them to get lazy and spit on everything. But in many respects Soviet rock is still bare — it is almost without recording studios, it doesn't have its own television and radio stations, it gets almost no advertisement, has almost no control over its own music or the release of its records, and western equipment and trifles are necessary to obtain across the cordon...

Rumor has it that there are rock groups and a rock club in every major city. They compose, release and record in their own make-shift studios, do their own advertising and go on tours. They are envious and egocentric and think a lot about



A FAMOUS SOVIET ILLUSTRATIONIST.

themselves. It seems like they grow their tree not for the purpose of it being necessary and beautiful, but so that it will be taller and greener than the neighbor's. They are really concerned about this. Among Leningraders there are foresters that have their American "axes" in their hands. This is when Soviet rock seems like much ado about nothing.

It is necessary to contain one's pride, get up out of the armchair, stand on your tip toes and fly off over the world to see how people live. People all long for love and happiness. Rock among all people is the same, trying to divide it by national character is silly. Give me a record that moves me, shakes me up, makes me dance like an idiot and does me good. Even if the record was recorded by Big Foot, I'll buy it!

If you woke up love in a person and made him happy wherever he is — this is rock.

If you dispelled, be it only one lie and freed the spirit of at least one person — this is rock.

Rock needs a world without borders, passports, money and violence. Then rock will be unstoppable and will roll across the universe to a place where there is no pain. Let it roll!

Rock never challenged anyone. It is the continuation of civilization, a creative upsurge of a young humanity and an intimate means of social interaction. Some social institutions were lacking something necessary to evaluate rock. Rock is not from this world, it has its own values — it's from another world, i.e. the future. Rock in which we are living today.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Kolya Vasin

K. BACHUH

P.S. Our rock speaks to the youth in Aesopian language, talking about lions, rams and migratory birds — anything to avoid trouble. It seems to me that our musicians are hardly concerned about humanity, they are often evil and write senseless lyrics. Such songs are not good. They are without love and light ... this is all explainable and logical, but never the less. **WE WILL ARGUE, WE WILL ARGUE, WE WILL ARGUE!?**

RUSSIAN SLANG FOR THE GUITAR IS "SHOVEL"
IN CONTRAST TO THE WESTERN "AXE"

THE FATE OF SASHA BASHLACHOV

It seems that today's life has not left room for the extraordinary. Miracles, prophets and spiritual titans are a thing of the past, we are content with UFOs and half-mythical pop stars. Of course, wonderful contemporary art exists but it easily gives way to rational perception. Alexander Bashlachov was an exception. I think that in my life, which has been sufficiently rich in events and acquaintances, there was only one time when something immeasurably big happened, something which was out of the ordinary — my meetings with him. We were complete opposites by nature: I was Soviet, a rather shallow person, a pragmatist and a “zapadnik”*; he was a poet, a wanderer and deeply and completely Russian. But his strength “turned me around”. Perhaps it would be an overstatement to say my acquaintance with him changed my life, but its effect on it is without comparison. I remember, it was about 1985, when some acquaintances from the Scientists' Club in Pushchino asked me to promote the unknown Bashlachov with my authority. I wrote on a poster announcing his concert with a felt pen — “If I am remembered for anything after several decades pass, it will be for the fact that I ‘discovered’ Sasha Bashlachov.” And I still believe this is how it should be — although his fate turned out completely different from what was to be expected. The thing is that Bashlachov was the only one who understood the prejudiced muse of Rock on a par with the great Russian cultural tradition ... or the other way round. He was the only one who combined the whole wealth of the Russian soul with the raw nerve of rock culture. This is why I think he is the most important person of our generation.

Now I don't wish to say anything about his work or about his amazing songs. They will become common property and there are people who will analyze them better than I do. I knew Sasha Bashlachov and will talk about only what I saw myself.

I apologize ahead of time for the fact that there will be a lot of “I”s in this narration.

September 1984. The peak of the Chernenko persecution of rock. I was prohibited in the capital and was “black-listed”. For this reason I gratefully accepted invitations from the provinces, where the rumors of the “taboo on Troitsky”

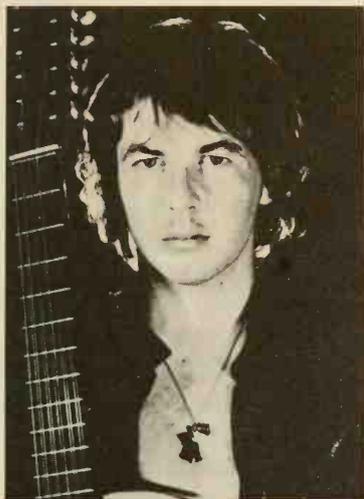
* A Soviet person who likes Western styles, music, etc. There is a bit of an understatement here on the author's part, it would be difficult to imagine anyone more “zapadnik” than Mr. Troitsky. — Tr.

hadn't reached yet. To be more precise, it was Leonid Parfyonov, the young bright personality of the local television station, who dragged me out to Cherepovets [an industrial town located in the Vologda region in northern Russia]. We had hardly started a liberal dialogue (which included right of rock to exist) when Sasha Bashlachov, a friend of Leonid's walked into the studio. He was thin, not very tall and had moderately long hair. His teeth like the majority of the Northerners deprived of vitamins were bad, but his eyes were kind and enthusiastic. He was dressed in the same things that I saw him in during the following years: a black leather jacket and jeans. And a cowboy shirt. I can't say that he made a great impression on me right away, he looked like a typical rock fan. He started to quiz me about Grebenshchikov* right off the bat and said that he was a big fan of his. Parfyonov stayed at work and we went out to walk around rather gloomy, ruler-drawn, Cherepovets. We conversed happily and for a long time, about what — I don't recall. I didn't give it any particular significance. God, it is so hard to recollect this now... Well, the houses in Cherepovets are boring structures built in the thirties, forties and the fifties, but are brightly painted. This was probably done so that they wouldn't look completely like barracks. In one of these houses, a bright blue one, Bashlachov rented a room. We sat there and listened to DDT and he told me a little bit about himself. He was twenty four years old, a native of Cherepovets. He had graduated from the school of journalism at Sverdlovsk University and was working as a correspondent for the local paper *Communist*. He used to write the lyrics for the local group Rock-September... Aha! This was a familiar, but sad story: sick of the backwoods and obscurity, Rock-September sent its tape recordings to the Russian department of BBC which gave them air play. The joy in Cherepovets was short-lived: the musicians were summoned to "where one would expect them to be summoned" and were forbidden to play rock. Slava Kobrin, the leader of the group, moved to Estonia where he still plays blues guitar in the group *Ultina Tule*. The rest of the guys joined restaurant bands. This successful action gave the boss of the Cultural Department the right to say the following famous words: "In Cherepovets, everything is fine with rock music — we don't have it any more."

Bashlachov continued to write poems and in May 1984, he bought a guitar during the Leningrad Rock Festival and began to learn how to play it.

He had about one and a half dozen songs then, and we agreed that he would sing them at Parfyonov's place that evening. There were three of us. I don't think that we were drinking, we just talked. I liked Bashlachov more and more — he was lacking that

* Boris Grebenshchikov, singer-songwriter for the Leningrad rock group *Aquarium*. — Tr.



Alexander Bashlachov

burdensome provincialism, so it wasn't necessary to coddle him while suppressing an internal yawn. He took up the guitar when it was already late at night. He excused himself, saying that he played the guitar badly. It did not seem to me that he was very shy, although this was his first "important" appearance. But he wasn't self-assured either. In general, he sang very naturally, and only sometimes glanced at me with a calm curiosity. It seemed like I was right at home and ignored the periodic question, "Maybe that's enough?" I wrung everything possible out of Bashlachov. I even asked him to play some songs twice, something that I don't recall ever having done before.

He sang fifteen songs altogether and I can't say that they were all masterpieces.

Basically, they were ironic or lyrical sketches from the "young life" and were slightly reminiscent of the texts he wrote for Rock-September. Written in a wonderful language with interesting observations, they would be an asset to the repertoire of any rock-singer. There were several "narrative" ballads which were completely traditional, but were built on brilliant metaphors which revealed their meaning in the last lines like O'Henry story. Of Sasha Bashlachov's early songs, I like three in particular. The first is the irreverent rock and roll hymn "The Dead Season" (also called "Hour of the Tide"):



*They've got ninety patches,
my faded blue jeans.
Our modest pay
is only enough for abortions.
But, like before, they ring out
and like before they get us high,
the primitive chords!*

Then there is "Train Number 193", which people more often call "Railway Crossroads". This desperate song about love takes your breathe away:



*Love is a sun, which sees the sunset,
It is me, it is the unknown soldier of yours.*

And finally, "Black Holes". Bashlachov said that this was the very first song he ever wrote. It is very simple — but his very own fate is encoded in it:

*They're good guys, but their path is not mine.
No reason to go, if not falling's the thing.
I know that I will never be able to find
all that, which is undoubtedly easy to steal.
But since my early years I couldn't toe the line.
The sun blinds me when I look at the flag
and I am tired of extending you my open hand
in order to get a fist shaken at me again.*

I felt that this was one of the best rock-poets that I had heard. Furthermore, he was surprisingly professional and “together”. To Sasha’s great surprise, I also liked the music: it was graciously melodic and extremely passionate – in short, it was not mindless folk song chord progressions. Perhaps it was the music that let you know this was rock and not some kind of camp fire song... That very same evening he sang “Time of the Bell” in front of people for the first time. This song later became the anthem of Russian rock. For Sasha, this was a breakthrough which surprised even him. It was a breakthrough from the intellectual “urban folklore” into the turbulent pagan spaciousness of Russian imagery. No one had yet set foot on this territory – neither the bards, nor the rockers. Even the respected Vysotsky* stopped on the doorstep of this realm.

Sasha was going at the tempo of troika. It was as if he were chomping at the bit with foam flying off his lips from the strain:

*...thus, we chew our curses with our prayers,
we live – tho' they poke us in the eyes.
Sleep and drink by the day and by the liter.
We don't sing for we've grown unaccustomed to it.
We wait forever. We wander dirty.
This makes us look alike,
but washed by the rain we are different.
The majority are honest and good.
So what if the dear Tsar Bell is broken,
we came with our black guitars
for it was big-beat, blues and rock and roll
that cast a spell on us with its first beats.
And in our chests are sparks of electricity.
Hats in the snow, crank it louder.
Rock and roll is gloriously pagan.
I love the time of the bells.*

Later we talked. This time after hearing a “young song writer”, I did not have to be delicate. I was sincerely enraptured. I said

* The popular Soviet bard who died in 1980. His songs were an alternative to the official music. In 1987 Vysotsky was posthumously awarded the State Prize of the USSR in recognition of his work.

that he should go to Leningrad or Moscow with his guitar as soon as possible, that his songs would be big hits there and so on... Bashlachov listened to this all with a child-like, joyful, but distrusting look on his face. Leonid Parfyonov was also badgering him but with a bit of irony. When a couple of years had gone by, Sasha told me that he went home that dark night and played his songs, dancing and jumping around like very happy people are sometimes portrayed in films.

The conversation continued on the following day. I hate to give artistic advice to artistic people, but that time I recall telling Sasha that he had to overcome the influence of Grebenshchikov and the whole "Leningrad school" in general, and write something in the spirit of the "Bells". Of course he keenly felt all of this without me telling him. It was quite obvious that he was confused by his unexpected discovery, and the dissimilarity of his new aesthetics which had nothing in common with any of the prestigious rock orientations of the time, including his beloved Aquarium. But what if they didn't get it, what if they considered him provincial? We parted that same day. I have not been in Cherepovets since then, but often recall the places and the question arises: was it the "backwoods", poor, somewhat idyllic Russian north that formed the work of Bashlachov? I think that it undoubtedly had an influence, but I would not say that he is "entirely from there". In general, he related calmly to the "northern pride", and never, at least not in my presence, expressed pride about his "backwoods" origin or compared it to the "glitch" of the big cities. Furthermore, it seems to me that it was very boring even oppressive for him in his home town. For his last three years, he did not have a place to live, but only in the most desperate situations where there was no other way out did he go home to Cherepovets or the village of Uloma. But even then he couldn't take it there long, in spite of the fact that he loved his mother and his sister very much.

So, several weeks later he arrived in Moscow and stayed at my place. Every evening we went to someone's house where he gave concerts. His first Moscow appearance was in the old Arbat apartment of Sergei Ryzhenko, the former violinist for Last Chance and Time Machine who was a notably talented guy but a total drunk. Sasha brought some new songs: two rambling ballads about Soviet life which make listeners laugh hysterically, and four serious cuts written in different keys, from different perspectives, but they all were about the same thing: the Russian way of life and its spiritual (and physical) decay:

*If a stranger should happen upon us –
the poor vivacity and our rare
strength of heart is striking,
as well as the stupidity of evil forbidden.*

*We'll pour out a tub of sauerkraut,
and bake a tart without dough.
What, it's empty on the outside?
But like before, it's tight on the inside...
We'll start to laugh hoarsely,
But what we are laughing about doesn't matter.
If it's boring in the morning.
Then it's very scary in the evening.
Seven of us huddled on a chair
All of us on a plank bed.
Sleep, my baby, la-la-la!
There is no one to make the birch veniki!**

There was also "A Winter Tale", "The Straight Road" and "Evil". He sang "Evil" more aggressively and heatedly than "Time of the Bells" and played so quickly that his fingers barely had time to form the next chord. This song remains the most "infuriated" of his compositions.

*We put up a farm — it got buried by a storm.
The vodka was for a week but the hangover for a year.
We darned on our bodies. And sewed to our ribs.
We sweat an even year and chewed for an even hour.*

This is just one of the verses. The remaining ones are just as good. It was amazing how much he managed to write. One time during this first visit, I advised him to go see Alexander Gradsky, the performer of the famous cycle of "Russian Songs" and sing him "Bells" and "Evil". It seems that this meeting did not make a big impression of Bashlachov. I called Gradsky to find out his opinion. He started by saying that the guy couldn't sing or play for beans ... but the poems were great! "He's a very hard-working guy," said Gradsky. "I can imagine how much time he spends on every line. Working with words, of course, is like being a jeweler." "As far as I know, he writes very quickly." "Oh, sure! No way! If that's so, then he's simply a genius." Gradsky began laughing heartily over the phone ... although he was not far from the truth.

Alexander Gradsky: "One morning a few years ago I was awakened by a phone call. There was a muffled somewhat confused voice on the line... I could feel that he was nervous. 'Could you listen to my songs...' I decided to meet with him and I thank my stars for that decision. "'Hello, I am Bashlachov,' he said and after a little pause added, 'Alexander...' He had a simple open face, a mixture of

* These last two lines are from a Russian lullaby. In Russian villages there is always a bath-house where birch *veniki* (twigs bundled together) are used to beat your skin to help blood circulation. — Tr.

a craftsman and Leonardo da Vinci with his one metal tooth sticking out incongruously. He pulled a guitar a la ‘totally out of tune’ from an incredible pawed case, took it by the neck (plunk, squeak, don’t-you-do-me-in-my-good-man-I-can-still-be-of-use-to-you*) and began shouting...

“It was as if a fresh Russian wind filled my kitchen. I remember asking myself: if he can’t play, can’t sing and swallows half his words, why is there this joy and bitterness in my soul? Why do I take what I’m seeing and hearing to heart? I wanted to say something very nice, very pleasant to him right away, but I restrained myself. I decided that I would listen to everything he would sing, I would pull everything out of him that I could. I would make him open up completely, exhaust him and then let the devil take him...

“‘This tea of ours has surely cooled...’ Wait, I thought, this isn’t a song. This was simply how the wonderful Russian poet Alexander Bashlachov talked and sang during our first and last meeting...

“Some listless flies were crawling about on the table. We drank for a bit ... then I took my guitar, he took his and we sang a Beatles song but couldn’t pull off a harmony...

“What did I tell him when he left? It seems that I said I’d do my best. Talked some nonsense. But what could I do for him then? “He didn’t call...”

Bashlachov said that songs literally “popped into his head” and sometimes it happened so fast that he barely had time to write them down. He told me that the meaning of some of his images, metaphors and allegories was not comprehensible even to him – he would continue to decipher them for himself for months after he wrote them.

His Moscow debut was a triumph. Bashlachov then went to Leningrad where he was also successful. From there he went back to Cherepovets but only to quit his job at the paper and say good-bye to his relatives. He got married in Leningrad to a nice lady named Zhenya and received a *propiska*** to the “second capital” on Kuznetsov Prospekt. The times he spent there were few, however, because he continued to visit Sverdlovsk and Moscow and later, as the number of his fans and friends grew, he travelled to lots of other cities. These tours not only appeased his unquenchable thirst for society, but they also gave him a means of subsistence. He was paid little for “apartment concerts”*** and sometimes the pay was limited to just booze and munchies

* This is a quote from the Russian fairy tale “Emelya the Fool”. The way it blurs together is a parody on Bashlachov’s singing and guitar playing. – Tr.

** In the Soviet Union your permanent place of residence is written in your passport. A *propiska* is the right of permanent residence. A Soviet citizen cannot work in another city without being a permanent resident there. – Tr.

*** This was a form of spreading “unofficial” music. Most Soviet rock groups got their start this way. – Tr.

(in the “intellectual” apartments, there was tea and cake). This however was enough for his unpretentious life style. I recall that once some sympathetic acquaintances decided to scrape together money for him to get his teeth fixed, but nothing ever became of it...

Sasha Bashlachov’s songs were getting better and better as time went on. During his second Moscow tour – somewhere around January or February of 1985 – he came out with “Windmill”, “There Is an Uproar”, “Ask Me, Star” and “Rusty Water”, and a couple months later he played “The Absolute Watchman” and “Get Out of Here”. “Watchman” is his most “head on” political song. When he would perform it everyone asked to turn off the tape recorders: they were afraid of informants. This song is about the horrors of totalitarianism:

The absolute watchman is only sterile scheme.

A war mechanism, the point position.

*The chaos of sunny days is brought into order by the night
under the name of ... what does the name really matter.*

This song’s direct analogy between Hitlerism and Stalinism is scandalous to many people even today, and up until the word *glasnost* it sounded criminal. By the way it was not out of fear that it was “kept under wraps”, there was an entirely different reason why Bashlachov played “The Absolute Watchman” very seldom. He almost stopped performing the satirical songs “The Exploit of the Agent” and “Meeting-Symposium” in spite of their popularity for the same reason. The thing is that politics, mundane and “earth-bound” themes were less interesting to him, both in his life and in his poetry. “I’m sick of that trash. It’s all stupidity!!!” he would say. Slowly, but surely, two qualities were “squeezed out” of his songs: irony and accuracy in his depiction of daily life. In other artists I always welcomed these qualities and considered poetic effusions to be a bad sign, however on Bashlachov’s level these pleasant devices turned out to be something enslaving and base. He had gone so far up, higher than anyone. What did he need to squander his talents on triviality for? Thus I was even more surprised by one phrase in his quiet and absolutely penetrating song “Get Out of Here”:

*Lie down and watch how the nuclear prince
is bringing his lash to the throne.*

It was so atypical of him, so trite... I asked him, “So what? Did you join the fight against nuclear weapons?” It’s strange, but Bashlachov looked no less puzzled than I was. “I don’t know,” he answered, “where it came from, it jarred me also, but I felt that it had to be there...”

*A cold April. Hot dreams.
Viruses of new tunes in the blood.
And every goal of the nearest war
is laughing and waiting. It is waiting for love.*

Exactly one year later the Chernobyl tragedy occurred. I realize that I'm on the slippery road of mysticism, but there's nothing else that I can do about it. Sasha Bashlachov was really a special person, I don't know anyone like him. He was fascinated by magic and by everything unreal. He seemed to attract strange coincidences and unexplainable events. I'm not a strong believer of the supernatural although I have been a witness to a couple completely apocryphal histories.

The summer of 1985. It seems to me that this was the peak of his inspiration. First he wrote "One for the Road" which might be his own favorite song which is "crowned" by a sad formula which can be applied to the writer himself— "there is no room for icons in Russia". Later he performed his enchanting, gloomy enigmatic ballad about Yegor Yermolayevich for the first time. It was like nothing he had ever written. And finally there was "Vanyusha". This song, or more precisely small epic poem, is not so effective in terms of its versification as it is for the exceptional strength that it is imbued with. "Catharsis" is the exact word to describe how it acts on an audience. Catharsis by shock... I have had the pleasure of having lived through genuinely earth shaking events while listening to great artists, from Ravi Shankar to Vladimir Vysotsky, but I think that the most powerful impression was created by Bashlachov in 1985 when he sang "Vanyusha". He was completely engrossed and so was everyone listening to him. It was only when the song ended that we saw that his entire guitar was splashed with blood. He had cut his fingers. It's a banal metaphor, but he had really rent his entire soul. This could have been terrible, like everything that transcends the boundaries of human limits is, had it not been so saintly and lofty. "Vanyusha" is a song about the Russian spirit. Unfortunately when talking about what Bashlachov's songs are about it is often necessary to resort to trite overused words, that is, to understandings that have depreciated almost to the level of kitsch such as the "Russian soul", "faith and hope", "love and death" or "spiritual strength". Of course this is not Bashlachov's fault. On the contrary, he was one out of thousands and thousands who had the courage and said a sincere word about these eternal, but trite values.

There was another song about roughly the same thing that was written at this same time, "On the Life of Poets". This song is about him, his mission and his fate. The poem could be written here in its entirety because it's very beautiful, but I will limit myself to a few lines:

Never mind that the angel-unskilled workers
 are out on the streets.
 That which was long hacked at by the hammer
 will breakthrough to the pen.
 The wanderer poets put down the sign of
 bleeding after the verses end.
 God stands on their doorstep
 but they seek their own cathedral,
 a search that knows no end.

“This is genius,” said the pop singer Alla Pugachova when she heard “Poets”. When “Vanyusha” was being played, she cried and after “Evil” she just gasped “awesome!” Bashlachov heard enthusiastic compliments by the dozen and by the hundred. He heard them not only from the semi-underground bohemians but from the mouths of famous poets, influential literary critics and from the secretaries of the Artistic Unions. “Let no one trample on your sky,” Andrei Voznesensky wrote to Sasha in his book *The Superintendent of the Soul*. This was a paraphrase of a line from “Evil” – “They’ve trampled down the field, sewing up the sky...”

Well, perhaps no one did trample on his heaven, and the little bird of paradise was not forbidden to flutter about. The single blessing that Bashlachov got from *glasnost* was that no one branded him an “ideological subversive”, a “hooligan with a guitar” or a “dangerous cleric”. By the way, if he had gone public a year earlier, he would have been arrested for his “illegal concerts” almost for sure. (Remember that even Bravo did not escape this fate in 1984.)

All of the “prestigious” appearances of Sasha Bashlachov (there were particularly many in Moscow at the beginning of 1986) were for the primary purpose of helping him get hitched up to some extent to the “official” culture, like say, get his verses printed or receive an order for songs for a theater production. This would have meant access to a broader audience and definite degree of security – both civil and material. I can’t say that Bashlachov longed for official recognition, nor was he particularly proud of his underground status. Social and artistic status was not the “cardinal issue” for him, what he wanted was some action and new opportunities.

However this wasn’t in the cards. There were concerts including ones at *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and at the Taganka, but somehow Bashlachov remained “out on the streets”. Undoubtedly those of us who were his amateur managers just did not have enough knowledge and connections, the people who we relied on for help didn’t have enough time and the press did not have enough courage and so on. The only thing that I am sure of is that Bashlachov certainly had enough talent to justify it all.

After the summer “splash” he went to the north. He liked it an awful lot in Siberia: he said that he felt an unbelievable influx of “positive” energy and happiness there. That same fall his son was born in Sverdlovsk. Sasha composed a number of songs during this time — “In the Open Field”, “Dough”, “Verka, Nad’ka and Lyubka”,* “Like Autumn Winds”, “Something Happened in Siberia” and others. There were about ten all together. They were light songs, filled with hope and even pacified, that is, to the degree that Sasha was able to be pacified in general. In short, they were love songs. He said that he had written the most tender of them “Let’s Sit Side by Side” after he had a dream of a young girl. “I know that it was love herself...” At the same time he wrote another song about poets, a triptych dedicated to Vladimir Vysotsky which ended with the words — “To be or not to be? What is the question about if there’s no other way?”

In January his son died and in the spring of 1986 Sasha wrote the last of his known songs. There were four of them: “When We Are Together”, “The Name of Names”, “The Eternal Fast” and “Dance in the Fire”. “When We Are Together” is somewhat of an echo of the “light” autumn cycle but its form is infinitely more complex and it is “estranged”. At this time Bashlachov was fascinated by the magic of Russian words: he searched for their roots, their consonance and in this way, the true hidden meaning of speech. All of his last songs are wonderful plays on words, not formal but completely inspired. “The Name of Names” and “The Éternal Fast”, as I conceive them, form a diptych. In my opinion they could be the best things that he ever composed. Perhaps the easiest way to put it is that these are songs about the spiritual resurrection of man.

Instead of icons

mirrors will pass the last judgement on us.

The name of names

*will rip out by the roots all that was buried before its time
in the sieve of times,*

*and throw the pain and a blade of grass so that truth
will sprout on time.*

It is possible to say that these are religious songs although there is not a grain of church dogma in them. “...And the cupolas won’t slip a hot golden hat on the Name of Names.” Contemporary Russian Orthodox art is not very powerful, neither the icons and nor the psalms... In Bashlachov’s songs there is real genuine spiritual power although I am sure that he would be considered a heretic.

* Nick-names for given girl’s names — Vera, Nadezhda and Lyubov (meaning Faith, Hope and Love). — Tr.

*Lord roll up my sleeves for me!
Give me as a gift the staff to the true path!
I'm going to see how your widow
wrings her dry bosom in her fist.*

At one time it seemed that Sasha Bashlachov had completely left rock and roll and was even somewhat burdened by it once he had found his own new "Russian" style. However these songs have a great, solid rock rhythm. Oh, how we wanted to record them the way they deserved to be recorded! We wanted to do the same thing to all of his other ones too by the way. I still have the notebook where Sasha and I planned how this or that song would be "produced". We wrote down what sound we would use and with which musicians we would record them. The fact that Bashlachov always sang with only a guitar does not mean at all that he did not want it any other way. Quite the opposite, he dreamed for years of having a group in which there would be all sorts of instruments from synthesizers to wooden spoons. He even thought up names for the group: The Second Capital, Outpost... But nothing came of it. Musicians from the Leningrad Rock Club and many musicians from Moscow, Sverdlovsk and Novosibirsk knew and loved Bashlachov but never got around to playing with him. Sasha's songs never sounded like he heard them — with an accordion or a brass band, electric guitars and peals of thunder... And even the usual "guitar songs" (there were only four songs that were studio recorded at that time) were not as good as he wanted them to be. The lack of quality recordings, in contrast to the many other things lacking in his life, really depressed him.

That summer I saw him several times. Once in June we were at Grebenshchikov's place with Billy Bragg and the three played all night long. Sasha even improvised in English. He wasn't in the mood to write in Russian but said that he had a lot in his head, but for some reason it wouldn't "jell". I was at several of his concerts, but I didn't particularly like them. It was obvious the abundance of his appearances had given him some degree of "professionalism": he began to work the audience, accentuate the more "right on" lines in his songs and, in general, play up to the crowd. In my eyes this was not him. Later he hit the road. First he went home, then he went to Central Asia... He disappeared for a long time. None of his friends heard anything from him.

He called me in December and at first I didn't understand what happened to him. He was like he had never been before — calm, even somewhat listless, and very quiet. Recalling his frenetic mood during the spring and summer, when he was always "fired up", I took this as a good sign. He said that he went through a lot during these months and had come to his senses and cleared his

head. Naturally I did not want to ask the question which it was apparent that he expected with a cringe: "Did you write anything new?"

There was nothing new. He said that he couldn't write songs anymore and that he couldn't even play his old ones. "I can't, that's it," he said unwillingly with his eyes downcast. "Later, maybe, but not now ... I just shouldn't." I did not quiz him further, this would have been cruel and unfriendly. Most likely the thing was that he had lived the past two years in such a state of inhuman tension of creativity, feelings and nerves that it was impossible to escape exhaustion. (In these two short years he wrote practically all of his songs!) He could have died then for he was giving too much, too fast.

From what I understood, he did not want to sing his old songs because he knew that he could not sing them like he used to sing them. That is — like they should be sung. However he had broken this vow of silence in order to survive. In order to physically survive he had to do something and what could he do besides sing? And everyone around him expected new songs, that was how he had supported himself among his friends and acquaintances. He successfully appeared at the Leningrad Rock Festival... Of course he felt that everything was not "quite right" — his songs used to sincerely excite him, now he just sang them. The question "does he have any new stuff?" was on the tip of everyone's tongue. But like before it wasn't coming to him, although he said that something was "going around" in his head.

In spring of 1987, he met a nice girl named Nastya who was from Tula and was an acting student. It seemed that she was his only consolation, though their life was not so sweet because they didn't have enough money or a place to live. At first Nastya rented a room, but later they roamed from one of their friend's apartment to another as soon as they felt themselves becoming somewhat of a burden. In the winter of 1988 we spent several days at a dacha of a mutual friend. Bashlachov was very quiet and humble. He did not converse with anyone and often went for walks in the woods with someone, but even then he was silent. One morning we woke up and he was gone. He left unnoticed. I'm afraid that he was offended because the evening before during dinner he casually mentioned he would sing then and it would be even something new. But we let it slip by and continued to do our own things. Our deafness now seems monstrous, murderous ... too late. Perhaps he would have sung the two songs which were written in the last year of his life — "Archipelago of Rakes"* (there is no recording of this song, not even the words remain) and "When We Are Two".

* "Arkhipelag Gulyak" — this is a pun in Russian on the title of Alexander Solzhenitzyn's work on the Stalinist prison camps Archipelago Gulag. — Tr.

*I've damned myself
With an aspen stake thrust to the depths.
The living rose up in my breast
Covered with scratches and the jester's bells.
Life, don't hold on
It can hardly be measured by death.
I will not fall in vain
For my knap-sack is dearer to me than anything else.
Thus 'tis easier to know honor.
It's my time,
It's my time to go after the song in which you believe.
We'll meet in the morning.
And you'll understand it all yourself.*

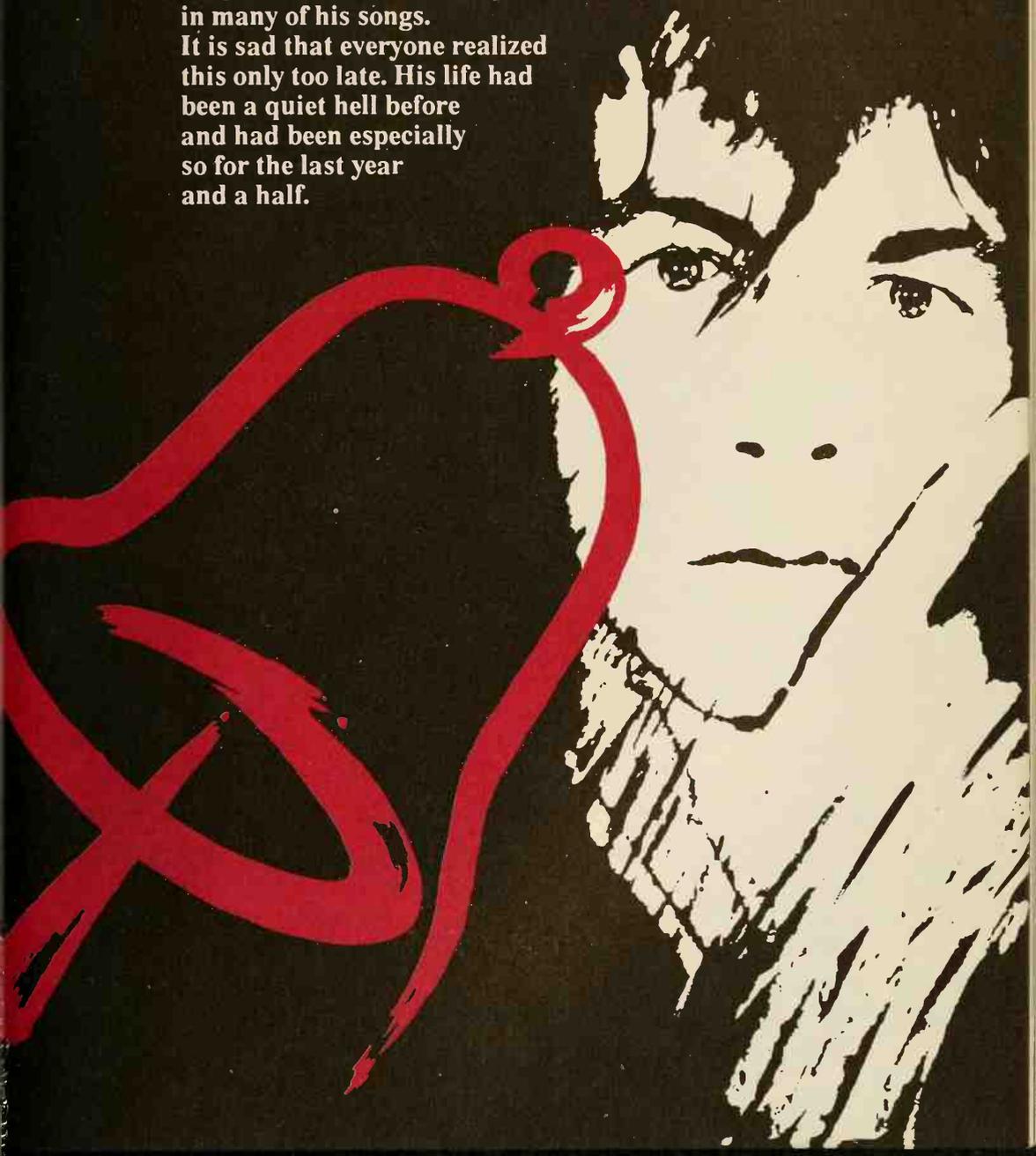
On the 17th of February 1988 he jumped out of the window of his Leningrad apartment on Kuznetsov Prospekt in the middle of the day.

Later there was a large concert in his memory and a funeral repast at a "Red Corner". Musicians from various cities, his mother, father and sister came to Leningrad. Sasha Bashlachov was buried on Monday the 21st of February in the enormous Kovalevsky cemetery in the northern part of the city. There were many people there, but the silence was deafening. There were no speeches nor lamentations about his "youthfulness" or the "untimeliness", there wasn't even a tear in the voices. There was silence up to the moment that the coffin was lowered into the grave. The silence said a lot, mostly about the heavy feeling of guilt. Certainly everyone there could have helped Sasha Bashlachov in some way before it was too late, but didn't do it. I recalled among other things the last time we met, three weeks before his death... He came over to our place with Nastya and the conversation was about their dreadful living conditions: they didn't have a place to live and Nastya was expecting a child. We agreed that we would keep an eye out for a cheap apartment ... although of course, we could have put them up in our apartment, but that would have entailed some inconveniences. If we had done this however Sasha would not have gone to Leningrad. Undoubtedly, many people were recalling a similar story.

There was another general feeling that was intensified by the silence: the feeling of the inevitability about everything that happened. It was meant not to console us, but rather it took Sasha's tragedy from the "vital" plane and transferred it to a different one. "Don't believe in the end. And don't wait for another shuffle of the deck," he sang in his "Song about the Poets", a song about people like him. He was one of the kind people who don't live long, and consciously lived in such a way that it would be difficult to survive.

He predicted his own death in many of his songs.

It is sad that everyone realized this only too late. His life had been a quiet hell before and had been especially so for the last year and a half.



It is sad that our official cultural institutions recalled him only in hind sight and did so with a fairly handsome dose of hypocrisy. His poetry was published after his death and a record of his songs came out. When he was alive he never had support in anything. When reminiscing about the difficult life of Vladimir Vysotsky, everyone puts the blame on the era of stagnation and its cowardly pen pushers. But for Bashlachov, a man of no less talent, fate turned out to be even harsher and he died in the third year of the uneasy era of *glasnost*.

Yes, he was a person who was inclined towards emotional and psychological self-immolation, but is it just to make allowances for "evil fate" which prevails over geniuses. Is it possible to sincerely consider a system, which does not support its own hapless, "damned by themselves" poets or even give them a chance to survive, to be democratic? Sasha Bashlachov left without leaving the slightest trace, not even spit in the majestic corridors of the Great Soviet Culture.

...One winter night we were walking towards the platform in Peredelkino in hopes of catching the last commuter train and Sasha was telling me about reincarnation. He told me that he knew exactly who he had been in his previous life and that it had been terrible. "Was it a long time ago?" I was curious. "In the Middle Ages?" "No," he said, "it was not long ago." "That's interesting," I said beginning to talk about things which strictly speaking I didn't believe. "Why and at whose command does a spirit get reborn into the next body?" "I know how that happens," Bashlachov said. "A soul begins to suffer again on the Earth just as soon as everyone has forgotten about its previous life. Souls are kept in the heavens by the power of memory."

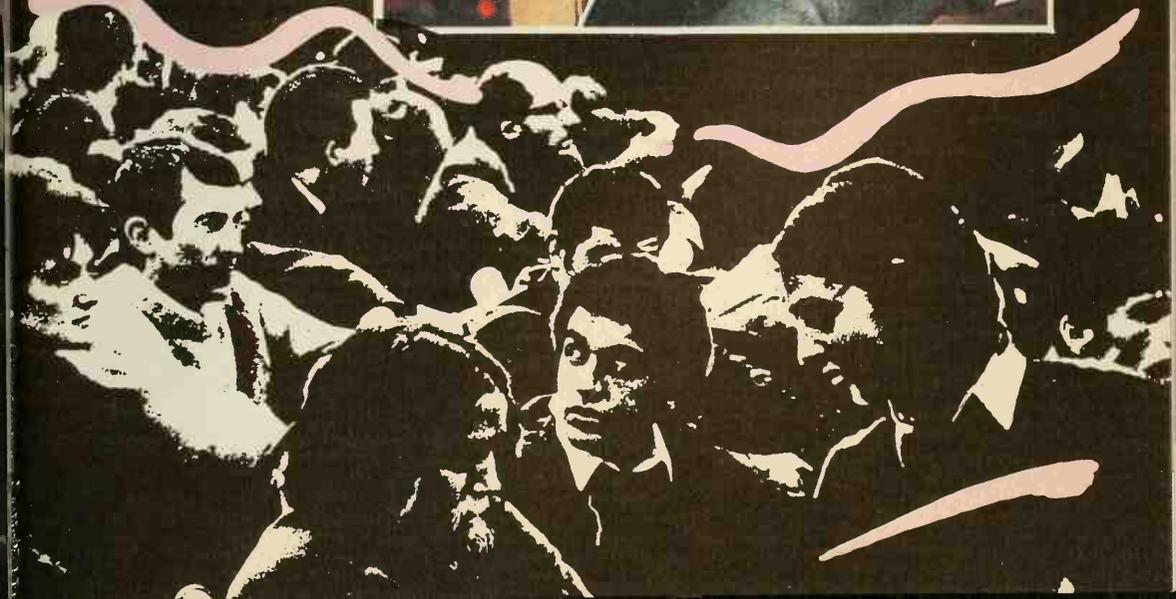
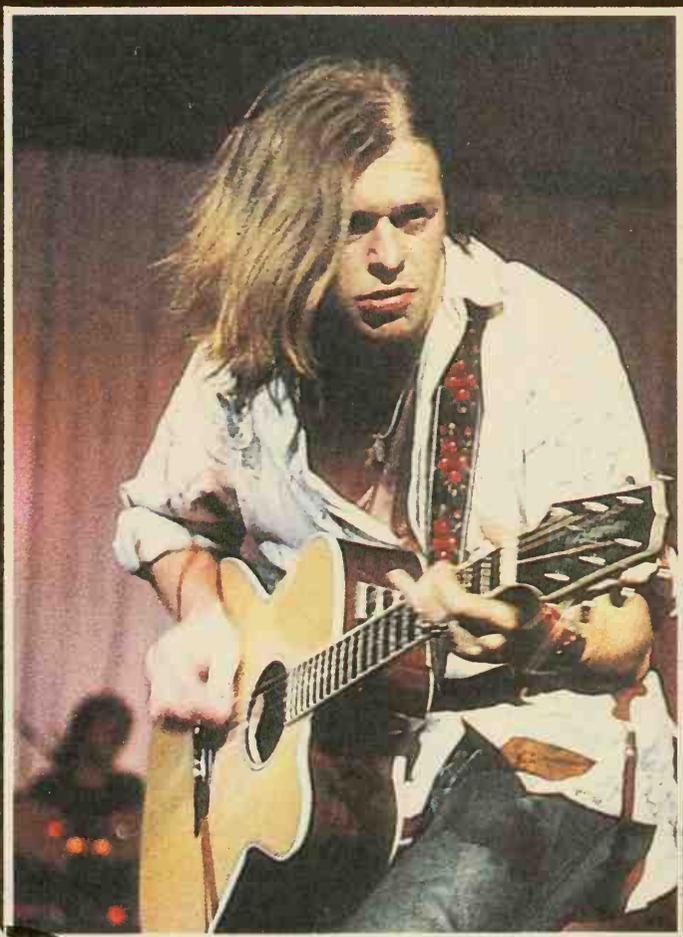
In August, Nastya gave birth to a son.

Artemy Troitsky



THE CROWN

a map of currents
in the Soviet rock
movement, a virtual
model of society
Open your eyes to
who is left, right,
centrist and extremist
in it, what is Soviet New
Wave, why problems of
style are elevated by
Soviet rocksters to the
status of problems of
social justice
a credo of a rock
ideologist



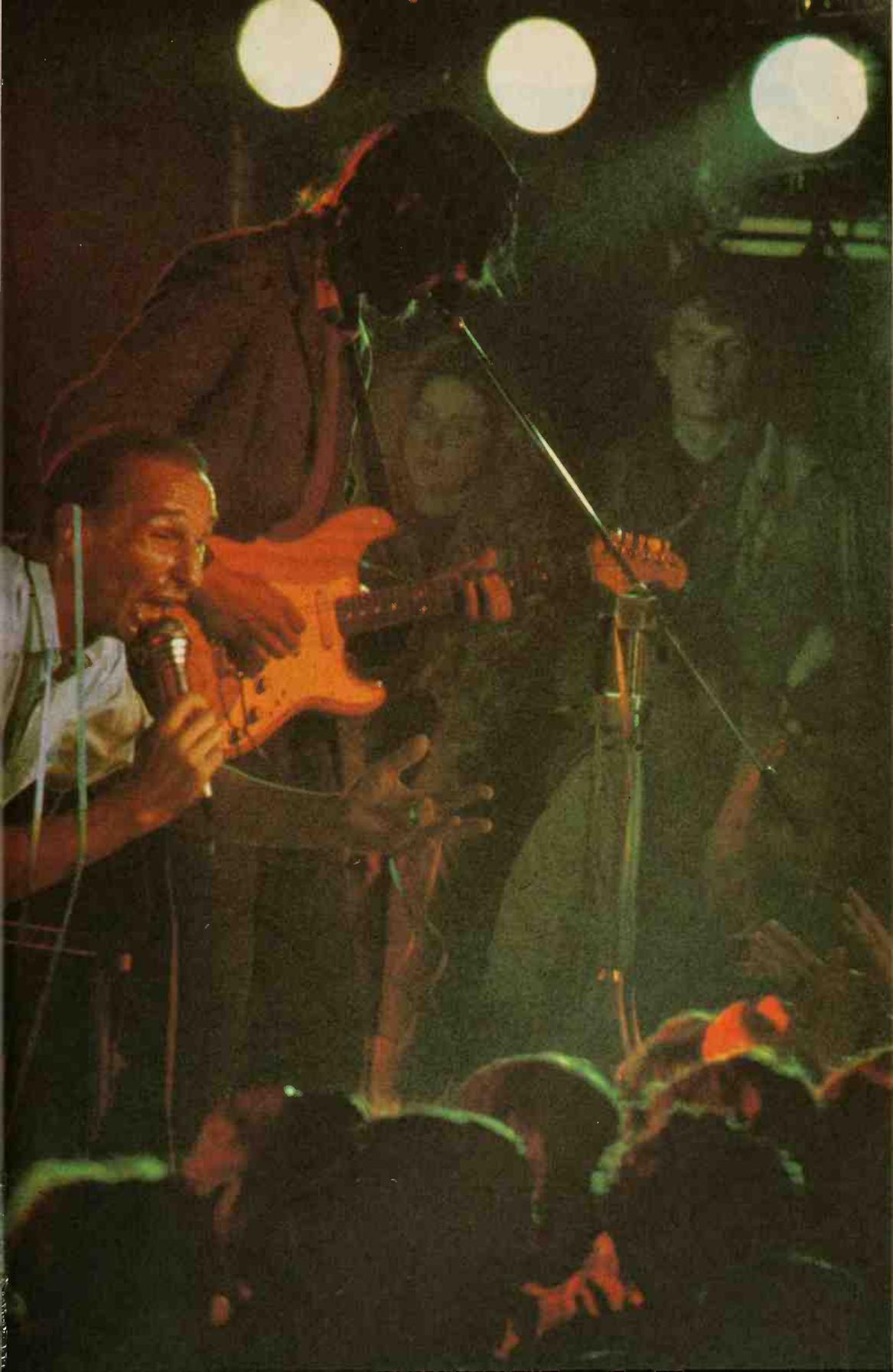
THE PHENOMENON OF ROCK MUSIC IN THE USSR

T Alexander Lipnitski, the guru of Soviet rock avant-garde, appears on the line-up of ZVUKY MOO (Moscow) now and then:

The invitation to an official audition in April 1985* came as a total surprise to Zvuky Moo. The outfit was on a list of banned groups and because of its repertoire it felt it made no sense to contact official agencies. Most Moscow rocksters advised the group against going to that audition. They relied on bitter experience: "They will put you on another list and pigeonhole you for all you're worth after that." The group's decision to go to the audition after all was a bold move for the time. The group performed numbers that were bound to grate on official ears, 'Source of Infection', 'Tourist', 'Get Up Early', 'A Bottle of Vodka'. We were all surprised and kept our fingers crossed." Starting from the fall of 1985 surprising things began to happen in Moscow. Gigs became regular and bands were allowed to play throughout the city. Moscow was out to catch up with the unquestionable leader of the 80s, Leningrad.

* In April 1985 the Communist Party Central Committee at its plenary meeting launched the course of perestroika. — Ed.

ZVUKYMOO



66 WHAT HAPPENED?

By the mid-80s a full-blown rock culture had emerged in the USSR complete with traditions, memorabilia, idols and prophets. It had a unique artistic and social message to deliver. It swept the nation and reached the hearts and minds of thousands upon thousands of rock fans in all Soviet cities. It would appear almost impossible to understand the phenomenon of rock music in the USSR unless we consider some essential features of Western rock. There can be no doubt that rock came here from the West. The advent of *glasnost* in the USSR introduced dramatic changes in the Soviet people's perception of the West. It put paid to the myth of the West as a world of capitalist exploitation where consumerism and militarist expansion reign supreme. The policy of openness enabled the public here to see that the realities of the West today do not fit into stereotypical schemes, that the Western world is diverse and that honesty, struggle, protest and rebellion are also to be found there.

Rebellion is a key-notion applied to rock music, which is described as the music of rebellion and protest, in Soviet studies of contemporary Western culture.

Young people in the Soviet Union, however, did not have to rely on scholarly publications to be able to perceive in the tragic notes of Janis Joplin, the aggressive style of Mick Jagger, or in the anarchy of the Clash, the sincerity of a human being lost in the bureaucratic establishment, its tears, pain and bitterness. It perceived rock as a rebellion which Soviet musicologists discussed as something very remote but which struck a deep chord in young souls.



The rebellion of Western rock became the rebellion of young people in this country.

There was no desire to imitate, it was intuition and a sense of affinity with youth in the West that was behind the exchange of albums and tapes, the ear-splitting sound of hi-fis, the yearning to get hold of posters and photos of rock stars and the collection of whatever scanty information fans could glean from Soviet periodicals.

That rebellion took bizarre forms. It was at times usurped by quick thinkers of no particular talent and degenerated into the easy-listening format of disco. But it was Rebellion that had always been the inspiration of true rock. It was a rebellion against alienation and loneliness, against the dogmas, against the fatigue brought on by "civilization" and by "applause that turns into ovation"* It was a rebellion, whatever form it took, that has always had an essentially social dimension.

Soviet rock fans have no doubts at all that rock is a social phenomenon, one hundred percent, and that is a clear sign of rebellion, a rebellion against the sloppy songs about things that do not exist in real life, against vulgar sentimentality and undue optimism, against the imitation of folk music never accepted by the people, and against marches that evoke no desire to march. Rock's message is straight. Through it young people address themselves and conduct a candid and sometimes tragic dialogue with themselves. Everyone is of course entitled to his own taste in music. There are many admirers of Bach, Wagner, Stravinsky, and Tchaikovsky in this country, many people who like light music and folk music. But rock is universal, it brings together the most divergent musical tastes. It unites young people because it gives them the most emotional channel of expression.

In its social dimension rock brings together the extremes of style. It gives both masters and amateurs a chance; innovation and tradition merge in it across the barriers of age, across the borders of talent and lack of it. Social awareness organizes the anarchic element of rock and amplifies it, fusing it into the voice of all who are young. Every group has its own face, world, taste, manner, and gift. The social basis of each group is integrated in the single basis of rock culture which unites widely divergent phenomena, bringing individual voices together in a choir, turning the incantation of one into the tribal call of all, and elevating personal searches to a tide of social self-expression. The degree of social awareness makes it possible to classify Soviet rock and to determine what in it is primary and true, and what is derivative and false.

What is social self-awareness? A readiness to accept what you are told without a thought? Is it an enthusiastic desire to join the ranks and march on? Is it the thirst to work selflessly to multiply the beauty of our beautiful reality? The answer is no. Social self-awareness is something entirely different. History teaches us that only the truth can be the basis of social self-awareness. Society degenerates and stagnates without it. Lack of truth gives rise to rebellion against the lie. Rock music in the West began with yelling the truth. The beatniks, the forerunners of Western rock culture, yelled the truth at the height of the American

* A cliché often used in press reports on Soviet leaders' public speeches.

dream come true, drowning out the sounds of rock-and-roll, swing, and sloppy love songs. The individual suffocating in a world where all is well and where everyone can make his pot of gold, the fear of the machine of the establishment, the tragedy of alienation, sympathy toward those who suffer because of the color of their skin, the nightmare of industrial wasteland, and the hate of hypocrisy all merged in a desperate effort to reject the accepted values. The messages of Jack Kerouak and Alan Ginsberg were heeded by the whole generation. The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Velvet Underground, and the Rolling Stones amplified those messages to give young people in the West symbols of faith in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Rock opened a new stage in the cultural evolution of civilization. Rock used music to tell the truth about the young and was used by the young to tell the truth about the world. That was a bitter truth and rock in general bore the stamp of bitterness, irony, euphoria, paranoia, cruelty and death.

Lies are the enemy of rock, but members of the rock generation did not possess the ultimate truth. It merely used the language of rock to state the facts. In East and West alike it is Homo Sapiens that are behind the slogans and inconveniences of everyday life, behind the statistics and public opinion polls, behind the industrial booms and economic stimuli, Homo Sapiens that are brought down by formality, hypocrisy, estrangement and personal tragedy. That is when the truth about the human being is at variance with the truth of formal indices. Crisis produces change, the imminence of which is felt particularly strongly by the young. And rock music, being the most readily available means of expression, is a herald of change. But then again, the road for change has to be cleared. It could

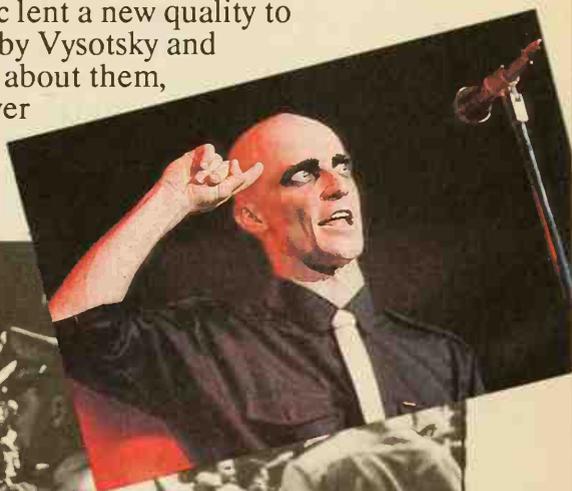


be done by telling the truth about the bureaucratic elite – the carrier of the morals of cynicism, about the dutiful optimism of YCL (Young Communist League) officials who build a fence of slogans to protect themselves from the crisis of youth culture, or about the escapism of teenagers doing drug trips.

Rock bands are honest about what they hate – what stealthily has made its way into our lives and consciousness to become a habit and way of life. Gradually, all of these fragments and styles, forms and images combine to create a universal subject that young people loathe – the World of Bureaucratic Nightmare, the World of Alienation, the World of Lies.

Currently, Soviet rock exhibits three principal trends.

The first one encompasses bands oriented towards a dialogue with society. They use a variety of forms to address their “fathers”, the officialdom and also those young people who choose the path of conformity and unimaginative subordination. Non-conformist rockers lay bare their demands and aspirations, their disagreements and downright hatred. Bands of this trend rise to meaningful social generalizations and don't mince words about the reasons for their opposition. They are merciless in criticizing phenomena that have now come to be dubbed “stagnant”. These bands took it up where the socially aware bards of the 60s left it, calling a spade a spade. On the other hand, the mass appeal of rock music lent a new quality to the dialogue. Whereas songs by Vysotsky and Galich had an air of intimacy about them, something related or cried over “among intimates” – rocksters' protest is all-out.



Their protest is amplified by the thousands of watts and inhuman strain on the vocal cords. The indefatigable and unbeatable desire to be heard by all is what makes the non-conformist dialogue so special.

The basic feature of this trend in rock music is in directly addressing social reality. In a rebellious chorus the musicians shout at society: "You are not what you ought to be!" But that doesn't mean — "You are bad and we are good!" "Social" rockers are just as straightforward and unequivocal about themselves. They realize they themselves are products of totalitarian structures and bear their monstrous imprint.

"You are not what you ought to be! And we'll show you the way we see you!" — that is the slogan of "social" rockers. Until now that has been the sole form of their dialogue with society — disillusioned, negativist and uncompromising.

Another trend of "social" rock can be called introvert. Here, musicians tell audiences about the inner lives and problems of non-conformist youth. They want no dialogue with those "others". They are self-indulgent in the extreme. Their focal theme is the vital spiritual quest of those young people who view themselves as totally separated from society. Songs of the "introvert" bands describe the alienated youth medium with its symbols and idols, its passions and routine. This type of rock is a spitting image of the youth subculture concerned only with itself. Its adherents are found in big cities. They are left to their own devices, surrounded by a complicated and vain world, where nobody cares for them. In school and at work, in the family and out in the street they are surrounded by a kingdom of figures, empty slogans, dubious goals, stupid bans, of indifference and apathy. And so they retreat into themselves, they create their own worlds and myths, they disavow society and get immersed in a "provoked life", in idleness, sex, liquor, mysticism and drugs. Society's indifference to them breeds indifference in response. The young people shirk social problems and proclaim a cult of mistrust. These are evils of the entire civilization...

Rock groups that with their music express the tendency of youth alienation form another trend, escapist rock. The social essence of their message can be summed up as "You are this way and we are different. Leave us alone!" But society doesn't seem to leave them alone, and inner peace is not so easy to achieve. Their estrangement is often pierced by sincere motives of emotional strain and desperation. Escapism is never complete, and social awareness is often discerned behind the bravado of indifference, estrangement and apathy. Young people are sensitive and search for the truth even in escapism.

Alongside music creating a habitat for non-conformist youth, rock in the Soviet Union also branches off into various "mystic" trends. Elements of mysticism can be part of a group's image —



as was the case with the early Aquarium and its infatuation with Zen philosophy. But mysticism can also dominate a group — such as the Trubny Zov of Leningrad, whose songs were based on evangelical sermons. Sometimes, songs written under the influence of drugs or alcohol are clad in religious garb. Escapist rock draws on haphazard visions, erotic urges, scraps of religious doctrines, urban stresses and fits of aggressiveness to create music helping the younger generation regain its lost spirit. But alas! Chaotic mysticism does not fill the spiritual void of the generation, but merely states it is there. That is why the tragic tonality of the songs explodes again and again with a hysterical reproach to the “fathers”. Still, the motley clothes of “social” rock make it difficult to strictly delineate the styles and trends. Just like a teenager it is apt to change its disguise. As for rock musicians — they are wary of any classifications. They do what their talent and intuition tell them to.

Alexander Dugin

ALEXANDER LIPNITSKY: MY CREED

In the 15th century, a time of unparalleled flourishing of spiritual life in Russia, people in the arts consciously placed themselves at the bottom of the mundane hierarchy. As a rule they were black monks and limited themselves to reflection and communication with God through their prayers and selfless work. Their only reward was scanty food. Only very few of them displayed vanity and put their name under an icon or on a church wall. Those that did it were not the best artists of their time. Neither Theophanus the Greek, nor Andrey Rublyov, nor Dionisius left an autograph for posterity. We are never going to know the names of those who built some of the masterpieces of Old Russian architecture – the Ascension Church on the Nerl, the St. Sofia Cathedral in Novgorod and the cathedrals in Vladimir.

Meanwhile, the very first generation of artists who began to make good money (icon painters of the Kremlin Armory, late 17th century) straight away started an unending feud over salaries and their status at court. They were quick in securing a decline of visual arts from which Russia was able to recover only at the turn of the 20th century, prior to the socialist revolution.

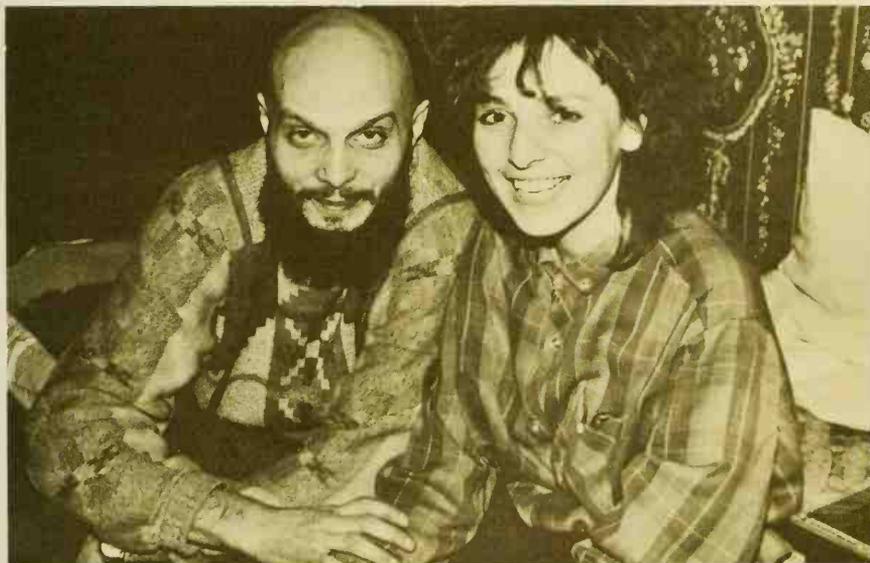
This brief recollection of history is important for understanding the maxim, “He who is endowed will build upon it, he who is not endowed will be deprived of whatever he has.” Everybody can live and create, but very few can carry the gift of creativity all through their lives. These few are referred to as geniuses and classics by posterity. But poverty, scorn and ridicule are their lot during their lifetime. It is clear to me that few of the Soviet rock stars of tomorrow will be able to stand up to the test of glory and wealth. Western art has many a time hit a dead-end for precisely that reason. We have seen many talents get burned up, unable to resist the “golden calf” – many more than died because of liquor and drugs!

Musicians of UB-40 complained to Soviet colleagues that the public in the West is totally oblivious to “problem” songs, that the people only want to relax and enjoy themselves and dance, and that even serious rock musicians have to swim with the stream.

“Forget the beginning and you’ll be deprived of the end” – warned Grebenshchikov. Yes, heathen folklore – the *skomorokhs*, Elvis Presley and the Beatles, Russian poetry and Soviet balladeers – they are all beginnings. But what laws made them all merge into rock by the end of the 20th century? How

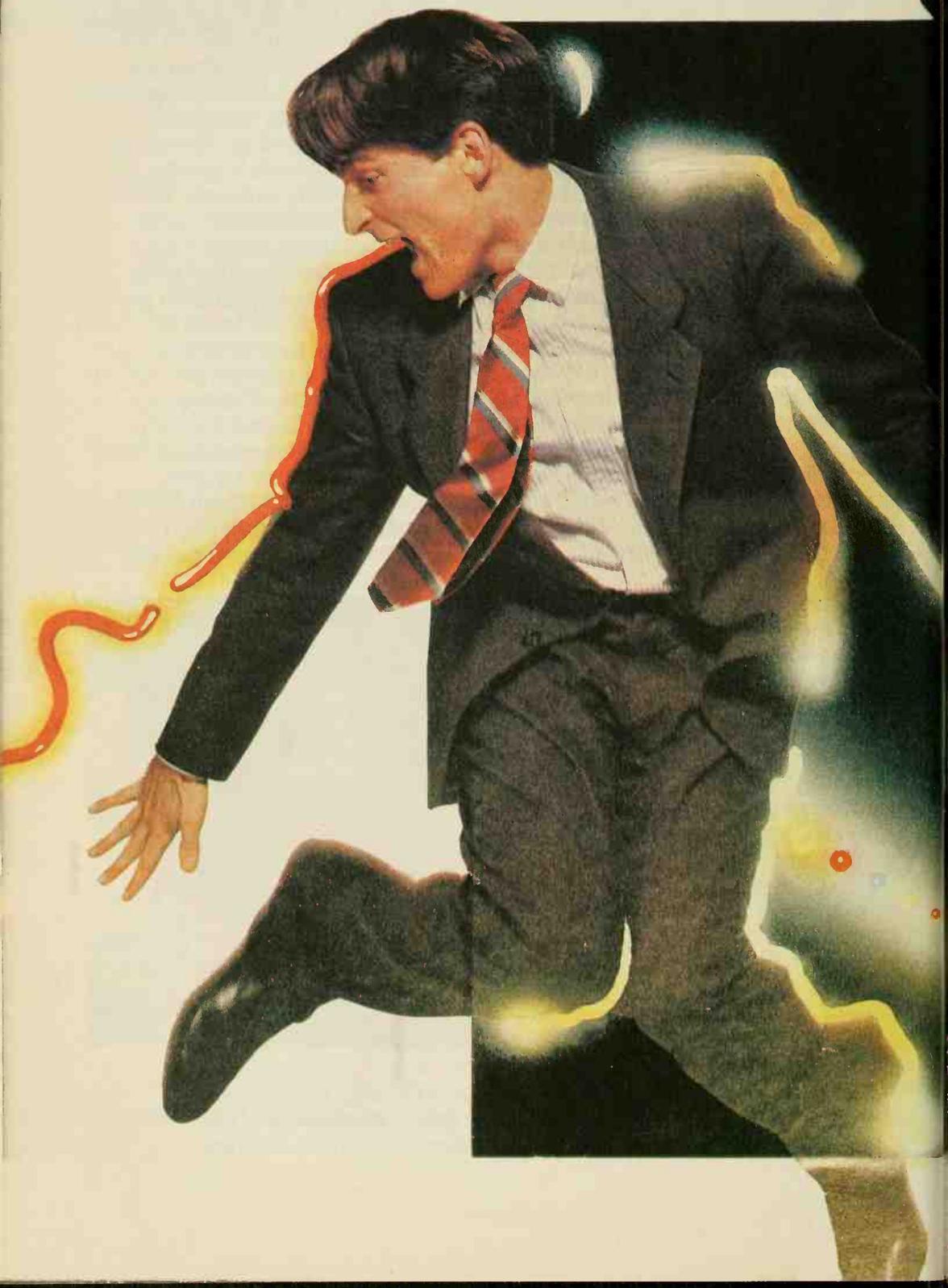
is one to understand the hackneyed formula: "Rock is not music, it is a way of life"? The official establishment of any nation must recognize it, otherwise a union of Rock and the State is out of the question.

After all, rock is not classical music from the archives. In the past quarter of a century it has not been Horowitz or Richter that have been reigning in the hearts and minds of most young people in those countries where their fine art has been competing successfully with the new phenomenon in world art — rock music. I believe Bob Dylan and John Lennon, Vladimir Vysotsky and Boris Grebenshchikov are more like Garcia Lorca and Vladimir Mayakovsky, than those who perform other peoples' music — the pianist Arthur Rubinstein or the violinist Leonid Kogan. That means they are the spiritual leaders of today's youth. Trying to belittle them, judging them on the scales of traditional poetry, classical music or pop music means being unable to comprehend the laws of social development. Everything they have done, are doing and are yet to do together with their followers has not yet been born, but it will see the light of day in the 21st century. It doesn't matter how Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Captain Beefheart or Mick Jagger handled their guitars, mouthed their organs or controlled their bodies. You will never be able to understand HOW they did it unless you think about WHY and FOR WHAT REASONS those masters were born, lived and stayed forever in the hearts of tens of millions of people.



*A. Lipnitsky and
Zhanna Aguzarova*

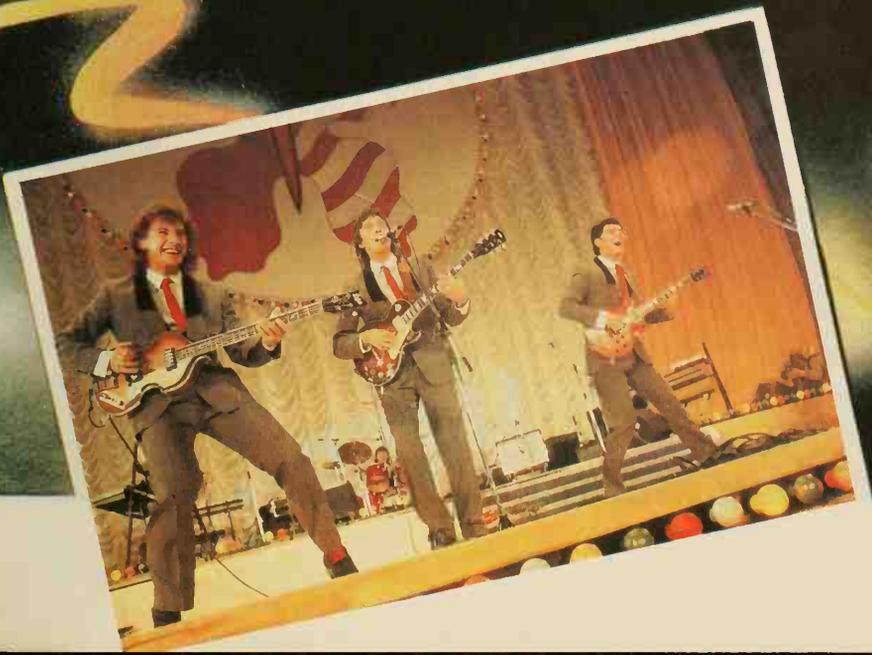
74 THE TIME OF HIGHWATER



New Wave

A GLIMPSE OF THE SOVIET NEW WAVE

New Wave is a trend in rock music that came to replace the traditional anarcho-psychedelic rock at the turn of the 1980s. However, rock critics in the Soviet Union do not seem to have a clear picture of what New Wave is. Some make no distinction between New Wave and conformist "light music", others use the term to describe just about everything that appeared after Time Machine. The confusion must be a result of the rock music explosion that occurred in the Soviet Union in the mid-80s and that is directly related to democratization and *glasnost* in Soviet society. Having emerged from the oblivion of being semi-underground, Soviet bands turned out to be so different in both professionalism and professions that it was difficult to draw lines between the various styles. In 1985 Soviet rock suddenly burst into bloom in such a gamut of styles which in the West had successively replaced one another over the whole of 20 years. Soviet rock fans could not have possibly witnessed the evolution of hippie rock into punk, of punk into New Wave, of experimental psychedelics into industrial rock or of hard rock into heavy metal. They had to digest it all at once as an instant revelation.





Besides, musicians themselves often broke the logic of the evolution of styles, mixing one trend in music with images and lyrics of another. At times, the eclecticism was compensated for by extreme profundity and sincerity rarely found in the West, and even acquired features of a certain synthesis. More often than not, though, it smacked of plain amateurism. But the crisis is over and New Wave in the Soviet Union today is a clearly defined musical phenomenon.

Soviet New Wavers are the youngest generation of musicians that took shape in the midst of the first Moscow punks of the early 80s and evolved into their own style by 1985. The New Wavers bear no relation to the hippies. They emerged only when the hippie movement had long been extinct, with only formal copies of its image and symbols to be witnessed.

New Wavers include primarily bohemian urban young people who have recognized there is no promise in "going back to Nature", the paradise of a commune or the romanticism of hitch-hiking. The parody-laden and scandalous jeering of city punks was also out of tune with the aesthetic requirements of the young bohemians — it was too haphazard and too sincere. Besides, punk protest tended to be too head-on and the forms of punk aesthetics — challenging in the extreme.

The New Wave style happened to be precisely a medium required by the new generation. It infinitely expanded the boundaries of parody, it bore the constant dynamics of theatrical reincarnation and, at the same time, created an illusion of something classical, fundamental, global.

New Wave discovered a new path. Instead of a search for the "paradise lost", life and freedom outside the bounds of the organized society (what the hippies and punks pursued), New Wavers acquired ingenuity and freedom through consciously accepting a conformist structure, dismantling their individuality and turning their life into an unending ironic show. New Wavers did not strive to create an alternative world of their own, but played around freely with the cliches of conformist structures. They did not strive to create new values, but liberally treated markedly old ones.

In many ways similar to European and American, the Soviet New Wave still has its own inimitable air about it. New Wave parody is never abstract, it makes fun of specific elements in the environment. Therefore, New Wave in the Soviet Union is as different from that in the West as the social systems are different.

The art of New Wave is all about a passionless mirror image of society, highlighting its most absurd features. Whereas Western New Wavers populated their world with self-complacent smiles of unbelievably neat American astronauts, silly jokes of petty clerks and suspicious optimism of robot-like software

experts, their Soviet counterparts spun the yarn of cloudless marches, of labor exploits, of tasteless pro-Western uniforms of petty *fartsovshchiki*,* of the idiotic wisdom of parental instruction and mysterious arrogance of Soviet functionaries.

But having got the taste of New Wave, its proponents in the Soviet Union quickly multiplied their number of laughing stocks. Their irony touched on other epoches and cultures and invoked cultural and stylistical attributes far removed from each other. As it fanned out, in its marginal forms, Soviet New Wave came close to Western, though the Soviet social environment had a telling impact even on the most romantic borrowings.

New Wave in the Soviet Union branches out into many of the same trends as in the West.



The first big-time Soviet New Wave bands were Moscow's Bravo and Secret and, later, Mister-Twister. They were plain retro. Bravo exploited the form of shake, twist and vintage rock'n'roll of the late 50s and early 60s. Sporting clothes of those years the musicians and lead singer Zhanna Aguzarova put up an energy-filled show in keeping with the light-hearted post-war optimism, infecting the audiences with a carelessness of the past. Their lyrics were as a rule light-minded and shallow, even though sometimes revealing slight hints at social satire. Mister-Twister was built along similar lines, where Zhanna's naive power was compensated for by the doublebass player's jumping about and uptempo twist.

* Young profiteers buying up things from foreign tourists and selling them to their countrymen.

Bravo and Mister-Twister continue to enjoy great popularity with the youngest New Wave fans who get a kick out of their appearance, plain retro and who adore shake. Bravo fans wear a sort of uniform — oversized jackets, wide and short trousers, red socks, lacquered sharp-pointed shoes and military-style caps.

At concerts they jump from their seats and go into crazy shake, twist or classical rock'n'roll that they have learned from professional dancers. Boys and girls wear the same clothes which gives them a special and ironic kind of appeal.

As distinct from Bravo, Mister-Twister does not always manage to stay within the fine irony style and sometimes slides into a clumsy “socialized” rut.

Secret is a Soviet imitation of the Beatles. The band takes after the Fab Four of 1964-1966. There is virtually no similarity to speak about, but many seem to find the Secret imitation likable. True, the band's popularity plummeted after they rolled up their sleeves and started making the fast buck. Non-conformity remains still the basic and absolutely necessary condition for the popularity of Soviet rock bands. There is too much toadying as it is to accept it in rockers who should be heralds of sincerity.

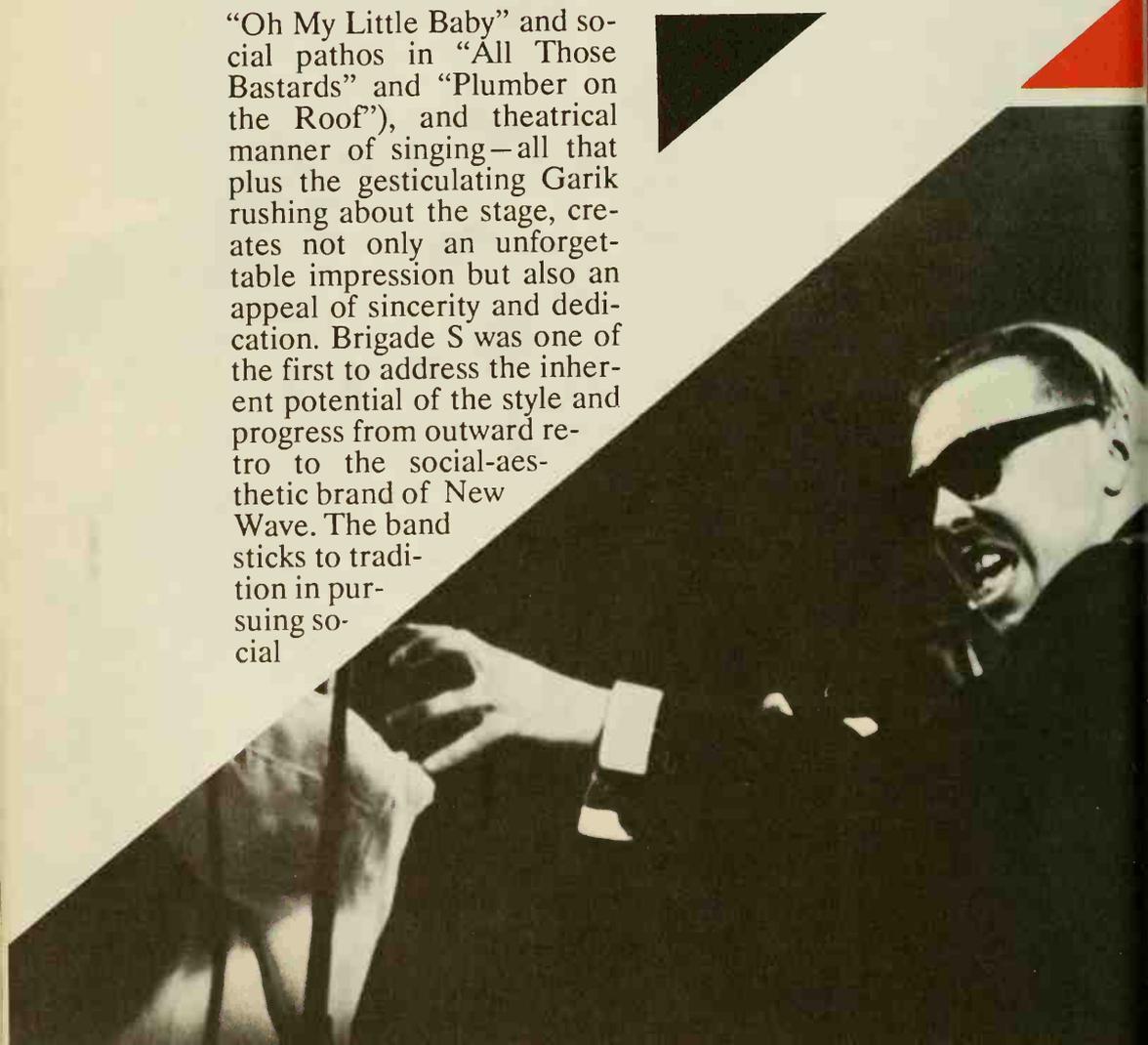
1950-1960





Brigade S is a remarkable New Wave band whose ideology and stylistics are not confined to pure retro. To a large degree that should be credited to its leader and vocalist Garik Sukachev, whose clownish plasticity and aesthetics make the band inimitable and meaningful. Garik Sukachev soared to stardom in Moscow and other cities back in 1985 thanks to his hits "Oh My Little Baby", "Goodbye, Girl", "All Those Bastards" and "Plumber on the Roof". Brigade's quasi-retro style with a brass section of four, a formidable electronic backup, catchy tunes, honest lyrics (the ironically primitive romanticism of a young half-imbecile half-poet in

"Oh My Little Baby" and social pathos in "All Those Bastards" and "Plumber on the Roof"), and theatrical manner of singing—all that plus the gesticulating Garik rushing about the stage, creates not only an unforgettable impression but also an appeal of sincerity and dedication. Brigade S was one of the first to address the inherent potential of the style and progress from outward retro to the social-aesthetic brand of New Wave. The band sticks to tradition in pursuing social



romantic themes. Its following is growing steadily. Despite a number of new hits—"The Tramp", "Don't Follow Us"—the group has not been able to rise above its first tunes. Brigade S sometimes appears on television, recruiting more New Wavers among the audiences and asserting the style in the provinces.

Officials who give them the green light on TV must be duped by the outward traditional conformity of the group in the best traditions of New Wave; they do not seem to notice direct hints at drugs, prostitution, sex and the absurd.

A more consistent and uncompromising kind of New Wave used to be professed by the Leningrad band Strannye Igrы (Strange Games) which in 1985 split into two expressive bands—Igrы (Games) and AVIA. Their story would perhaps better be told by Artemy Troitsky who, incidentally, avoids the term New Wave.

AVIA

A man like a monument that has just dismantled its pedestal walks down the aisle in measured steps. He stops abruptly, puts a megaphone to his mouth: "Spectators from the 35th to 18th row: hurrah!!" Then a pause ensues as he walks further to the stage... Stops again: "Spectators from the 17th to the 1st row: hurrah!!" Then a second-long blackout follows and next thing we know he is on stage in front of a mike with a semblance of a kind fatherly smile frozen on a strong-willed face:

*We have all got together here
To enjoy a holiday!
And the holiday, we all know,
The holiday is the concert.*

No exclamation mark, no excessive merry-making, it sounds weighty and with reserved pride—"concert". A pre-recorded tape produces majestic piano chords from a "Festive Overture" nobody knows which opus and then musicians file out onto the stage. Their hair is neatly cut, they are smiling and wearing uniforms: black, loose overalls and white shirts. There is one without a smile, his head shaven, his shirt black: the Soloist.

The electric organ erupts in an alarming staccato, gradually melting into a monumental chord progression, probably meant to symbolize strong will and determination. The Soloist is at the mike:

*Me! You! Us! All together!!!
But?.. And if the likes of you—
follow the likes of me!!
There...
Night. Stars!
There... Well, that's about the way.*



The Soloist and the MC get down to the choreographic part of the program: at the proscenium they enter into a sculptural single combat of sheer physical strength, which could symbolize the Unity and Conflict of Opposites, or Class Struggle, or just Everyday Life of Glorious Labor. Now and then powerful chords seem to take a breath and go off into an easy dancing rhythm — and the twosome momentarily take on an image of playful bodybuilders... And then again they are in the thick of a titanic battle for... “Spring Hymn”: the Soloist holds up a trumpet and the Drummer sings:

*Springtime blesses us with goldmines of talent,
Exciting our creative faculties.
The touch of springtime and the faculties
Gives rise to poetic words, so close to all:
Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho, sha-la-la-la-la,
Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho, sha-la-la-la-la!!!*

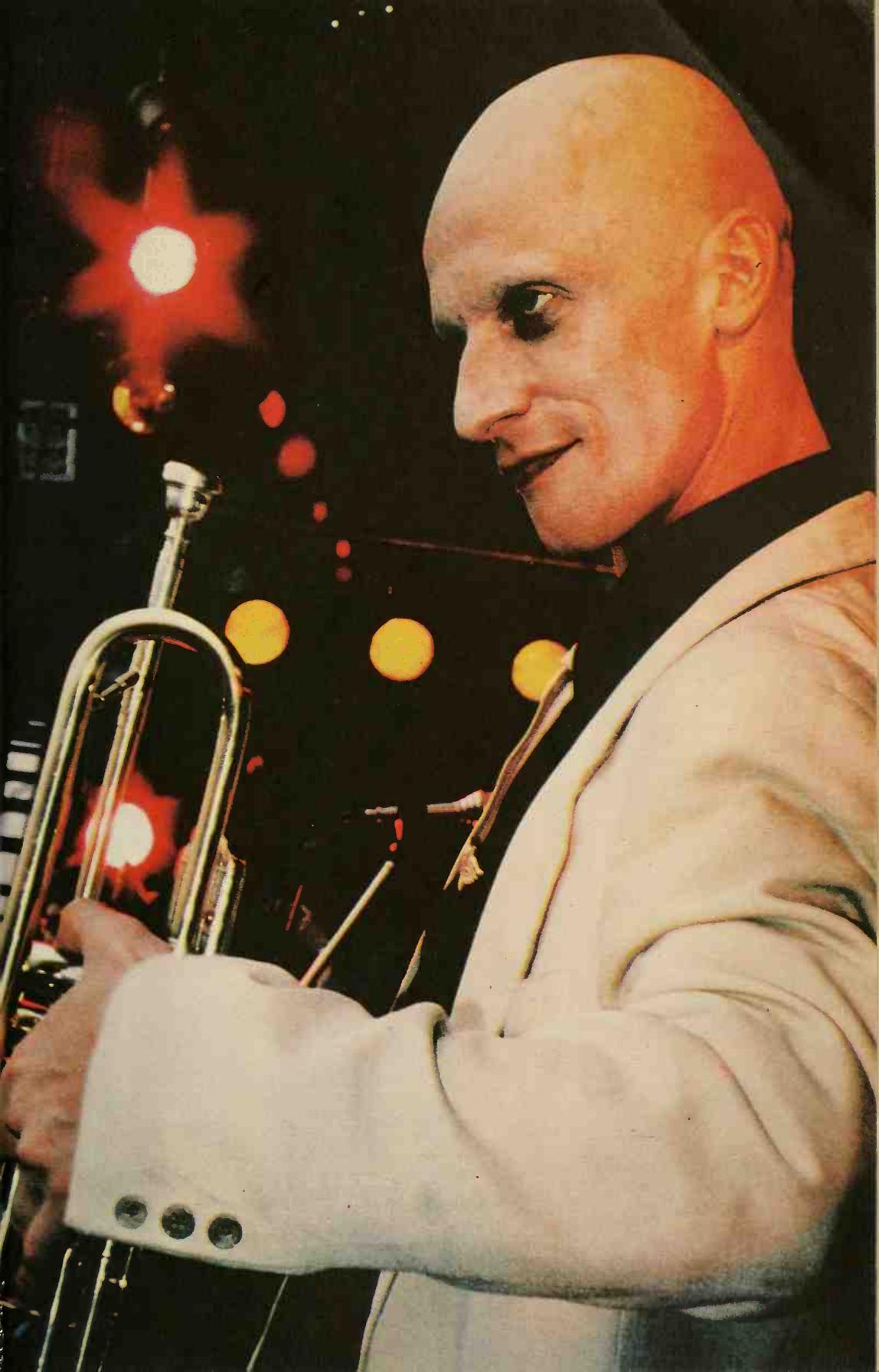
At this point a group of modestly dressed Boys and Girls appears on stage, about ten of them. They saunter off into a joyful Spring dance that starts with an optimistic march, then acquires the features of a Russian-style Gypsy dance and culminates in synchronous body movements in twist style. The MC:

*Wake up! Don't sleep! And listen to the sounds
That we are about to produce
So that you are gripped by an urge
To imitate them for a while.*

The dance group, clad this time in working or sports clothes, meanders in columns and files around the musicians and suddenly disperses, having turned in a second into a “live” production shop! Wheels and cogs keep turning, bushes and plugs keep flashing back and forth, nuts and bolts keep going round and round — the human conveyor keeps flowing like a rivulet. Red flags keep flashing like tongues of fire in an open-hearth furnace (or is it the fire-box of our steam engine?). The Soloist and the MC, imaginary shovels in their hands, keep feeding the fire with coal, then briefly wipe the sweat off their inspired faces.



*Sing the song of jubilant joy
Loud and clear!
The joy will be ours —
Just don't let it slip!*





goes the chorus. "Get a move on!" – calls out the fiery Soloist. And the culmination ensues: to the grandiose chords of the band the dance group erects a multi-storey human pyramid...

"...The folks tend to get in a funk... Especially in smaller cities. In Ivano-Frankovsk they would just get out midway through the gig, some crossing themselves."

"Many people think they are either being duped or going crazy. Either way they get awfully depressed."

"Then people from the YCL press come to see us, they treat us to beers and start telling us just what we meant by it all... They are very candid: they got it all, they agree totally and from now on we'll keep up the struggle together. Then they take their leave one by one."

"In Volgograd they thought we were Nazis, survivors of 1943... Of course: a black shirt, the sleeves rolled up and all that. In Chelyabinsk they just didn't let us play."

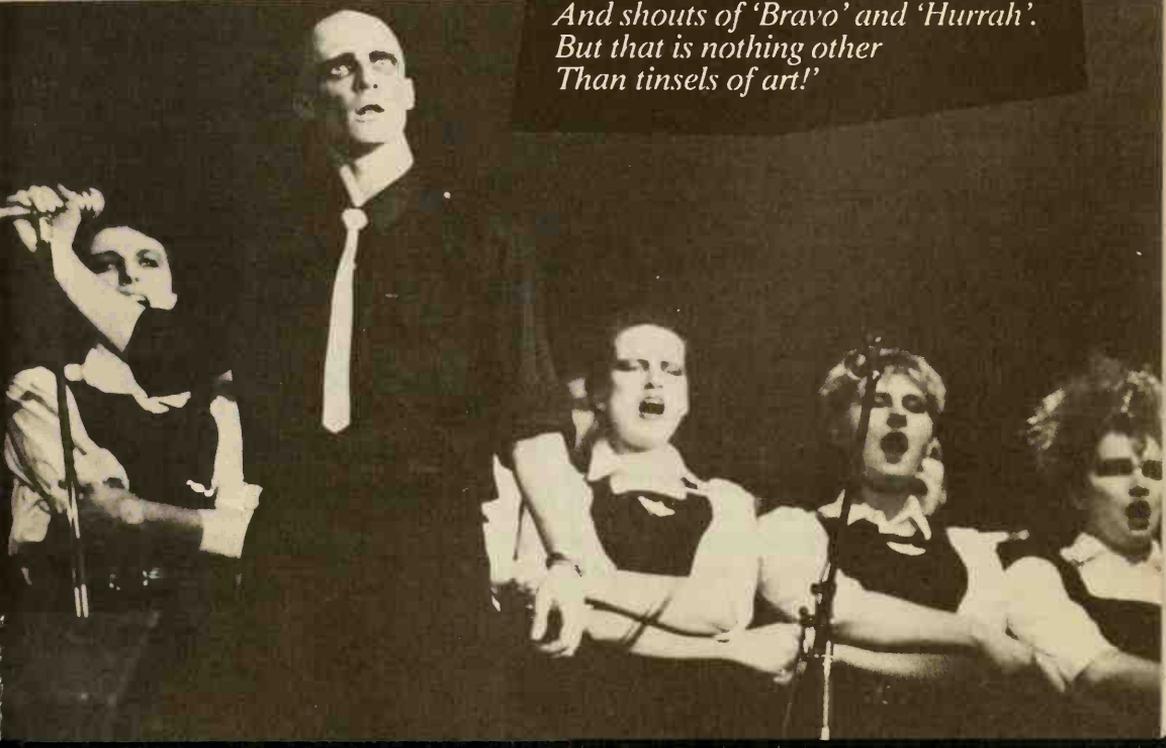
"A middle-aged couple came up to us after a gig in Lvov. They said – thank you, now we know there is still a spirit of firmness in our youth, there is still discipline in the ranks. Otherwise – just take a look around..."

"Local officials indicate: all right, kids, we got the message, you sure pulled a mean one on us, staging a subversive act like that. But let's split peacefully – nobody likes to admit to have been fooled."

"The audience and its response is growing from gig to gig. And we get a clan of aficionados in each new city. They come to all the concerts, they join all of the rhymes and shout 'hurrah' whenever necessary..."

As the MC says:

*We hear the storm of applause
And shouts of 'Bravo' and 'Hurrah'.
But that is nothing other
Than tinsels of art!*



Art? Politics? Conceptualism? A hoax? Folks, this is AVIA, a band from Leningrad, and its story is not too long: 1982 saw a group calling itself Strannye Igrы (Strange Games) crop up, they did “ska”, then a popular style, a mixture of rock’n’roll, Jamaican rhythm, Dixieland, dark glasses and baggy suits. It was a show all right. The kids were hearty and trendy – back then they sang to a button accordion. There was no leader in the group – they thought it all up and executed it together. Frictions within the band mounted and in the summer of 1985 they split in two: the Sollogub brothers – Grinya and Vitya, set up Igrы, while Kolya Gusev, Lyosha Rakhov and Sasha Kondrashkin called themselves AVIA. They were three at their first gig on January 31, 1986. I happened to see them for the first time at the shooting of the “Musical Ring” TV show in February. They played an instrumental piece “Truck a-Riding”, a fine take-off of Soviet movie soundtracks of the 60s. It was very subtle and very professional. In June they played at the Leningrad Rock Fest. AVIA’s compositions – their basic principle has hardly changed since – were an ironic and tasteful combination of modern rock, salon jazz and all the various elements of everyday musical kitsch – from a languorous tango to a military march. They played well: Alexander Kondrashkin, the drummer, had had a few years in jazz before then and had been considered tops in the Leningrad Rock Club. Alexei Rakhov, a gentlemanly saxophone player with an engineer’s diploma, also sounded quite confident. They wore workers’ overalls, probably meant to underscore their dignified modesty and craftsmanship. But there was nothing even remotely reminiscent of a show. A couple of weeks later, when I stopped over in the Estonian resort town of Pärnu, I ran into Kolya Gusev and we hit upon some interesting things as we talked. Kolya is a hopelessly balanced and analytical person, nothing like you would expect in a rock musician. His worldview was shaped under the influence of his favorite Russian writer Saltykov-Shchedrin. Kolya’s favorite music is boogie-woogie. We spoke precisely about the fact that AVIA’s music is very visual – but there is nothing on stage to catch your eye. So there emerged, in Gusev’s words, a “psychological deficiency of impression”. He was quite caught on when I told him I pictured the AVIA show as a mixture of a cheap popular print and the theater of the absurd. Kolya said he dreamed about crazy mass kitsch – something in the nature of classical Soviet musicals of the 1930s and pompous circus shows. I thought to myself: “Wouldn’t it be a great idea to stage a rock show in the motif of naive socialist realism. It is a pity nothing is going to come of it – as always.” It turned out I had been wrong: That same fall the idea began to materialize. AVIA was joined by Anton Adosinsky, that same Soloist and current co-leader of the band.

He was born in 1959 in the Krasnoyarsk region, where his granny had to settle: she had been a revolutionary and a feminist; she had been a magazine publisher and an associate of Alexandra Kollontai. After that, though, she had to serve her term in a Stalin camp and stayed in that neck of the woods in exile. This is of course an intriguing fact, but Anton is resolutely averse to taking any advantage of it by drawing any analogies: "My family background doesn't have anything to do with what I do. I remember nothing of Siberia and I have never been influenced by my grandmother. Overall, there is nothing unusual about the whole story: she indulged in politics — as was the custom back in those years — and she landed in camp — just as most normal people did... I don't believe 'professional revolutionism' is in my genes." Back in 1982, as a photographer, he came to a rehearsal of an eccentric group of Leningrad mimes — *Litsedeyi* — and was so fascinated he just stayed with them. Five years of an actor's life — and again, disagreement on some artistic issues. Out of the many choices he had he preferred AVIA.

Later, Anton recruited a troupe of his own — about 20 people, mostly girls, which was to become the "AVIA Physical Culture Group".

"I invited people from trade schools and junior colleges — never actors. So that they wouldn't be prejudiced and would be easy to work with."

Gusev: "It was very important to get away from any theatrical stuff, any acting. We managed to achieve that because in a completely absurd image a person is much more natural and content than in any 'convincing' acting."

Anton: "No, the girls are not acting. They are nobodies. Mannequins without any intonation. That's why they can easily do very weird things. They are completely free of any evaluation of what's going on — and there emerges the totally 'dead' visual component with the help of living persons. We call it the 'shotalitarian dance'. It is a combination of 'shock' and the 'totalitarian'. Just as in Orwell's *1984*."

All this sounds a bit sinister. Still, explaining his motives for joining AVIA, Anton Adosinsky said: "I was looking for an embodiment of laughter. That chaotic, spontaneous laughter that the *Litsedeyi* once had... I saw this in AVIA: ease and a bird's view of all the ratrace and rubbish. But it is not a haughty or arrogant view, it is very human. There are normal people here who breathe freely." Yes, a quiet, studious and slightly "removed" view of the world is the main thing that unites the run-of-the-mill Kolya Gusev and exotic Anton. Incidentally, very interesting was Adosinsky's reaction to the hit documentary film *Rock*, in which he was one of the main characters — although without his knowledge: "There I am pictured as some kind of a hung-up moaner with the complex of a 'prison camp child' who

is now revenging himself on everybody and everything, kicking metal barrels and being a warden-type tyrant in a dance studio. All that is untrue, but it has been doctored well to fit the concept of the film: rock music is made by mentally and socially hurt people who cannot find fulfillment in normal life and so take up musical instruments.” Indeed, in the film AVIA mostly brings to mind of a religious sect with Anton — its fanatic leader. But that is very far from the truth. On the whole, though, *Rock* is not a bad film at all, even though it singularly portrays rocksters as “outcasts”. Incidentally, it was precisely that that won the picture trust and popularity in musical circles: abnormality and estrangement is highly revered. That is also one of the indicators of the growing rift between AVIA and the majority of our rock community.

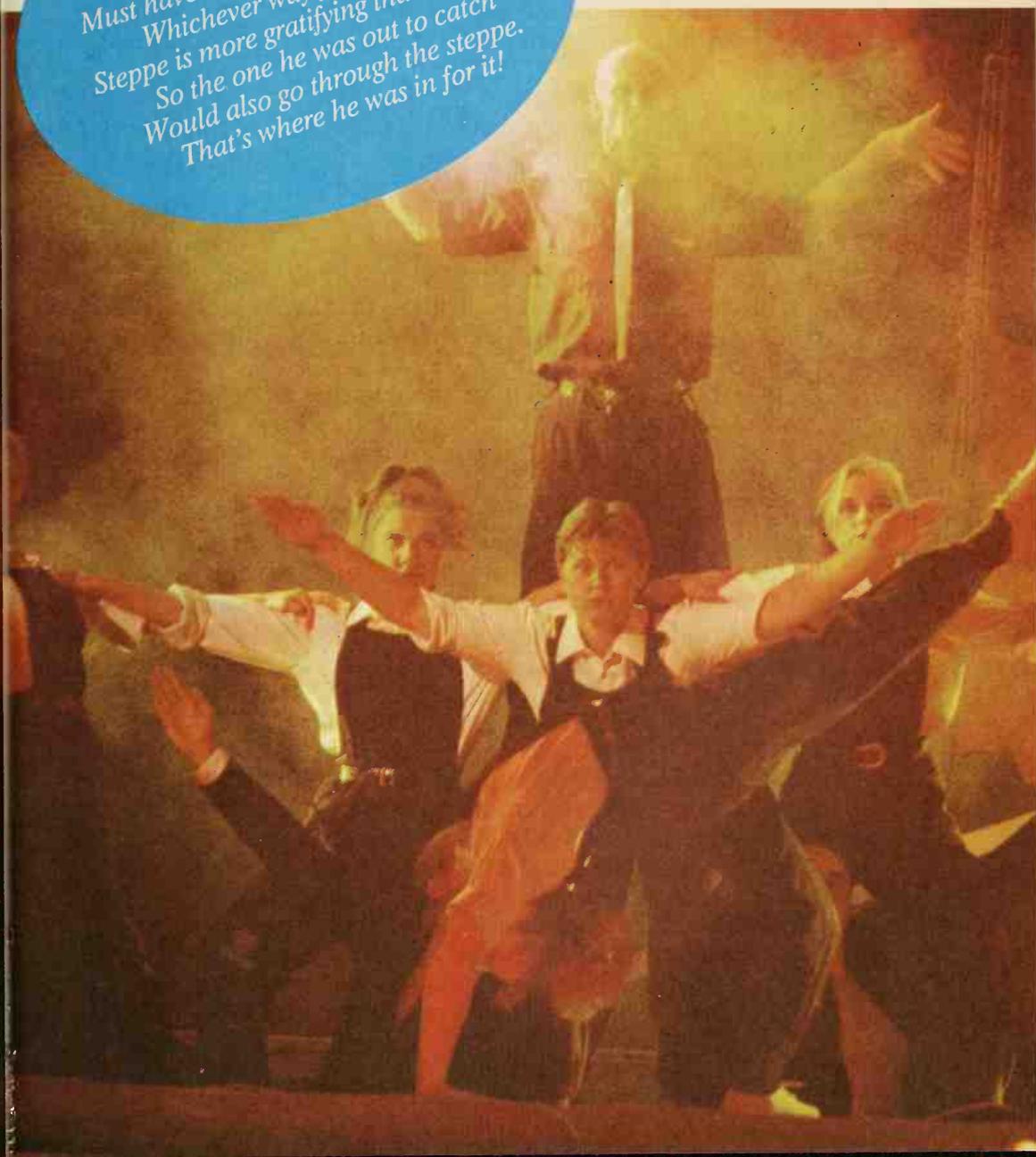
Ironically, AVIA seems to have the reputation of an almost establishment band among rock devotees! Those accusations of “time-serving” often come from musicians who hold much more traditional — not to say conformist — views of rock, than AVIA.

Television people like AVIA: the stage version of each of their songs is a ready-made video, there is no need for special stage effects. Audiences at AVIA gigs are most diverse: not only rock-teenagers, but intellectual middle-aged family couples, theatrical connoisseurs and even pensioners. Kolya Gusev puts it this way: “We skirt not only rock, but a lot of other stories as well — and everybody catches on to his own.” It is true that some take AVIA as rock, others — as fine entertainment, not inferior to the Kiev Music Hall, still others see them as avant-garde theater, yet others — as an anti-Stalinist political act, and others come for recollections of their youth, about the “Blue Blouse” agitation teams of the 20s, sports marchpasts, about Meyerhold and Rodchenko. And most probably there are more groups in the audience... So can it be that the intricately complicated, “multi-layered” popularity is “time-serving”? While pumping up thousands of teenagers with infallible “heavy” riffs and devout chanting of refrains is not?

I believe the real reason for the non-acceptance of AVIA is different. “Genuine” Soviet rock has always been marked by an irrepressible drive for declaration. The tradition goes back decades, probably to the honorary title of “poet-tribune”. Rocksters seem to have inherited it in a hypertrophied form: you either have to be some kind of “tribune”, or you just don’t know what you are doing around here. The word with a capital “T” has acquired such a formidable authority in Soviet rock music — it is valued more than “high”, “groovy” or any suchlike. The tremendous popularity of Aquarium, Zvuki Moo, Televizor and many other “low-drive” bands goes to prove the point. Of course, being a good poet is desirable — but not absolutely

necessary. It is more important to stick to rock's "right stuff". The contents may be social, philosophical, political, religious — even erotic or sexual — if only it is honest and candid and doesn't remind one of "official" lyrics. From this point of view, what does AVIA have to offer?

*He was standing in the steppe,
Must have been watching for someone.
Whichever way you look at it,
Steppe is more gratifying than a swamp.
So the one he was out to catch
Would also go through the steppe.
That's where he was in for it!*



That's where they were in for it: no stance of their own, just jibberish. The plainest argument I have ever heard against AVIA sounded something like: "It sounds so much like some kind of silly Soviet song!"

But AVIA do take a stance, and a very strong one at that. In a nutshell, it could be worded this way: instead of attacking Stalinism from the outside, they themselves don "totalitarian" clothes and turn them inside out, their stupidity and meanness for all to see.

Kolya Gusev: "We developed such a model because we got dead tired of 'exposures'. Before, it reminded one of a fist in the pocket. Now it's bold declaration of self-evident truths. People hear from the stage what they know only too well and they know that with their declarations artists cannot change a thing."

Anton: "It is not enough just to state that all our officialdom is a dreadful thing. What is needed is to get the people to feel it for themselves. That's why we create something similar, only stretched to the point of grotesque, madness..."

Gusev: "We want to help the people come to their senses and take a new look at what they are used to. They have to realize that what they became reconciled to is not a natural element of life or culture at all. And we achieve that by faithfully professing those dogmas and, before the eyes of the audience, turning it into total idiocy."

Our people are so much indoctrinated that even that doesn't always work: what else could explain the thanks for "discipline" and "strong spirit"? Or this other trifle fact: everybody, including journalists, believes that the MC is the band's leader — of course he is the boss if he has got the megaphone! As distinct from "parody" bands, AVIA doesn't face the problem of keeping a balance of irony and earnestness. Their "laughter" effect is inherent in their very concept, that is why all their effort goes to the other balance of the scales, that of "earnestness". That turns out to be far from easy. "Totalitarian art" calls for sacrifice.

Anton: "We sometimes fall short. Then it all gets to be very theatrical, like a parody of the 'mass' song — and that is awfully boring. That's why I have to turn into a senile, dictator-soloist. Everything I say or sing I push down the audience's throat. It is as though I was out to inspire the folks, but in fact it is intimidation, it is violence. Of course there is a background, there is distant laughter somewhere in the back of the mind. But sometimes we tend to get dissolved in the image so much that everything else disappears and that's when the show really gets to be eerie.

The show gets to be a total blackout. It is scary and very good." Yes, it seems the AVIA kids' common sense finds itself under a lot of strain. But for what — a political effect?

Kolya Gusev: "Primarily for the sake of artistic impression. We do not follow any sort of program or social order. The aesthetic aspect is more important to us than the political one."

Anton: "The so-called social problems have already done in half of Soviet rock and remain an anchor that doesn't leave the musicians a chance to pursue their own, 'heartfelt' way. Those who manage to untie themselves from that anchor will survive artistically, while those who don't will remain human beings and staunch fighters only in the press."

Kolya Gusev cuts in, apparently sensing that Anton's words could be taken as self-indulgent aestheticism: "There is no getting away from social issues in art. That's why being expressly 'socially aware' is taken as insincerity. We are quite happy that AVIA music is having some effect on the public, but that is rather a side effect. It couldn't be an end in itself."

I totally agree with that. Our rock personalities get a great kick out of playing the role of public leaders. But, as a rule, it is just "playing the role" because their programs can hardly be complimented for constructive integrity and because nothing really changes in this life even if they repeat them a thousand times. No, our "socially aware" rocksters are not necessarily politicoes or pot-boilers: most of them are absolutely honest in what they sing about. But they choose the easiest way — because head-on social awareness sells like hot cakes at the time of *glasnost*, getting enthusiastic reception not only from "below", but often from "above", too, and also because peddling slogans from stage is too easy and too effective if you attach a couple of catchy chords to them. Rock is a supermegaphone, a fine tool for manipulating crowds, so it takes responsibility. AVIA's is a noble mission of turning the barracks aesthetics inside out and exposing totalitarian tricks through laugh. But then you find another heavy metal outfit next door, pressuring and intimidating their audience — without a shade of irony...

After the 1987 rock festival in Leningrad one of the critics said about AVIA: "This is great, but it isn't rock." I am sorry. Does rock necessarily have to be straightforward, declarative and artless? Is rock indeed so boring? "Yes, AVIA is different from the rest, but I think it is rock," says Anton Adosinsky. "You can sing on stage to electric guitars and it still won't be rock; but you can just talk to somebody nicely in a beer joint and it will be rock. Rock to me is a tremendous inner effort. It doesn't even have to be expressed in sound."

Kolya Gusev: "Soviet rock has acquired a stylistically limited, self-contained character. Everyone seems to exhibit a pointed desire to get walled in with traditional electric guitars, drums and the rest of it. Instead of trying to be fulfilled by what they really want."

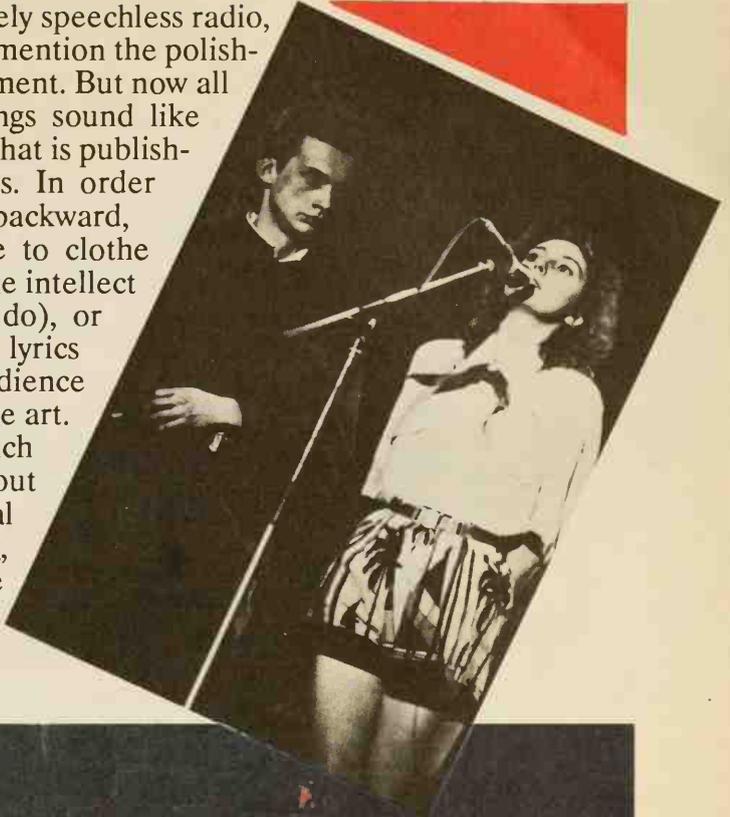
But if it is in the way they don't want? To start with, one has to possess fantasy and intuition — and only then follow them. That's the way it was with AVIA: they started out by putting forward the most varied ideas, even the most outrageous. Armed with that "doctrine", they could then move forward, breaking down barriers in their way. And there were barriers — of the kind that made a lot of other people just quit. As far as their equipment goes, AVIA is the poorest of all the "elite" Soviet bands. Up until 1988 Gusev played the only electric organ they had, a Soviet-made Elektronika, the kind you won't find in the cheapest restaurant band these days; Kondrashkin pounded a home-made set of electric drums, and Rakhov fingered a store-sold Czechoslovak guitar. I don't know what kind of sax he has — perhaps it was the only decent instrument they had until quite recently. Yet their music is far from simple. But the poverty didn't stop them: on the contrary, they developed a fairly original sound in the spirit of the "legitimate pride" of artists in Soviet equipment, the best in the world...

Much has changed lately. AVIA has received financial independence, and instead of seven roubles per head for a concert (which they used to get under the Ministry of Culture's regulations) they now get about a thousand. Of course they bought new instruments. Then Anton for the first time showed his mimetheater called "Derevo" (Tree) — I won't go into it, but it is really something. Meanwhile, the band itself came up with a new program, far removed from ordinary rock sessions. "Whenever cultural or YCL officials in Leningrad are asked about how *glasnost* is doing in the city they say: 'Look, there is our band AVIA — something out of this world, just look at their mugs! — and they appear and tour any place they choose.' Just as Grebenshchikov grew to be something of a showcase, we, too, are a banner of *perestroika*..." Anton Adosinsky says it with an understandable amount of irony and even regret. But for me I find in the AVIA "banner of *perestroika*" a more profound and quite feasible meaning: they are one of the few Soviet bands displaying "new thinking" in rock.

Whether we like it or not, but rock — original, rebellious and protesting — is still a product of the era of stagnation. In the past few years it has changed only slightly: the people are much the same, as is the music. While everything around rock has changed tremendously: self-management, *glasnost* and an end to international semi-isolation. I won't delve into the influence of economic reform on rock, but some of the other things are worthy of attention.

Glasnost has actually deprived rock of one of its main trumps, its virtual monopoly — among young people — to say the truth. The furor that "underground" gigs and recordings had produced was due in large measure to the fact that they appeared against

the background of absolutely speechless radio, TV and the press — not to mention the polished singers of the establishment. But now all the “accusatory” rock songs sound like child’s play compared to what is published in papers and magazines. In order not to appear foolishly backward, radical rocksters now have to clothe their accusations in genuine intellect and poetry (which few can do), or renounce the primacy of lyrics and try to influence the audience with their musical and stage art. That is something in which AVIA has no peers — without having lost any of its “social impact”. I may be wrong, but this is where the future of Soviet rock lies, not of speculative rock, but that of a genuine kind.



Internationally, Soviet rock is living through a “strange boom” — by analogy with the “strange war” of 1940: it is being spoken and written about and given plenty of airtime, but there is very little in fact going on. The reasons for the stalemate are obvious: on the one hand, the West seems to have developed an interest in our rock music (there is the vogue on everything Soviet and a degree of fatigue from their own stars), but on the other, it can in no way be happy about what the Soviet side has been offering. Offers have been limited to look- and sound-alikes: Autograph, Dialogue, Zemlyane and various recruits of the Soviet rock old-timer Stas Namin. Nobody cares about an emasculated Russian copy of yesterday’s Western pop charts. What are needed are bands that can really be identified with the Soviet Union and its *perestroika*. And, of course, they should know how to play. Regrettably, we’ve got less than few of those. AVIA is a rare exception.

By recounting the “proletarian culture” of the 1920s and “totalitarian pomp” of the 30s and 40s they apply the rule of contraries. But that doesn’t make them any less meaningful, or their work less unique. I am not even talking about their eye opening essence. The analogy is apparent with the already well known “Fundamental Lexicon” of Grigory Bruskin who was a tremendous success at the 1988 Sotheby’s auction in Moscow. The picture’s formula is in fact a new look at the aesthetics of the proverbial “Girl with a Paddle” statue, painfully familiar to us and totally unknown to the rest of the world. It is an image totally our own — just as are the athletic parades with patriotic chants and Stalinesque high-rise buildings. It is a routine — now grown mysterious — part of our cultural experience, in which a reflection of the fallacious philosophy of “leaders and pawns” borders on the charm of inimitability. An intelligent artistic study of this experience from the viewpoint of today yields surprising — and instructive — results for ourselves and the world. “AVIA for all” — is written on their sets.

In contrast to the quasi-proletarian AVIA, another New Wave band in Leningrad, Auction, donned the image of neoNEPmanship.* They offered outright satire of the bourgeoisie and the wretchedness of their ambitions. The band’s leader and frontman Oleg Garkusha presented the image of a purposely deficient, puny, worm-like aesthete, crawling to reach the comfort of hyperbolically decorative things. However, Auction fell clearly short of New Wave and the band’s sincerity turned into poorly masked punk.

The Moscow band Proshchai Molodost (Goodbye Youth), a fragment of defunct Molodost (Youth) played in much the same key. The band was a duo of pianist Tenenbaum and vocalist

* NEP, New Economic Policy launched in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and allowing private enterprise.



*WE ARE THE YOUNG PIONEERS
MARCHING ALL IN STEP !*

*LEFT, RIGHT, ALL IN LINE - FORWARD MARCH
ALL IN TIME !*

From Soviet propaganda songs



Yakushin. As distinct from Auction with its heavy reliance on electronic sound, Proshchai Molodost recounted NEP aesthetics with the help of NEP sound: to the accompaniment of a honky-tonk piano Yakushin sang the shimmy “Romantique” or “Surrealism Is No More”. It was clear-cut New Wave Cool. The peculiar and stylish two-man band, though, lacked talent. It didn’t present enough of a contrast to contemporaneity and of the totality that New Wave requires. The two split in 1987 and Sergei Tenenbaum joined Brigade S.

The band Molodost, now defunct, stuck with the same New Wave milieu as did Bioconstructor and Yelochny Bazar (Christmas Bazaar). These Moscow bands were clearly aware of their style’s limits and were a lot alike in that they did not shape New Wave, but New Wave shaped them. Bioconstructor described their music as “techno-pop”. Clad in tight-fitting leather, the band



moved on stage like robots and played something very electronic. Their lyrics hailed a computerized world. Yelochny Bazar, later re-named Megapolis, is Bioconstructor’s twin-brother. Only instead of the image of a computer programmer they offered the image of a young urbanist after work. Instead of lauding telecommunication networks and smoothly operating industrial plants, Megapolis constructed the emotions of an ordinary youth. They did it so mechanically and in such a great detail that the end product bordered on

the absurd. That type of “programming of the normal” barely concealed the irony. Bioconstructor and Megapolis both have their following, half of which are non-conformist, anti-technocratic and truly New Wave youths and girls, while the other half are ordinary students of mathematics and “young urbanists after work”. It seems they are all attracted by the bands’ “anti-normal” ideas.

Now, about “The Grands” of the style.

Chronologically, priority in Soviet orthodox New Wave remains with Moscow’s Center which grew obsessed with the Wave before others, long before the mass epidemic. Back in 1982 Vassily Shumov, the leader and heart of Center, began to make the first romantic albums. Shumov’s motivation came from the work of a little known musician and poet Yevgeny Golovin



who in the mid-60s created a whole aesthetic trend of “intellectual black romanticism”. Elitarianist and misanthrope, Golovin never gave concerts or performed before the public in general. The treasures of his talent were available only to a narrow circuit of disciples who, together with him, made tours of obscure bohemian hang-outs of bohemian Moscow. Vasya Shumov was fortunate to have become one of the Golovin neophytes. Golovin’s songs and their apt imitations became a starting point for Shumov’s New Wave career. With time, run-of-the-mill renditions and a la Golovin poetry of “black romanticism” grew more sophisticated and by

1985 Center finally tapped its own image – a minimum of grotesquely romantic lyrics, at times intensely socially aware, and laconic “anti-popular” music, remindful of latter-day Lou Reed. Center’s visual image was also completely New Wave: neatly dressed boys with their hair cut short, apathetically listless and withdrawn when on stage. There were no spectacular tricks or cowering to the public. Everything was perfectly “cool”. Center has produced over ten tape albums – very diverse, very interesting, containing a lot of musical and poetic revelations. Some of the albums include either original or re-worked songs by Golovin. Center constantly adds something new to its programs, such as a corps de ballet, presenting now the 15 constituent republics, now a bunch of inspired “Turgenev” women. Center also makes use of different props and sets depending on the program. A huge one hundred rouble bill illustrates the song “International Currency” that has a refrain “one rouble, three roubles, five roubles, ten roubles” in 15 languages of the national republics.* At times, the



* The value is indeed written in the languages of all Soviet republics on each banknote.

keen social slant threatens their stylistic integrity. Lately, Shumov has been at pains to keep the distance necessary for the orthodox New Wave, still sometimes slipping into punk. Be that as it may, Center is a veteran of the Soviet New Wave and its role in promoting the trend is hard to overestimate. The band is stably popular and Shumov enjoys great respect in the world of Soviet rock music.

Perhaps, some people will disagree, but the Moscow band Nicolai Copernicus is today the hallmark of the entire Soviet New Wave. It came into being in 1985 and in sheer volume of work and the abundance of musical and poetic discoveries outshaded all the other New Wave bands, including Center. Nicolai Copernicus set itself the task of optimum realization of the potential inherent in Double Precision Irony. They are probing into the farthest corners of the beautiful and the irrational. At the 1987 Lithuanica Festival the band merited the prize for creative quest, but it is yet to be fully appreciated. The metaphysics and elitarianism of their music and lyrics make the band elitist to a degree. Still, practically all of the New Wave bands today recognize their superiority. Nicolai Copernicus is at the moment the final authority in New Wave.

This is how it all began. In the summer of 1984 a small, weird-looking character was approaching Abakan, a Siberian town in the Khakass Autonomous Region, close to the border with Mongolia. The road was lined with mammoth bodies of the Sayany Mountains, lit by the red sun, with wrinkles of ancient landslides and bottomless gorges. Now and then a Khakass village could be seen with smoke coming up from the hearths in the homes. The panorama of a fascinatingly virgin landscape seemed to have flown out of another dimension, other realms of being... The motionless mountains; civilization whose evolution had reached the shaman's tambourine and stopped right there; the absence of rhythms that permeated body and soul of the city dweller; the exotic Sayany sun — all that was shocking, enchanting, spellbinding the walker, it seemed a hallucination, a miracle, an impossibility and a message of the Unearthly... To the local folks, though, the newcomer himself looked like a hallucination and a message of the unearthly. At least for those places he was certainly out of this world. Hussar whiskers and a conical reddish beard, green glasses for the blind, a silver earring, long black hair with red ribbons made into a braid, a black leather jacket, wide yellow checkered pants and sharp-pointed shoes of the kind one can get at a flea market or borrow from a circus clown. In his hand the stranger was swaying a black case, which could contain a rifle or a musical instrument... The stranger was in such glaring contrast to the environment that he seemed to invite the wildest explanations for his appearance.

Was he an old Tuvinian gone mad? Or was he an evil spirit materialized by the frail shaman from the steam of magic brews and sounds of the wind? Or was he a foreign spy, planted in this forsaken country to infiltrate Soviet society at some specified later date?

In actual fact, he was only Yury Orlov, a Moscow musician who came to Abakan with his saxophone to get enrolled in a music school there. From Moscow to the Khakass region, from a capital city with prestigious music schools to a provincial town with a small hole in the wall for musical education, designed to train musicians for the local philharmonic society... Yury himself explains it as a romantic whim. Or could he be attracted to this land by the mysterious force of Karma? One way or the other, the juvenile sax player from Moscow — an impudent punk — chose Abakan, lost in the Sayany Mountains, as the venue for further musical pursuits.

His existence in the Khakass town was a pretty nerve wrecking experience: even Orlov, a seasoned threat to the public sense of decency, found it hard to get used to the whole of the local population trailing him on his walks around the city. In all the time that the Moscow punk spent in the Khakassian capital the local folks remained undecided about how to react to the weird man — like him, despise him, adore him, be sorry for him, laugh at him or just beat him up?...

His stint in Khakassia gave Yury two very important things. First, the mountains and virgin landscapes, the exotics of the primordial land brought up to the surface his inborn romanticism and an understanding of aesthetics that had been pushed deep inside by the desperate nature of a punk. In other words, they awakened in him a taste for New Wave aesthetics. Second, in Khakassia Orlov came across authentic old folklore. He devoted more time to roaming Khakass villages and conversing with local elders than to practicing his scales on the sax. On one such hike he met an honest-to-goodness shaman.

Perhaps, every contemporary rock musician is in one way or another familiar with mystical teachings. It is one of the facets of rock culture. The example of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones was followed by countless Western rock stars. But in this country, for reasons of mass atheism, many Soviet rocksters had to settle for amateur translations of mystic books, or even anything they could fish out of atheist booklets by the rule of contraries.

Yury Orlov was fortunate to have become a shaman's disciple. Perhaps the Khakass "Koniyoto" liked the Muscovite's looks, or his psychic flexibility appealed to him. Whatever the reason, something of the shaman's ritual was revealed to the neophyte in a punk's leather jacket. A psychedelic jagged rhythm of the tambourine, jerky bodily movements, enchanting intonation of verbal formulas, the secrets of guttural singing, but

mainly – methods of meditation, of an intuitive understanding of life hiding beneath the apparently inanimate rocks, trees, of the elements and stars – this is what the shaman taught his young friend. Yury quit the music school and got immersed in the depths of the weird science. He took a path that – quite mystically – was charted by the forerunner of Soviet rock culture Yevgeny Golovin in his ballad “Koni-yoto”:

*Koniyoto, the old shaman,
Appears very strange.
He swallows frosty mist
As others swallow sourcream.
He feeds his fire with snakes,
He plays dice with a fox,
He holds serpent fire in his fingers
And walks on charcoal barefoot.*

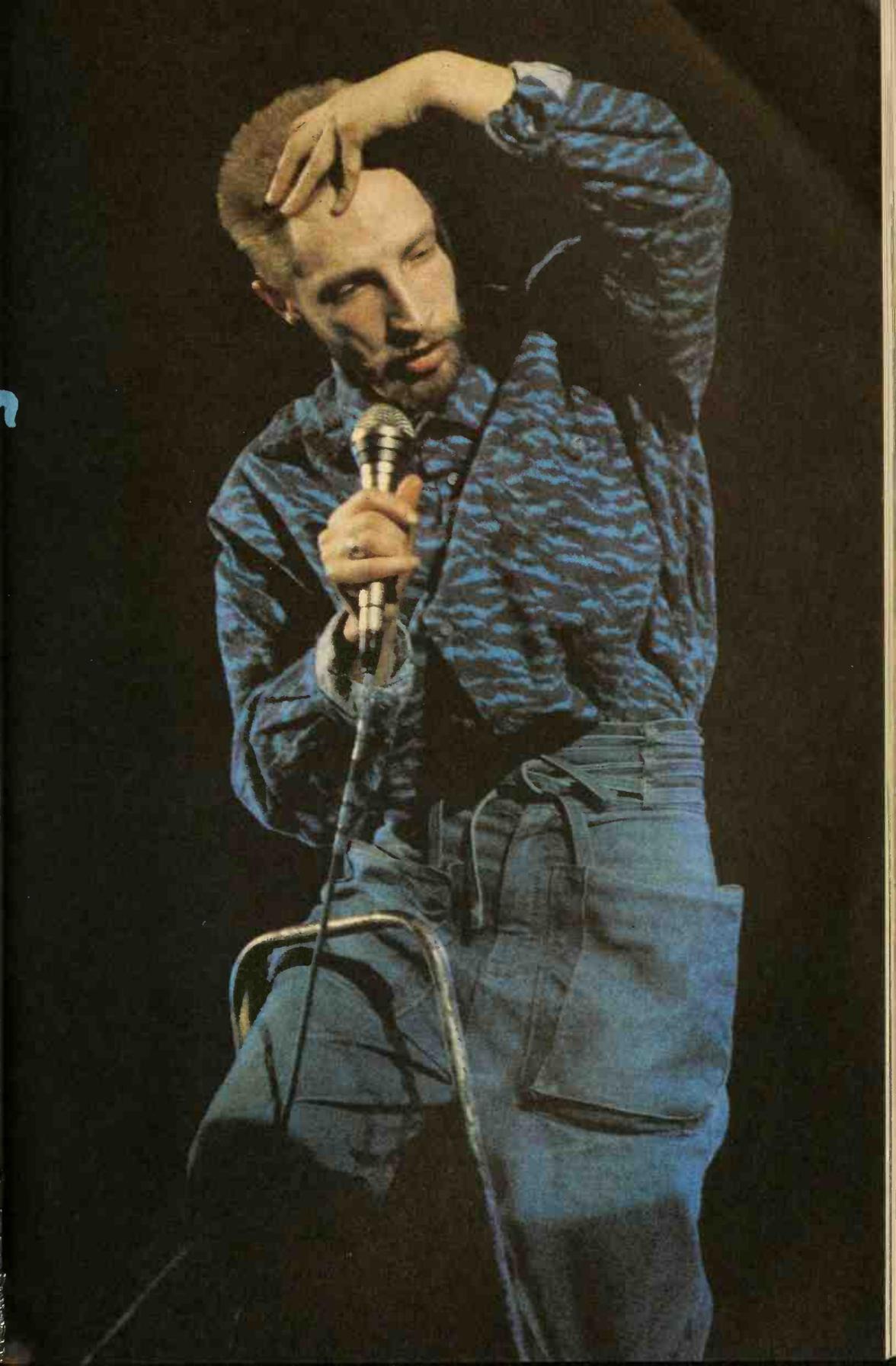
*Koni-, Koni-yoto,
Koni-, Koni-yoto,
Koniyoto, the old shaman.*

By the fire, alone with his Teacher, through vocal and rhythmical exercises, through brews of magic powders and roots, through legends and the contemplation of dawns and sunsets – Orlov was discovering the isolated world of a small ancient people. The force of gravity of this small island of being was so great that gradually it led him to a crossroads – either to stay forever in that world of hallucinations or come back to his previous life. He chose the latter, but the shaman’s lessons were never forgotten. Back from Khakassia Yury brought to Moscow a spiritual embryo of a future band that was to alter the biography of Soviet rock music, the embryo of Nicolai Copernicus.

KONIYOTO’S DISCIPLES

1985 is considered to be the official date of birth of Nicolai Copernicus. That was when Orlov was joined by musicians of kin – Igor Len, a professional pianist, Oleg Andreyev, an art rock buff who studied double bass at the Conservatory, and Igor Andreyev, the saxophonist who had previously played with Bravo. A period of creative search ensued. But even back then one could discern the image of the avant-garde group that Nicolai Copernicus would become a year later.

The first gigs – on lousy equipment, practically without rehearsals – looked like interesting punk-jazz. The guys played songs like “My Soviet Tractor”, all entangled in cables, wearing children’s tights, and outrageous make-up. The music ranged



from avant-garde jazz to electronic experimentation, reflecting Len's preferences and Orlov's past: he used to play with an instrumental band the Jungle in Leningrad.

The watershed occurred on the day when Orlov, who worked in a printing shop, laid his hands on a collection of Soviet poets of various nationalities, which had been released for 63 years since the formation of the USSR. The conformity of the poems and the stress on ethnic subjects prompted in Orlov a brilliant idea: in a single album he wants to combine the lessons of Koni-yoto — shaman singing, evocative intonation, the exotics of faraway places, inhabited by small ethnic groups, professional psychedelic character of arrangements, New Wave romanticism, social parody and meditative estrangement from the ordinary. Exhausting rehearsals follow, where every word, every phrase and every sound are polished. Poems taken from that poetry collection gave birth to a concert program called *Motherland*. Its presentation in late 1985 was a vastly important event in Soviet rock music. Nicolai Copernicus comes as an electric shock to the audience. A wall of psychedelic masterpieces falls on their ears. The song "Puffs of Smoke" is a take-off of pot trips that Nicolai Copernicus saw in an innocent and banal poem:

*I get to thinking and I notice how peculiarly light
Are the puffs of smoke rising above roof tops on a quiet night.*

In another number, "Far away, beyond the limits of the wind, instruments check out the calculations" a Soviet poet took an optimistic pre-view of the space era. And Yury Orlov offers an ironic parody of his optimism, thinking of the monstrous fruits of progress — the ozone holes, ecological calamities and the Chernobyl catastrophe. And of course, the title song, "Motherland". That was where Copernicus' tragic humor reached its pinnacle. The customized and petty lyricism of an ethnic poet, singing glory to his native land is turned into a majestic panorama of a cosmic anti-Utopia, into a gloomy chorale of Death and Despair, into the Monstrosity of Stalin's nationalities' policy, into an Exposure of the Cosmic Evil reflected in a "grain of sand" of the Motherland, denigrated by Violence and Tyranny.

In 1985, just when Aquarium, Kino and Zoopark were only making it to the surface, when Soviet rock music was undergoing a crash course in hippie ideology, late by 20 years (or, rather, held up), when punk rock was a rarity and New Wave was restricted only as "retro" — it was then that Nicolai Copernicus presented its fundamental New Wave show. Wearing expensive lounge suits, with fake diamonds, Nicolai Copernicus looked murderously luxurious in the midst of poor — but honest — Soviet rock music.

Semi-imbecilic lyrics (“I saw my Muse at the wheel of a harvesting combine” or “And only my lips sang this song of happiness and labor”) in Orlov’s presentation turned into metaphysical revelations. The words and phrases disintegrated into separate elements that breathed the ancient spirit of cosmic forces. Children know that a word repeated many times, begins losing its meaning, it gets strange, unfamiliar and disturbing... I don’t know how – but Orlov achieves that by saying a word only once. Like a fanciful demiurge, he makes the lyrics into messages from other spheres of being that shed light on the everyday world. At Copernicus’ concerts Moscow’s rock music fans for the first time faced something unexpected and profound. Thanks to the album *Motherland* many people cut through to the Talking Heads, Japan, Lorie Anderson and Kate Bush. Thanks to *Motherland*, the horizons of rock culture grew so much more profound. Thanks to *Motherland*, New Wave emerged before the Soviet rock world in its purest and most original shape. The sincerity of Grebenshchikov (Aquarium) or clownish craziness of Zharikov (DK) seemed child’s play when compared to the bottomless tragedy and despair of the reserved and neat boys from Copernicus. A confluence of Cold and Beauty, Absurd and Calm, Hatred and Acceptance, Contemporaneity and Tradition, Irony and Earnestness helped one see a true image of *Motherland*, painted up by the hypocrisy of conformist poets. *Motherland* was Copernicus’ triumph, after which the band found itself admired, revelled in, envied and loathed. Musical perfection, curt arrangement, exotic timber, Orlov’s shaman-style singing and pseudo-luxury appearance – all that began to be copied. New Wave groups kept mushrooming and the number of fans soared. The *Motherland* program in a sense drew the line at searching for style in Soviet rock. Challenge now assumed a professional and aesthetic basis, the spontaneous Rebellion became classical and new gimmicks grew into metaphysical revelations. Copernicus’ first album showed that Soviet rock music could be masterly and perfect, that rockers’ traditional grievances about poor equipment were unconvincing, that any lyrics could be brilliantly applied – in a word, that Soviet rock was entering a new era, an era of quality. It was quite a long time, though, before *Motherland* was taped. Copernicus absolutely refused to record the album on third-rate equipment. “The quality of recording should correspond to the quality of music,” they said and continued looking for a professional studio. Simultaneously, the band began working on its next album. The rehearsals were strenuous, the guys were living in music and for music, in quest of the harmony of their souls and their tunes. Orlov was sort of drug for the rest. Learning to play amounted to learning to live. They read books together, went to museums together, listened to Western

avant-garde and ancient folk music together. The shaman's disciples were looking for connections and correlations, for common points in cultures and traditions. Cage, Stockhausen, Silvin, Baudelaire. Mallarmé, Rimbaud, the Japanese miniature and European Baroque imbued the New Wavers' consciousness, sprouting music, style and ideas.

In early 1986 Copernicus records *Motherland* in a private studio and the tape is copied and recopied throughout the country. Soon after, Copernicus completes its next program, *Northern Route*.

That program, parts of which Copernicus sometimes played at concerts, revealed a new facet of the band. It was totally their own material, and Orlov's and bass player Oleg Andreyev's poetry proved to be another shock to the audiences. The lyrics have everything New Wave Cool could stake a claim to — the surreal world of the Universe, decadent tragedy, industrial spirit, revelation of feeling and icy humor. Reminiscent of the German expressionism of Jaime and Benn, Copernicus' poetry again displayed the hallmark of Quality.

Meanwhile, the line-up undergoes some changes — not all of the guys can take the gruelling rehearsals and the habit-forming beauty of the psychedelic. Besides, Orlov gets to be still more demanding, bigoted, at times hysterical. Igor Len, one of the band's brightest musicians, refuses to pursue the dangerous Northern Route of New Wave. The industrial sound gets him down, a proponent of soft and traditional art rock. His place is taken by guitarist Konstantin Baranov and guitarist Boris Raskolnikov, one of the first followers of New Wave in the Soviet Union. It is he who gives support to Orlov, who hit a low after Len's departure. A new stage in the life of Copernicus commences.

Work on the *Northern Route* is resumed with renewed vigor. Guitar parts are meticulously detailed. Sometimes other guitarists and brass players are invited for concerts. At times Copernicus reminds one of a chamber symphony orchestra. Its songs get to be more and more like New Wave plays.

Moreover, they are strikingly intellectual. In each of its new songs Copernicus produces an aesthetic world with its own characters, objects, using music to paint them in cosmic colors and lend them fantastic forms.

Stalactites of Love grow in caves where moonstones are kept and where "dreams get in on blue winds from the sea". And over the caves huge birds float in the skies, heralds of dawn wounded by the bow of memories... What is it? A Nordic enigma? A myth yet to be decoded? Surrealist futurology? No, it is the feeling of a person recollecting his first love ("Giant Birds").

From a venue of sports competitions, a stadium suddenly turns into a whole epoch, where there are "slow-motion jumps and

where a mistake is like Eternity beyond the coral walls” (“Stadium”).

“Kind lips of venerable age”, belonging to a mysterious being, “call you to where the ruins are, to where the fire, to where old women are dancing a tango and small children hit you on the eyes...” (“Shock”). Pictures of the beyond replace each other in a lethargic circular dance, animated by the industrial-symphonic music, by the spirit of tragic Art. Few of the newly-enlisted musicians stay in the band for long.

Copernicus’ rare concerts are so much ahead of the times that the audiences reject them outright. Quality recording is impossible, the band is totally at the mercy of musical officials who don’t know beans about rock but they control the recording studios. Copernicus has to live through it all. Their talent and a sectarian way of life melt them into one collective being – a romantic astrologer, neo-metaphysicist and ranger of a speculative cosmos.

The guitarist Kostya Baranov and the drummer Mitya Tsvetkov are torn between the band and their college studies. The rich spirit of music and the emptiness of daily lectures clash head on. The boys are worn out by a stress that blows up in a breakdown. But even from a clinic they rush to practicing sessions where their psychic traumas are treated not with tranquilizers, but with Art. A shaman’s disciple offers better treatment than doctors.

Meanwhile, the group’s finances are increasingly in shambles. Copernicus gets a place to practice in the Moscow Hermitage Garden and even some equipment, but gigs are few and far between and don’t bring any money to speak of. There is no time for any other kind of work – it is all eaten up by music. They became desperately pauperized – no money to even buy new drum sticks. The band is totally despondent. And then Orlov comes up with the “Millionaires’ Guild” project:

“Spiritual wealth, aesthetic luxury and quality of life – these are guarantees of an endless credit,” says he. “We are fabulously wealthy. We have everything!” The “Millionaires’ Guild” takes off. The band’s morale soars. At that point Copernicus is locked out of the Hermitage Garden – instead it houses a theater for a not very funny Soviet comedian. But the bad turn didn’t break the “Soviet Union’s most expensive band”. “It is time to seek the assistance of the Spirit of the Stone!” Orlov declares and gets into what seems to be inactivity. “The Spirit of the Stone” makes its appearance in the guise of Stas Namin, a producer of both official and non-official rock groups. His interest in avant-garde must have been prompted by another flop of a Soviet variety show in Japan.

Suddenly, Nicolai Copernicus finds itself in possession of everything – a cosy room for practicing, fine equipment and

concert engagements that Stas Namin secures. The band gets down to new albums, though the *Northern Route* is never taped. *Red Dogs* is a program that gets Copernicus back to head-on New Wave parody. Simultaneously with *Red Dogs* they are working on a romantic album, *Royal Hunt*.

Having spawned about a dozen popular imitators, Nicolai Copernicus remains little known nation-wide. It shouldn't be surprising: the guys are always in a quest that is far ahead of the fairly conservative tastes of the rock audiences. It seems they are least of all interested in publicity. Besides music, they turn to painting, to visual images of the Soviet New Wave. Parallel to all that, Orlov records several solo albums of instrumental compositions. But a band needs contact with an audience.

Their avant-garde drive and elitarianism place Copernicus too high, out of reach of the audience, so high that their heliocentric music simply doesn't reach down to Earth. At this point the musicians consent to a partial compromise — lending to their music a semblance of simplicity, making it more melodious and the rhythm more precise. However, this makes Copernicus only pseudoreachable. It is also compounded with a theatrical show: now Orlov rides out onto the stage in a wheelchair, now he covers his face with phosphorous that gives off cadaverous sheen in the semidarkness, now he puts on leather riding breeches and a leather jacket with nothing underneath and the others imitate dolls... Every gesture of each of the musicians is thought out and practiced. As a result of such attacks Nicolai Copernicus' new style is sure to capture practically any audience.

The music of the *Royal Hunt*, born out of the fiercest kind of youth non-conformism, is accepted — however paradoxical it might seem — by the most diverse strata. While on a tour of Kuibyshev, the band enlisted some of its most enthusiastic supporters from among local garrison officers. After the gig the excited militarymen begged Orlov, dressed in a tight fitting New Wave uniform, for autographs, one per unit. Even in a hall packed with Lyubers,* who had come to sort it out with Moscow's tough guys, Copernicus managed to make the aggressive teenagers fall silent to the enchanting intonations of the singer.

The *Royal Hunt* seems to be successful and the artful trappers catch birds of every feather imaginable — from junior military cadets to free-for-all punks, from satiated connoisseurs of avant-garde to young technocrats and from 16 year old girls to gray-haired art historians and critics.

* Lyubers — teenagers from the city of Lyubersky near Moscow. United in an informal organization with a motto building that they want to Moscow to be a big punk, many social clubs, prostitutes, etc., explaining it by a desire to blast the capital city of the mad junk.

Nicolai Copernicus is moving on to glory — despite attacks from proponents of cultural geocentrism. Overcoming the schemes of “evil spirits”, the shaman’s disciples are on their ritual ascent to the limits of the world. In the final count, their work is only an instrument of ascension, ascension above the protesting and the meek, above the developing and the stagnant, above those longing for communication and those walled in their loneliness, above the borders of styles, harmonies, countries, civilizations, doctrines and practices... The band’s music can no longer be defined as Western, or Oriental, bourgeois or socialist. Their music is universal, music of Ancient Memory and the Last Witness. Cruel, cold and spotlessly beautiful. Like a mirror of Arctic ice it reflects the grandiose figure of Koni-yoto, the Master of the Elements, of whom Yevgeny Golovin prophesied:



*Since the world has been turning,
Koni-yoto has been looking at the mist
Covered with blood as a ruby
And merciless as a drum.*

*Koni-, Koni-yoto,
Koni-, Koni-yoto,
Koni-yoto the old shaman.*

Quite a few New Wave bands in the Soviet Union were set up or overhauled after the Copernicus model. The band’s former keyboard player joined Alliance that turned into Copernicus’ twin brother, except that trying to imitate Orlov’s vocals is hopeless and that if carbon-copied the Copernicus idea loses appeal. In a sense, Copernicus also gave birth to the schizoid Fun of a new band Ded Moroz (Santa Claus). Its leader, Yevgeny Osin, once a percussionist with Copernicus, inherited the band’s unrestrained challenge and innumerable objects of irony. Soviet New Wave also has its own “hyperhard” — they are Moscow’s Otryad im. Chkalova (the Chkalov* Detachment). Its leader and frontman is A. Sinitsyn. The logic of the band’s music is not in a search for interesting superpositions, but in a mirror-like reflection of basic cultural and social phenomena. They seem to be the most straight-on New Wave band. In his songs, Sinitsyn consistently turns from one cliché of the contemporary mind to another — army service, studies, love, mysticism, peace, recreation, friendship, work... Each of the themes is wrapped in an idiotic poetic surrogate. Delirious music is perfectly in line with the general idea. The band’s popularity seems to be greatly aided by its super-ironic name.

* Valery Chkalov, a legendary Soviet pilot of the 1930s. Many Soviet factories and collective farms are named after him.

Similar “hyperhard” grotesque is also characteristic of Tsarev of Moscow’s Metro band. However, as distinct from the Otryad im. Chkalova, Tsarev’s irony is directed mainly at optimistic Soviet lovesongs of the early 1970s. Sometimes it seems that his concern is not over music making, but over revenging himself for having been brainwashed by the variety music of the stagnation era. Few people are aware of Tsarev’s individual efforts.

New Wave at one time used to be professed by some other bands that have now turned to “industrial” – avant-garde post-technocratic music known as “rock in opposition”. They are Moscow’s Nochnoi Prospekt (Night Avenue) and Leningrad’s Narodnoye Opolcheniye (People’s Militia).

Nochnoi Prospekt started out as an electronicized retro band, baking irony-filled rock’n’roll and shake tunes on contemporary Moscow themes. But even those numbers revealed the talent and intellectualism of the group’s leader Alexey Borisov. Perhaps, New Wave seemed too narrow to him, or maybe he wanted to break out into something totally new and unusual. Anyhow, Nochnoi Prospekt found itself precisely in “industrial”.

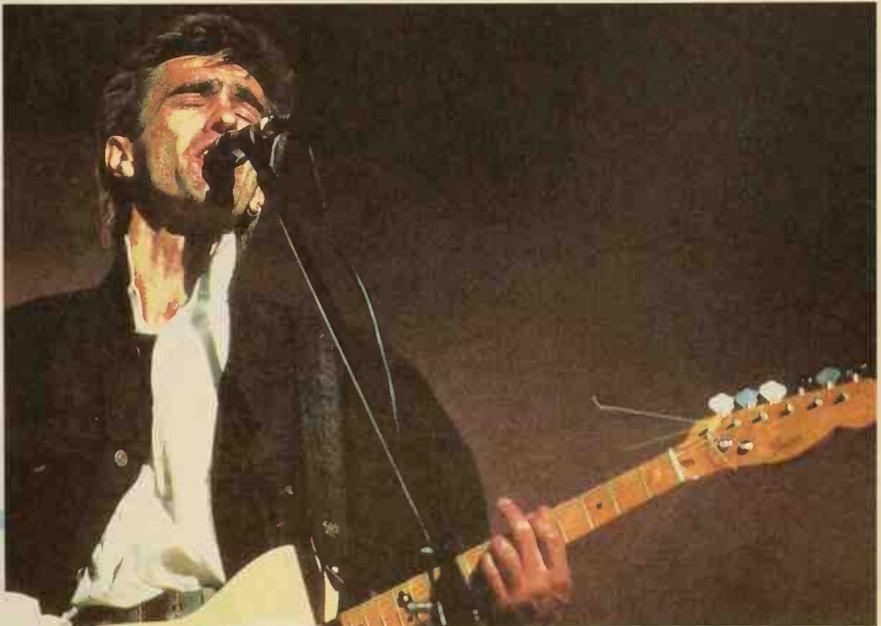
The original line-up of Narodnoye Opolcheniye for some time included the famous Soviet punk Svinya (Pig). That’s why in its early days the band was something in between all-out punk and avant-garde industrial. Before finally plunging headlong into total anarchism the band lived through a period of juvenile New Wave – tape albums of schizoid themes, rebelliously non-conformist but still within the framework of the style.

Narodnoye Opolcheniye is of greater interest to fans of socio-surrealist avant-garde than to purely New Wave audiences.



New Wave bands in the Soviet Union grow in numbers with every passing day. Punks, conceptualists, new hippies begin to dig the appeal of masked, estranged protest. Traces of New Wave can be found in bands of the most diverse styles — post-punk DK and Zvuki Moo, neo-social Televizor, neo-rust Vezhliy Otkaz (Polite Refusal) and the provincially beautiful and provincially sincere Nautilus Pompilius... And the younger generation — those who are between 12 and 14 — are bound to be captured by New Wave. All the other styles and forms are growing older by the hour. New Wave's growing popularity is doubtlessly related to the growing intellectual status of the young, their educational standard and ideological flexibility... But in a way it is also the result of a growing pessimism in young people — decades of demagoguery and lies have left such a profound imprint on society which would take many years to erase, and young people are just so impatient.

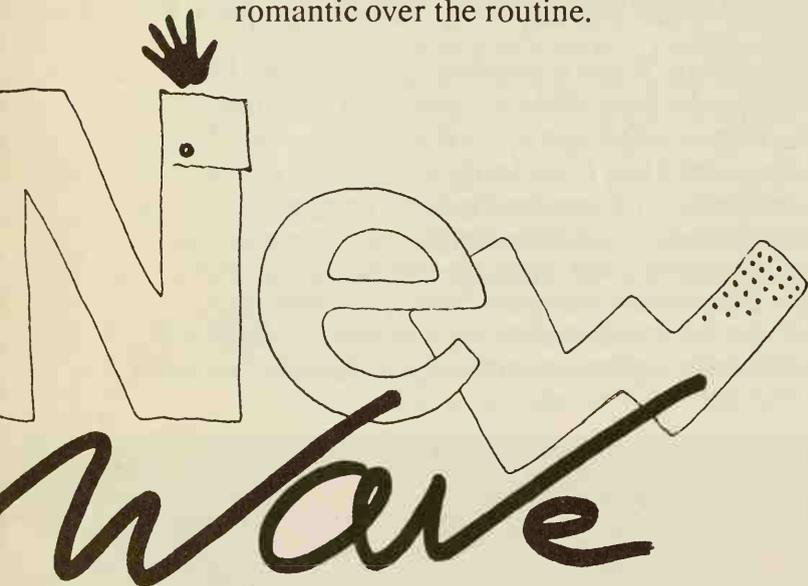
The potential of New Wave is practically boundless. This style is not weighed down by rigid musical forms or a compulsory idea. When a New Waver is fed up with one picture he simply goes over to another — and this is perfectly in line with the overall logic of the movement. If, on the contrary, he gets sick of the unending masquerade and settles down to concentrate on something, that stability, too, would be ranked New Wave. It seems New Wave is the future of Soviet youth culture. The time isn't far off when rock audiences in the USSR will acquire the ultimate comprehension of the Double Precision Irony.



And then the hippie-style wisdom of Aquarium and even the exalted frenzy of heavy metal buffs will be taken as a New Wave self-parody.

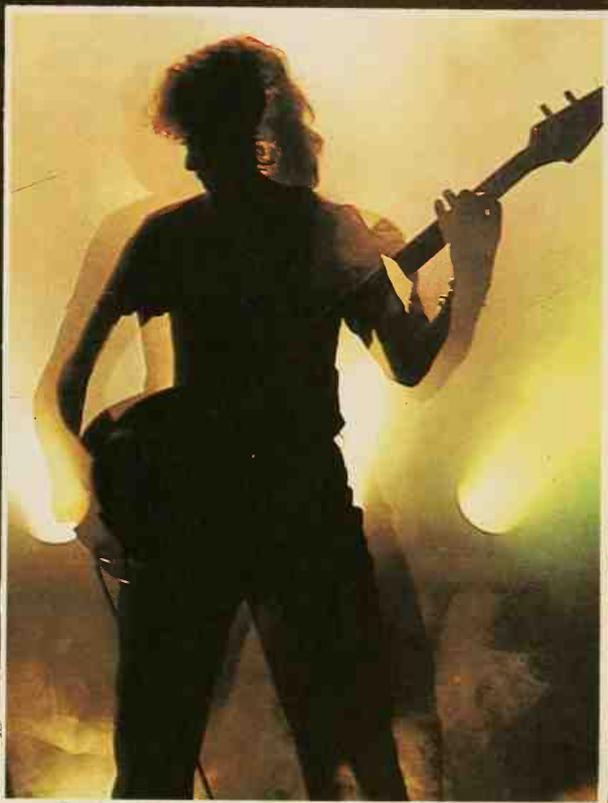
Having grasped the essence of New Wave, it isn't easy — it maybe even plain impossible — to get rid of the habit of splitting your own ego, of getting estranged from reality and of infusing day-to-day life with unnecessary aesthetic categories. And you get shivers down your spine when you think about the future of Soviet society, when the current generation of New Wavers assumes responsible positions, when the current fans of Copernicus and Center are to decide social and political issues, when instead of the primacy of the economy over ideology, the Soviet new philosophers will assert the primacy of irony over earnestness, of the absurd over the rational, the primacy of the romantic over the routine.

Alexander Dugin



ROCK AVANT-GARDE

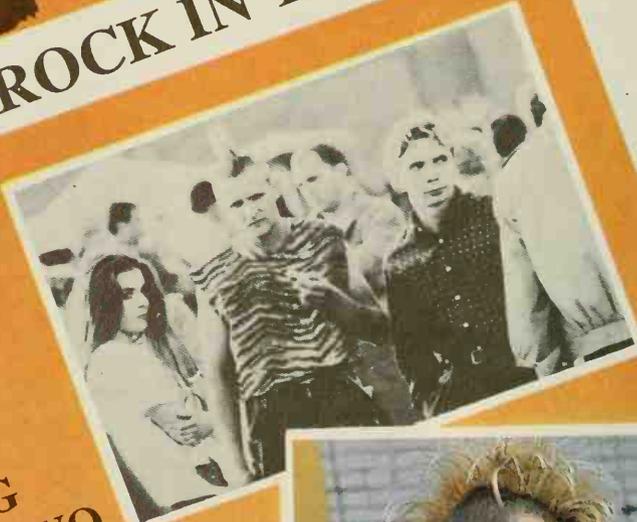
new discoveries made by
Soviet proponents of the
Action and Performance style
Find out about
why Soviet avant-garde rock
is an extreme form of social
modernism, what is Soviet
punk rock, does rock
avant-garde have a future



ПАНК РОК PUNK ROCK PUNK ROCK

PUNK

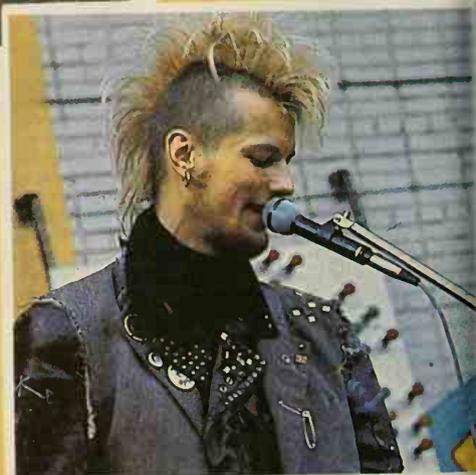
ROCK IN THE USSR



THE GIG IN BYKOVO

A sunny Sunday in April 1988. The day is a holiday by the calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church. The authorities of the town of Bykovo near Moscow, in compliance with their atheistic education plan, opted to lure the youth with the commonly forbidden fruit — a punk rock fest.

A dirty-brown one-storey barracks — a club and movie hall in one — standing in the midst of endless kolkhoz fields. The nearest homes are several kilometers away. The littered movie hall is cold and damp and full of smoke. It's semidark, even though pallid yellow-green spherical lamps generate a putrid light. The stage is hung up with placards showing proletarians and appeals to support *perestroika* and not to spread AIDS.



An obscure band gets up on stage and strikes up. The equipment is awful, the acoustics horrendous, the instruments are out of tune and it seems the guys can't even play. The band grates and squeaks, the sound doesn't fill the hall, burns the ears like acid and drives into your brain like a rusted screw. The vocalist screams: "The hunch-backed will only go straight in the grave... The humpback will get his humpbacked coffin... A humped gravehill over the coffin." The refrain of one phrase — "Dead horse's muzzle" — is repeated monotonously a dozen times after each verse. The musicians can't even hear themselves and go down into the hall from time to time to find out what the audience was getting.

It was impossible to tell if it was a warming up, tuning or the concert itself: judging by the tickets we were ninety minutes into the gig. In between the verses the guitarist yells to turn up the guitar that already drowns out the bass, drums and the vocalist, hoarse from the "Dead horse's muzzle" scream. The piece goes on for 10 or 15 minutes.

The people in the audience smoke a lot and have beers, ordinarily in short supply but now on sale on the occasion of the holiday. Empty bottles roll on the floor. There is constant movement in the audience with people coming and going. Most of the audience are in a depressed stupor. They have no desire or strength to move or talk. After another half-hour of this torture the audience is comatose. Even the girls' hysterical giggling dies down. Heads hang and shoulders stoop, the hall is as cold as a fridge, damp as a swamp and full of smoke like a dirty lavatory. The smoke is suffocating, causing



a terrible headache—just like the unceasing clangor of the iron monster. Then the sound stops—though bringing no relief. The band takes its leave, having declared that their playing was good, but the equipment was shit and the soundman was a shithead. But there is nobody at the mixing console.

The next band gets onto the stage—wearing very long hair, some with beards. They are the Chudo-Yudo.* For half an hour they pretend to change the mikes, tune guitars and move up drums, shout to somebody at the mixer to twiddle the knobs. The audience is dead. They just don't care. Suddenly the music erupts. The tuning was no waste of time. The words are almost discernible. Something like—"I don't give a damn about the Edict** and I do what I want and I drink what I like, and now I am going to the wine shop taking empty bottles—oh yeah" and so on. Something of a "folk" song about empty bottles that after an orgy are exchanged for new bottles. The idea is a jeering symbol of nature's renewal. The folks in the audience cheer the musicians, egging them on: however petty, it is a snap at the authorities, and everybody is fed up with the anti-drinking drive. Their music is weird—jerky, jumpy, the rhythm meandering.—producing the impression of something like a broken mechanical toy. The band goes off the stage right after the first song—to the audience's great surprise. Now it is clear—they just tried out the equipment and the gig is still ahead.



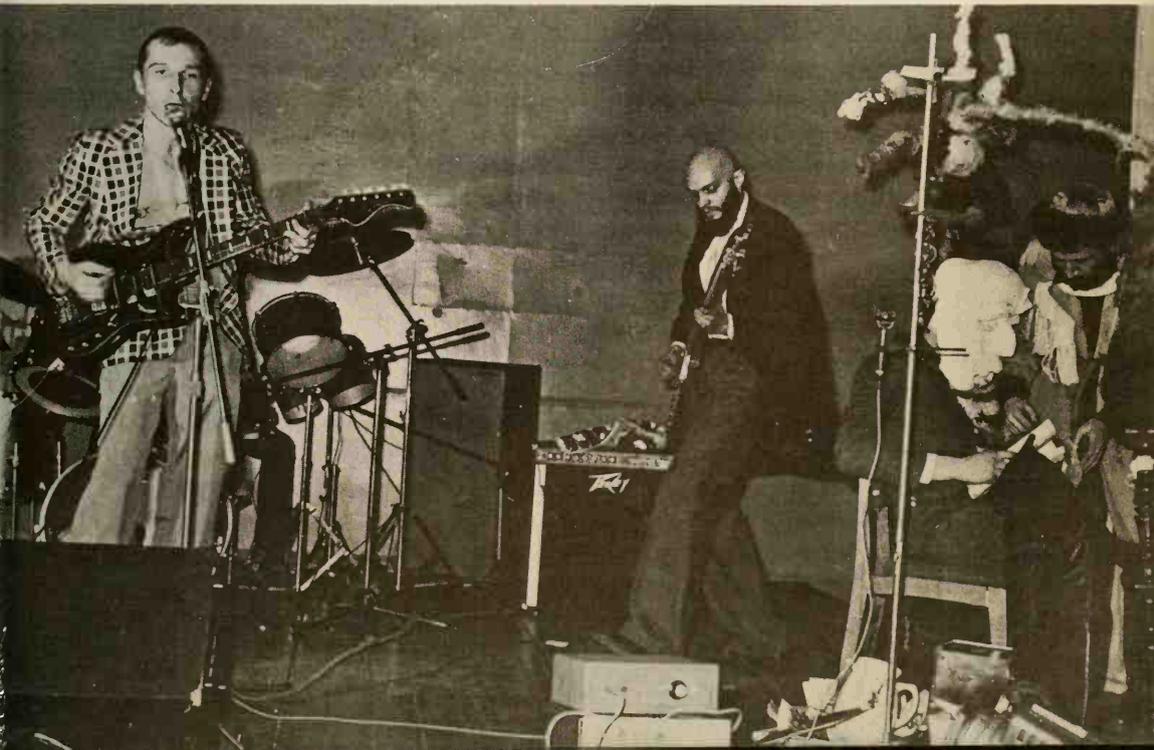
* Chudo-Yudo is a fairytale monster.

** Edict of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on combatting drunkenness and alcoholism, restricting the sale and production of liquor.

There is constant movement and jostling on stage. A portrait of Brezhnev is hung up at the back of the stage, with pins drawn right into the forehead. The public is happy. Somebody turned on a stage light and aimed it right at the audience. Everybody is mad but the light stays on until the end.

The Evil Spirits came from Novgorod without their instruments, now somebody brings them a bass. As a warming up, somebody asks the man to do a traditional blues. But he doesn't react. Looks like he is drunk. The folks in the hall are pissed off: "Stop vexing the guy!" The band elects to play without a bass. Instead, a violinist emerges on stage, gets undressed, leaving only his pink shorts on and starts producing disgusting sounds from his instrument. The drummer breaks into a fit — here goes! The vocalist yells like a bear and the words are lost. The tune sounds like something between heavy metal and a landslide. After two numbers the vocalist sends the band away, since the backing kills the vocals, takes somebody else's electric guitar and sings an epic of folk-like ditties, peppered with a fair amount of obscenity and irony with regard to the patriotic upbringing of Young Pioneers* by war and labor veterans. The character in the ballad is a veteran who himself was a hoodlum and bully as a kid and now lectures hoodlums in order to get them to mend their ways. The guitarist pulls through the song and goes off stage to approving shouts — "Come again! You're good!"

* Children's organization similar to scouts.



LUKY
M O O.

A police squad enters the hall, looking sternly at what's going on. A skinny guy gets onto the stage and yells into the mike: "Are we making trouble?!", the audience shrieks — "No!", "Are we drinking vodka?!", "No!", "Has Gorbachev let us listen to rock?", "YEAH!!!", "And we will listen!" Seeing such a turn of events, the cops take leave. The audience cheers up.

The next band, Sexual Opposition, nobody has ever heard of before. Dark glasses, black jackets and crewcuts. They are all grown men and the masquerade gets on the nerves of the youngsters. They began to convulse and drum and rumble. The vocalist, jerking like a puppet, sticks the mike stand between his legs — evidently to demonstrate his sexual aggressiveness. The songs are about Afghanistan, about unhappy love on a background of unending drunken orgies, about the value of independent thinking. The music is mannered and feeble. The consensus is that they are not punk, they are junk. The people are glad when they pull out. The vocalist, clutching at a last straw, shrieks: "We are sexual opposition!" The audience retorts: "We have no sex."

Somebody brings a female mannequin in a police uniform onto the stage. An obese jeering jerk

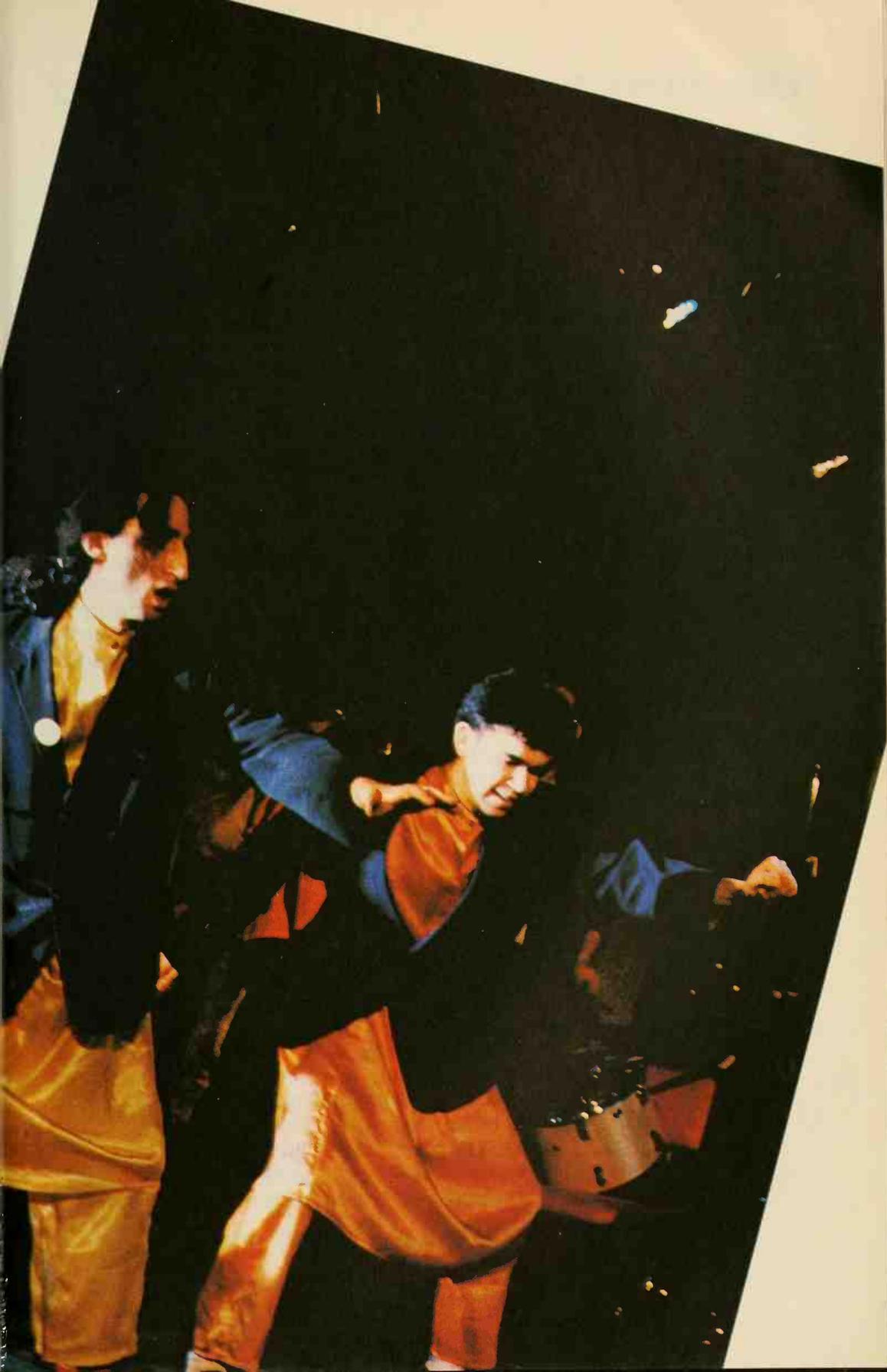


reads out a *Pravda* article lashing out against rock music. The audience has a good laugh. This is the start of a stint by the NII Kosmetiki (Cosmetics Research Center)—a super-popular unofficial punk band. The hall wakes up, the depression gives way to maniacal animation. Somebody appears on the stage in a large checkered jacket and tight and short pants, his hair standing on end and lips and eyes painted. A dozen trinkets on a string round his neck and the jacket all covered with pins and badges. This is the band's leader, punk Mephodius. The musicians, dressed decently and with taste—one in the Soviet flag, another in a White Guard uniform with aglets—produce the impression of intelligent, cultured, calm and collected people, doing their job professionally, without any wriggling or playing up to the public.

*AIDS, AIDS, AIDS, AIDS in Moscow.
Me, you, he and she—the whole country's got AIDS.**

* Paraphrase of a jazzed-up patriotic song.

The rhythm is sharp, resilient, the guitar riffs — ripped and piercing, the voice is strong and brazen, bursting the eardrums. The band is well blended, the guitars and keyboards keeping up with the drums. One piece follows another almost without a break, the audience gets high and starts shaking. The backdrop on stage features slides showing now parts of a naked woman's body, now a portrait of Brezhnev. The long narrow hall is dark, there's horror, the absurd and sex. "The Sexual Deserter" is about a poor soldier who has to do his stint in the form of a sexual conscription. "The Courtesan Cooperative" is about a bordello co-op and the problems it faces. There is also a song for the protection of animals, prompted by recollections of a dog run over by a car and its torn insides that symbolize humanism. Still another song is a tango about a good-looking paratrooper, awaited by a lonely woman in a far-away town. Doing this one, Mephodius, clad in a woman's dress, comes up to a huge portrait of Brezhnev in a Marshal's uniform and presses his body to it, tenderly stroking: "Where are you, my paratrooper? Two scarcely dressed girls keep dancing on stage throughout the show. Mephodius undresses the policeman mannequin, taunts it, then breaks off its legs. The music doesn't stop for a minute. The thick rhythm seems to have solidified in space, pushing against the walls and the heads of fans. Many are dancing. Now and then the audience howls, noising out the metallic rumble of the band. After about 40 minutes the NII Kosmetiki clears off. Five hours of music behind, a break is announced. The pub- lic, with the sense of a duty well done, crumbles out for a smoke and a breath of fresh air. The Chudo-Yudo, Vese- lye Kartinki and somebody else are going to play after the intermission. But we just can't take it any more and together with a big gang of fans, go back to Moscow.



In punk rock, music doesn't mean much, being totally subordinate to lyrics. Most punk bands make use of commonly known and commonly utilized cliches for a musical background. Melody is not there: it is replaced with intonation and a special way of phrasing. As a rule, singers don't carry vowels and leave no pauses between words and phrases, turning their vocals into a shrieking tongue-twister to a dense and sharp rhythm. Punk rock is a rapid, inexpressive and non-dramatic recitation of punk poems to the monotonously torn champing of a guitar and the piercing clatter of drums, played without variation or ingenuity. The high-powered clangor and grating results from endless repetition of one and the same isolated element of sound, often a combination of a couple of cords in precise concert with the drums. In totality it creates a texture — unchanging, boring and dull as a wallpaper ornament, a dirty brick wall or clatter in an internal combustion engine gone bonkers.

Practically all of the punk bands profess this monotonously rigid — but still “intimate” (compared to cosmic heavy metal and electro-pop) punk-standard style: Avtomaticheskyy Udovletvoritel (Automatic Satisfier), Alice, Obyekt Nasmeshki (Laughing Stock) of Leningrad, NII Kosmetiki and Tupye (The Dumb) of Moscow, BOMZH* from Novosibirsk and many others.

The absence of inner musical and rhythmic structure in punk rock makes its various pieces differ only in tempo: very fast, moderate or half-dead. In the latter instance, the music gets to be crumbly, retarded, prostrated. Unable to beef up the sound in order to stay within the style, musicians have to drag out their “ballads”, driving the audience up the wall, sucking out its energy and will to live.

Total neglect of the musical form accounts for the primitivism and monotony of punk music, depriving musicians of any development. They get stuck where they were when they got into punk. That is one of the reasons for the emergence of many musically abhorrent groups. But those who elect to play rich and juicy music invariably break out of the limits of the crude and stern thresher.

Abandoning the underground and acquiring “good taste”, punk rock develops either into rock standard (Va Banque, Zoopark, Center), or into New Wave (Kino, Auction, Tsement, Udaff, Televizor). In such instances we deal not with a radical expression of hatred and pain, but an “interest in social problems” to use the terminology of the official youth press, featuring complimentary articles about the innocent “sausage

* Russian abbreviation of “having no fixed abode” standing for vagrant.

rock" (i.e. concerned over the shortage of sausage and other staples in shops).

The shift to New Wave should, genetically, lead to an intellectual version of music and lyrics, which often proves beyond former punks. Such groups tend to fall boring victims to conformism which emaciates their lyrics, and they differ little from Western and Soviet specimens of mass culture.

PUNK SHOW STANDARD

As an anti-social and anti-cultural phenomenon, punk is unable to express its vision of the world comprehensively, clearly and convincingly. That is why punks resort to a standard set of means and tricks to display its essence in public, for their friends to enjoy and for aliens to fear.

In order to be a punk band, they have to do their hair in a special style, they have to squint as if because of bright light, they have to keep their mouths gaping, protruding their lips and sticking out their tongues as far as possible. A vocalist should spit, make convulsive gestures (preferably indecent) and jerk from time to time. Wet lips apart and eyes squinting, he should present himself as a scum, bonehead and cynic. It is not absolutely essential to show his bare ass, but it is in style. The lyrics should contain statements to the effect that "everything is shit" and "everybody is a shithead", as well as wishes for the instant and violent disappearance of everything living.

Konstantin Kinchev, the frontman of the Leningrad Alice is an expert at contorting a disgusting mug in full compliance with the punk standard. On that account he considers his lyrical and sentimental stuff to be punk rock and is out to further the ungainly impression by rigid and monotonous musical backing. There came the paradox: in a bid to break free from the artificiality of the hypocritical world, a contemporary punk resorts to perfectly artificial crutches and cliches and ceases to be a punk — at least in the old sense of the word. This can be partially explained by the emergence of neophytes who get to be part of a ritual that has lost its conceptual clarity and is used for the utilization of emotional wastes. Another reason may be the position of punk musicians, trying to get compassion and support from the public, rather than to seek self-realization through opposing everything external.

The public is no longer excited by the pure and amateurish standard of the punk show. Punk concerts only pull those that couldn't make it to something more prestigious. Punk rock has turned into an amateur pop culture with a very limited circle of fans.

For Soviets, rock is primarily rock in English. Rock fans, not knowing the language, don't understand what their idols are singing about — besides the sky-is-blue-I-love-you naivete of The Beatles era. Soviet experts and critics of rock of the 60s and 70s grew up on "wordless" rock, devoid of meaning and content. There simply was no other rock. Therefore, with the emergence of their own rock, neither the audience nor the musicians felt any need for meaningful lyrics and practically all of the early Soviet bands words were nothing more than a part for the vocalist. Punk rock provided the first example of creativity in the framework of a rigidly fixed aesthetic system. The tendency found its further development in the best of the Soviet New Wave.

The alternative rock of the band called DK marked a revolution in lyrics, high-powered image and paradoxical ideas as opposed to the impotent, suave and generally meaningless Soviet rock prior to the 1980s. In punk rock the lyrics don't require a meaningful message, being only an expression of a meaningful stance. The lyrics are anti-lyrical and anti-sensual, they are not a product of an associative drive or stream of consciousness. The lyrics are a product of an artistic design, for they are constructed in accordance with preset ideological parameters. The arrival of punk rock marked the end of the phenomenon of meaningless lyrics for lyrics' sake.

DK: A PARADIGM OF SOVIET PUNK

DK, set up by Sergei Zharikov in the early 80s, should be recognized as the creator of a totally poly-stylistic rock. He leads it still as its ideologist, lyricist, song-writer, arranger and drummer. The group featured top-flight musicians — Yanshin on guitar and Letov on wind instruments. The band's existence is wrapped up in mystery, they almost never played in public, staying underground, unknown to broad audiences. In impossible conditions, when mentioning their name was considered almost a crime, the band recorded 30 "tape" albums of 45 minutes each! The quality of recording is awful, the words are barely discernible and the record flounders, but that doesn't spoil the impression of that radically novel, and at the same time traditional to the point of being reactionary, approach of DK to their musical output. DK has tried its hand in every known rock and pop style — from rockabilly through rock'n'roll and blues to jazz rock, hard rock and reggae, from lullaby to prison lore, from folk ditties to melodramatic restaurant chanson, from minuet and polka to tango, waltz and march. Very often DK borrowed somebody

else's themes or tunes, separate lines or entire instrumental versions were re-arranged for two or three instruments and percussion and an original text was superimposed.

The borrowing is justified by instant recognition of the chosen style that, without much a-do and with canonical clarity, lends itself to the reproduction and reinterpretation of the devalued and meaningless music. Stylistically omnivorous, rock is able to discredit and destroy all the "surrounding" styles. The same is true of rock itself becoming dissolved in the "universal" and "generally meaningful" kitsch.

DK can by right be branded anti-cultural and anti-musical. They get any musical form immersed in the state of cold and plastic kitsch and deny it the right to independent existence. DK thus left no doubt that rock started by Elvis Presley and The Beatles had degenerated and conked out: a rotting corpse, consistently and enthusiastically autopsied and dismembered by Zharikov's group.

After DK, sincere and naive rock'n'roll and any of its derivatives — at least on Soviet soil — point inevitably to their underdevelopment or reactionary character. Zharikov contended that "Soviet rock should get out of the backyard". Not only did it get out — it took back to the backyard everything it found outside, having put a price on everything and having found a place for everything.

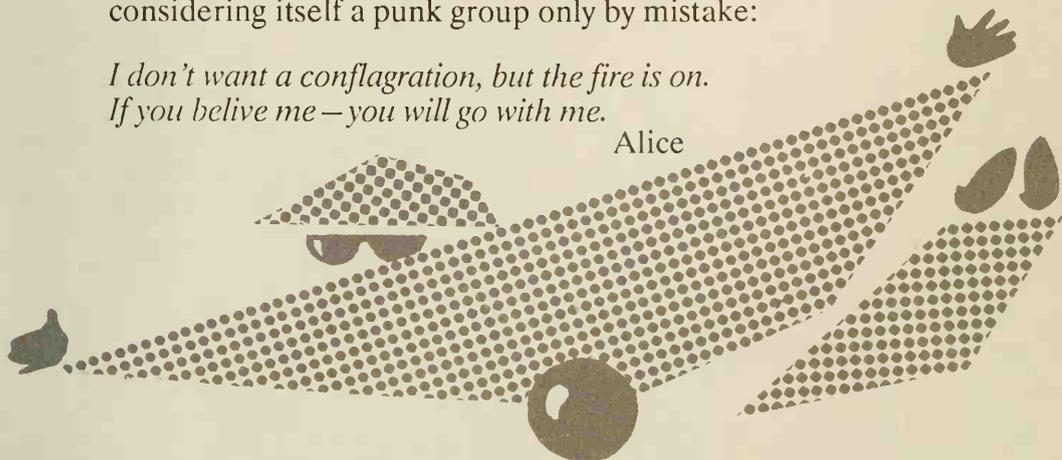
What punk has been trying to accomplish in the social and psychological sphere has been done by DK in music. As a musical style, punk rock is surrender to a boggy garbage dump discovered by DK where Big Beat used to be.

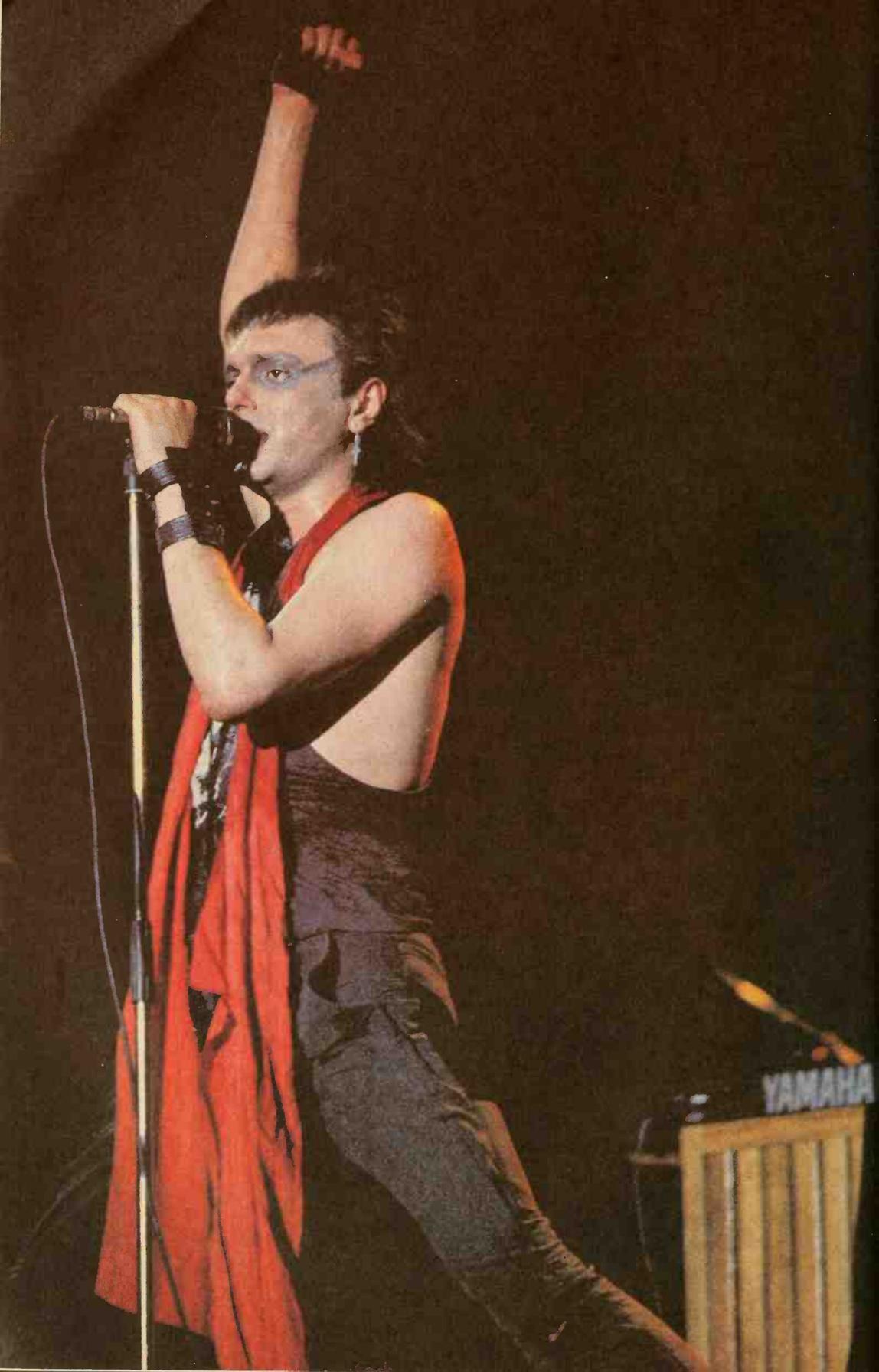
PUNK AND INDIVIDUALISM

Punk ideology in real terms confronts the ideology of sentimental individualism as is plugged by the youth idols the Leningrad bands Kino and Aquarium. Alice is keeping up with them, considering itself a punk group only by mistake:

*I don't want a conflagration, but the fire is on.
If you believe me — you will go with me.*

Alice





This breed of rock suspects the human being to be a unique personality with great mysteries and spiritual depths, hidden from the superficial observer but open to those who are eager to understand. The individualist cherishes the dream of being understood; that is his greatest delight:

*Belive me, I don't need none of this fuss.
I wish there are ten people that dig me.*
Prokhdnoi Dvor (Connecting Courtyard)

The shroud of secrecy, veiling the conspiracy of the individualist or "escapist" rock, is confronted by the total clarity of the inner life of the alternative punk rock hero:

*I am a dreg, the king of the garbage dump.
I was stealthily chewed up by someone.
That's why I am very viable,
That's why I am pleased and unruffled.
And you are gone, sha-la-la-la-la,
And you are gone, sha-la-la-la-la...*

DK

The theme of one's own path, own vision and point of view figures most prominently in peddling the individualist's merits.

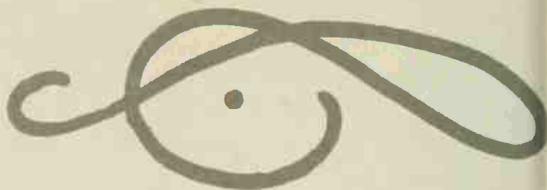
*I sing for those going their own way.
I am glad if somebody gets me right.*
Alice

The individualist tries to be earnest, even tragic, he immerses reality in mystery and torments the audience with a riddle:

*My color is dark red,
But it wasn't chosen by me.
Somebody, very much resembling a wall
Presses me down with its weight.*
Alice

A punk is having it tough, too, but he is more straightforward, his position is clearer, and the positive — if anything — is proudly projected:

*I am the worst,
I am worse than you are,
I am the ultimately useless,
I am dung,
BUT TO MAKE UP FOR IT I CAN FLY!
I am a gray pigeon.*

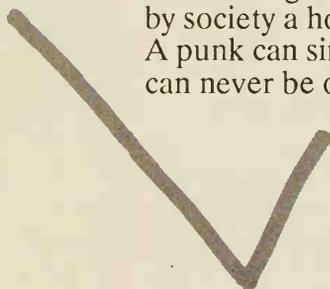


Zvuki Moo

Even if punk rock exhibits a degree of individualism, it is so stark, unpretentious and trivial that there is no word to define it. And what for? Punk is all on the surface.

IS PUNK A HOODLUM?

From the point of view of officialdom, any uncontrolled and unregulated action violating public order is classed as hooliganism. As much as in his actions a punk neither has a utilitarian goal nor is striving to achieve one, so he is considered by society a hooligan maliciously violating public order. A punk can sing about hooligans, can behave like a hooligan, but can never be one.



*They call me a hoodlum, Phil Esposito.
I never moaned, never once in my life.
I came back from the reformatory before time,
And now I feel good, I am grown.*

DK

A hooligan is vigorously active because of overflowing physical strength, because of a yearning for direct homeheaded aggression. A hooligan is self-conceited, he is quite comfortable with and happy about the world he lives in. This world is a bit cruel, though, but the hooligan is able to stand up for himself and then the balance between the individual and society is restored. The hooligan is romantic, he is inclined to poeticize his brute force. The hooligan is intellectually backward, dim and square. He feels no pain.

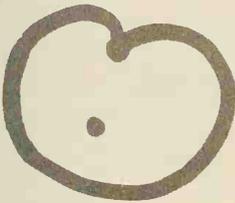
A punk is passive and depressive, rarely venturing to display his anti-social essence and he doesn't care about the result he achieves. A punk is weak.

*Oh, you're a strapper, Phil Esposito,
And I have no strength, no strength at all.
I got fear always on my heels.
And you wear pants, all your life wear pants.*

DK

A punk is non-aggressive, the virtue of his stance is to him self-evident: he doesn't want to prove it to anybody, let alone beat someone up. What's the use of busting something up when everything is ruined anyway? A punk is obsessed with his inferiority complex, he is a misfit, oppressed by crude discomfort. A balance between his personality and the world is unattainable, because a punk has no personality and the world is just a dirty garbage heap. Instead of a balance, the only thing possible is a confluence of two heaps of garbage (a man and the world) into one dump, which is what a punk is out to achieve to the best of his feeble strength. There is no romanticism here. A punk's stance is intellectual, conceptual and non-utilitarian. A punk does feel the pain.

A hooligan is earnest, with a faith in his path, which makes him much like a sentimental individualist. A punk is ironic, he agrees with everything, he knows and sees everything, understands everything but believes in nothing.



*I am an ordinary Soviet hoodlum,
I have my knife and my gun.
I am cunning as a tender broad.
I stab them right through the gut!*

*chorus: Stab 'em, stab 'em, we have no fear,
We are going to buy a Mercedes
And go off to the woods with a broad.*

DK

Punk rock is no hoodlum folklore. It is an attempt at artistic expression of punk-consciousness and punk-vision into the essence of the world. Punk rock is inevitably ironic, imbued with parody and provocation, it doesn't carry any sappy sincerity or tenderness. Most of the DK or Zvuki Moo numbers shock the listener with what seems to be dissoluteness, rudeness and bad manners. We are shocked by seeing ourselves in the mirror. That means the musicians have achieved their aim — and calling them hoodlums because they gave us the mirror is unfair.

If the wolf is the sanitary inspector of the woods, then the hooligan is the sanitary inspector of a societal group. The punk is no doctor, he is an eye-opener. The punk is the wounded conscience of contemporary society.

Can a punk be considered an enemy of the regime? Hardly. To a punk, Soviet government, as something integral, simply doesn't exist. Jeering at Soviet songs, Soviet symbols, Soviet propaganda cliches or state leaders, a punk perceives no intrinsic connection or interdependence between them and tends to doubt their strength and stability. To him, they are an odd bunch of incomprehensible phenomena. Humiliating Brezhnev is perceived by a punk not as an expression or rejection of any

position. To a punk, Brezhnev — just as any Soviet person — is as much a character of the terrorist atmosphere as the cartoon Wolf* or a saleswoman from the local wine shop.

PYOTR MAMONOV



Pyotr Mamonov is over 30. Word has it that, a former actor, he now works as an elevator operator. The plasticity of his body and face is unusual, his eyes are fixed, dull and expressionless, full of savage wilderness. His movements are jerky and uncoordinated like fits of palsy. His arms and legs are thrown about, pin-hinged to the body, assuming unimaginable positions with stroboscopic speed, shaking and vibrating. He constantly butts the air, crooks his shoulders, warps his

- Character from a popular cartoon series “Just You Wait” about the Wolf chasing a Rabbit.



mouth in a grimace of disgust, licks and swallows the mike. He does all this very seriously, naturally and matter-of-factly, producing a fearful impression. With his promenade Mamonov puts the audience into a hypnotic trance, like a snake-charmer mesmerizing his cobra. Mamonov's movements and gestures, borrowed from the bottomless arsenal of Soviet alkie, ever-stoned proletarians, psychotics and neurotics, are easily recognized and appreciated by youngsters.

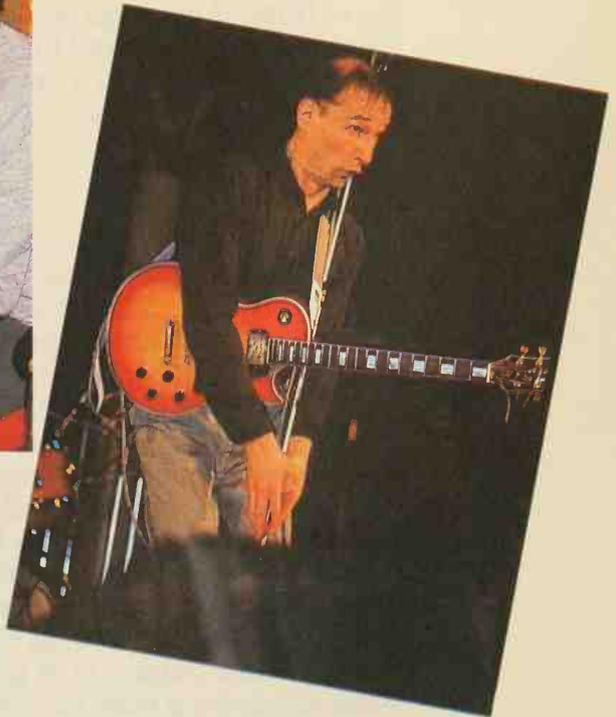
Mamonov is the frontman of Zvuki Moo and author of all of its numbers. His personal show is accompanied with quacking and bubbling music. Mamonov's lyrics are absurd descriptions of horrendous alcoholic scenes and wild relations between characters that are not so much image-bearing or symbolic as they are nightmarish, depressive and the only existing reality of drunken delirium.



+ PYOTR MAMONOV
 + BRIAN ENO =
 ZVUKI MOO
 ALBUM RELEASED
 IN LONDON
 IN 1989

*As soon as I see your silhouette,
 I know how much I love you.
 As soon as I see the familiar curve,
 I know and I see you'll be mine!
 Bottle of vodka!*

Zvuki Moo



A star, ideologist and Daddy of the punk movement in the USSR, a poet and musician, an unofficial public leader and showman, Kolya is tall, with an elongated face and a big nose, goggle-eyed and minus front teeth. Kolya is not young, he is over 30. He dresses in retro style – bright, mannered and not without taste (punk-taste, of course). He is a very polite, modest and quiet person. A friend of all the unhappy and discarded. A humanist and educator.

Kolya created a theory of the punk movement that explains its wholly humanistic character and its wish to expose its funny and unenviable lot, its essence and appearance and to assert – through self-denigration – its autonomous and legitimate existence in the face of the socially secure, well-placed and conformist-minded age peers.

Kolya Rock'n'roll is known for his mile-long absurdist poems that he occasionally recites to anybody's backing at home gigs. In public Kolya tries to behave so as to make everybody feel weird and disgusted. However, he often leaves a taste of artificiality and pose. Kolya is enthusiastic and always ready to stage an innocently provocative show. At a Zvuki Moo concert Kolya showed how one can use a ruble note for toilet paper and then burned it. After which Kolya was carried by a gang to and fro in front of the stage while he acted like a corpse. Then Kolya Rock'n'roll disappeared for several years. That was no surprise: he didn't have a job or a home, which is why the police didn't feel much sympathy for him.

GOR

Gor is the most prominent figure of the Moscow underground. His body is big and bulky, his facial features are sharp and regular. He is different from Pyotr Mamonov and Kolya Rock'n'roll in that he doesn't make out like a screwball or degenerate. Gor is an intellectual, a physicist by training. When, solemnly stuttering and faltering, he recites his poems, the audience trembles in horror.

Appearing as a showman with the bands Vezhliviy Otkaz (Polite Refusal) and Metro, and the fashion theater Post, Gor cooks up a show of astounding force, as he turns the music into a broth of sound for his plastic experiments. Standing on one leg, wearing riding breeches and a tunic, Gor slowly paints himself with chalk, turning into a statue. Or he plays a violin with a hunk of beef in short supply for a bow. Or rolls onto the stage, wrapped up in

yellow paper to rip out of it like cracker. Or walks around the stage in a dress made of geographical maps of the USSR. Gor's image is that of a berserk Stalinist, a champion of hard line and order that degenerated to the point of absurdity and mental derangement. Gor's absurdity is totalitarian and anti-human, chastising the acquiescent post-Brezhnevism of *perestroika*. Gor is not so much a punk as an avant-gardist and conceptualist, making masterly use of the punk style. Punks like Gor for the showmanship, but don't appreciate his mean-spirited, ironic, estranged poems. Gor is an intellectual opposition to Stalinism still alive, to post-Stalinism and even to neo-post-Stalinism — if it is to be found.

Andrei Gorokhov



CLOSE-UP OF GOR & C^o OR NOTES OF MOSCOW'S ELITARIAN AVANT-GARDE

Stankevich Street is in the heart of downtown Moscow, joining two other busy streets — Gorky and Herzen. A group of people is hanging out in front of a modest old mansion. Their appearance instantly exposes them as venerable connoisseurs of the complicated.

The complications start right from the entrance: one has to walk for a long time through a narrow meandering corridor, going up and down shaky stairs. It seems it stretches for a hundred yards... Then one finds oneself in a hall without windows and with unplastered walls and a painted stage. The ceiling is two stories high. On both sides of the stage there are rickety balconies, a lot of some kind of junk and a general atmosphere of no pretense. There are of course twice as many spectators as there are seats — though all have tickets. An essential feature of any Bohemia is deliberate scorn of any formal organization. It seems that here New Wave conceptualism is opposed to traditional rock. Conceptualism is spectacular right down to the details of the interior. Rock has a different tradition: it is magical. Conceptualism concentrates on the aesthetics of reason that has undergone a fatal and irrevocable crisis. This relates it to the Bohemia of late in the last century, which for the first time defined décor as false, and anti-decorativeness as a requisite condition of artistic sincerity.

The lone figure of Tsarev emerges on stage. He is one of the two anchors of Metro, a proponent of “complicated plainness”. He looks homely, in a white cotton shirt, fair hair falling straight onto the forehead, a reddish beard. With a broad, typically Russian face he looks like one Ivan-Tsarevich from a Russian fairytale. For starters he just “fools around”, tries out the piano. But the show has already begun.

Gor comes out next. He is also robed in white. Loose white clothes are the uniform of the gig. Gor showers the audience with tiny, matchbox-sized, type-written leaflets reading “Pop-phenomenon. Game of rags.” An abracadabra of letters and figures follows. The conceptual groundwork is laid: a girl cellist and a drummer appear on the stage.

The hall is filled with the sound of African-style drums, giving way to a bravura march tune. This, of course, is a sound track. But Tsarev superimposes his piano dingling on to it and little by little the classically harmonious music turns steadily psychedelic. The marches follow one another, European styles are replaced

with those of the Samurai. Tsarev's shrieky strumming, the foredoomed howling of the cello and rhythmical thunder of the drums blend in with the sound track, generating a conceptually musical concert.

Suddenly, black-bearded and pony-tailed Kamil in a pseudo-Turkish outfit emerges on the left balcony. He untangles a web of ropes hanging down from it. Tied up in the ropes is a human-sized puppet in a conservative business suit. Kamil manipulates the puppet, posing as a puppeteer. One cannot believe one's eyes: the message is too straightforward and obvious. It is too simple, too hackneyed and abused.

But then a lad in white pants and a black silk vest climbs up a ladder leaning against the black brick wall of the stage. He is Jurayev. With his back to the audience, balancing on the top rung, he gropes with his hands on the wall. Then he starts throwing pellets onto a sheet of iron on the stage floor. He then hangs an abacus on a nail in the wall and clicks on them with his toes, still throwing down pellets.

Looks like classical conceptualism, but the feeling is that it is outdated. As much as Tsarev's idea to turn conventional music into psychedelic avant-garde is successful, so much so is conceptual aesthetics out of tune with New Wave criteria. For New Wave, "normalcy" itself is more grotesque than any conceptualism, a concept being extraneous and its pathos devalued.

After Kamil's drawn-out manipulations with the puppet and Jurayev's with the ropes, which, standing on the ladder, he is sticking into holes in the wall, comes the turn of verses. Jurayev comes down from the ladder and takes the mike...

Poems — or, to be more precise, recited conceptual texts — are the pivot of New Wave.

If you add this to that you'll have neither this nor that.

A beauty, but sleeping, a bird, but cross-eyed.

What's the noise from the box?

Have patience, Russia, bare-footed mother.

The inner energy of such poetry — and that is its most important achievement — transcends the bounds of irony, parody and the absurd, although adopting all three in their emotions. "Winter is endless from spring to spring." "Went to sleep on a hilltop, woke up in a pit." The aphoristic style of Jurayev's pseudo-proverbs suddenly reveals a void. It tastes of cosmic cold, intellectual chill, the other world's freshness after the sticky tepidness of formal culture.

Jurayev gives way to a girl singing in Italian. This is what they call *styob* (youth slang close in meaning to "jive"). Surprisingly, she is not just singing Italian-sounding double Dutch. Her Italian is

conceivable. The combination of Celentano's intonation with the Russian accent, simple phrases with universally known words like *amore, felicità* — that is what produces the New Wave effect... Tsarev and Kamil sing: "We are two banks of a round lake..." One should know the sentimental hit of the 1950s that they parody to appreciate the audience's response: it is one of predatory elation. Why predatory? Metro made use of the retro style, cool and estranged, as a challenge to avant-garde non-conformism. Now we witness a challenge to the retro style itself. The audience's predatory reaction is prompted by a discovery that the conceptual New Wave has no untrodden zones, concealed from reflection. Yet another component of the unconscious has been pulled up to the surface and cornered! Gor is the brightest star of the show. He is the founder of "pseudodocumentary poetry" — by his own definition. Gor's poems deserve a closer look. As a phenomenon, Gor is the peak of avant-garde in Soviet rock culture. If "industrial avant-garde" is out to minimize and systematize music, Gor does the same with lyrics. His poetry is a textual resumé of avant-garde rock culture. At the same time, Gor's poetry dialectically rejects rock poetry. Gor manages to incorporate in one phrase what rock musicians devote whole albums to:

*One dot has one meaning, two dots have two meanings,
Three dots have three meanings, four dots have four meanings
And how many meanings are there to four sides of gloom?
And how many meanings are there to five degrees of freedom?*



Here, the minimalism of the “Heavy New Wave” is taken to the extreme, the cold horror of the computer paradise is total: everything is calculable — meanings, voids and degrees of freedom! One is apt to recall the “Kraftwerke” refrain: “I am an operator with my pocket calculator” — a lifeless confession of the technocratic conscience.

Or:

We are no slaves, slaves we are not. We are the children of slaves!
We are no Tsars, Tsars we are not. We are the thrones of the Tsars!*

Gor fits into two lines recollections of the revolutionary enthusiasm and a motif of social disillusionment, criticism of Stalinism and disbelief in freedom, clichés of the years of stagnation and a requiem to justice.

Or:

*N-n-now one can r-r-rob, m-m-murder and r-r-rape.
Snow will c-c-cover it all.*

The “black romanticism” of nihilism, transformed into the creed of Yezhov and Beria,** in Gor’s stuttering message, sounds like the scorn of the aggressive tendencies of contemporary punk culture, advocating an end to the outside world.

* The phrase was very popular during the anti-illiteracy drive of the 1920s.

** Ministers of the interior during the Stalin period guilty of carrying out mass repressions.



38
40
42
44
46
48
50
52
54



13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

But — back to the stage, now the venue of a fashion show given by Irina Burmistrova's fashion theater "Blood with Milk" (meaning in Russian "the pink of health") and Lena Zelinskaya's group. "Blood with Milk" is a veteran team with a history of their own. It took its source in Moscow's "ASSA" rock parade, set up by Garik Kolomeichuk, an energetic and prolific New Waver from Khabarovsk. Irina Burmistrova took it up where he left it. The "Blood with Milk" theater is rather traditional avant-garde and its more Leftist-democratic wing than New Wave. Their fashions are fantastic garb — a medley of kitchenware, clysters, roll foil and boxes...

Lena Zelinskaya's group is not really New Wave, either. The "models" are very tall and very skinny, and of brightly sepulchral beauty. The colors are mostly black and white. Huge black berets, outsize white collars, dresses with lavish bustles, the hems raised high and pinned on the thighs, or fastened between the legs in the manner of a sarong. The overall picture is dominated by 16th century motifs with a distinct Spanish coloring. The main thing is everything is very beautiful and ready for wear. The choreography is precise and flashy. Apparently Lena Zelinskaya displays more of a professional interest than a pure avant-garde drive.

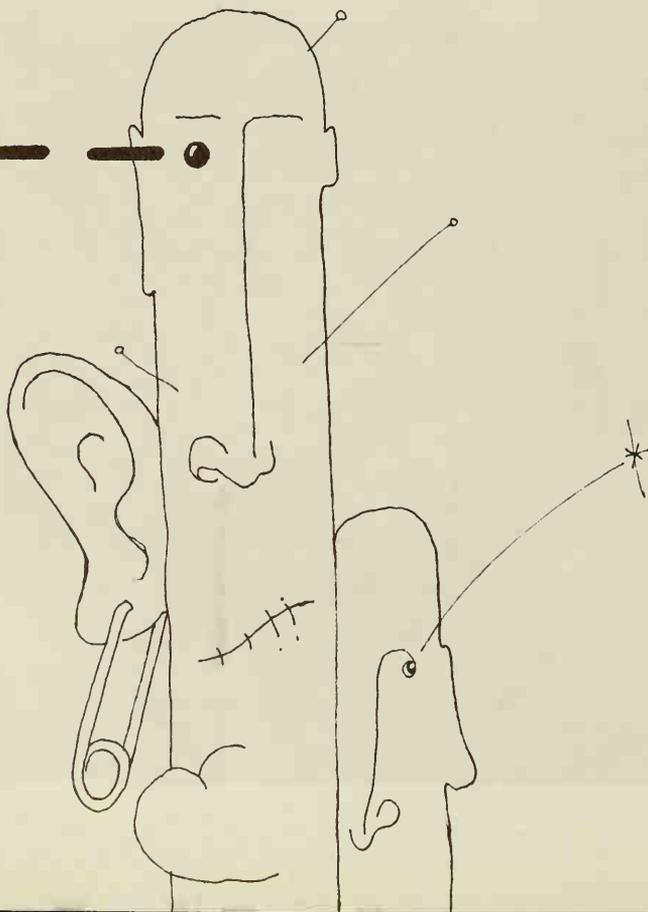




In general, “fun” erases the borderline between avant-garde and amusement, between an object of “pure” art and a fashionable piece of clothing. Often, everything depends on the context: in combination with Kamil and Gor, Zelinskaya’s show is construed as a conceptual performance in a fashion house. On the other hand, it could pass for a purely professional design that doesn’t warrant contemplation.

Avant-garde this time was ... routinely avant-gardish and so familiar that it could impress not even a neophyte. After all, elements of it have now permeated the entire rock culture, the entire contemporary art – so much so that, taken separately, it is downright boring. Well, such is its lot. The very idea of elitarian avant-garde contains an anti-democratic drive – overt, candid, straightforward and deliberate. Metro is unwilling to don the pseudo-democratic rock attire and continues conjuring up paradoxes of the absurd and closed labyrinths of the irrational. Incidentally, such shows are typical. Metro, ASSA and avant-garde fashion designers appear about once in two weeks in a community center, art exhibition, park or theater. Their impact is dampened, novelties are rare. The taste of outrage that accompanied initial actions of 1985 has evaporated completely. It has now turned into a daily necessity, a habit, a refreshing shower, an encounter with the Irrational.

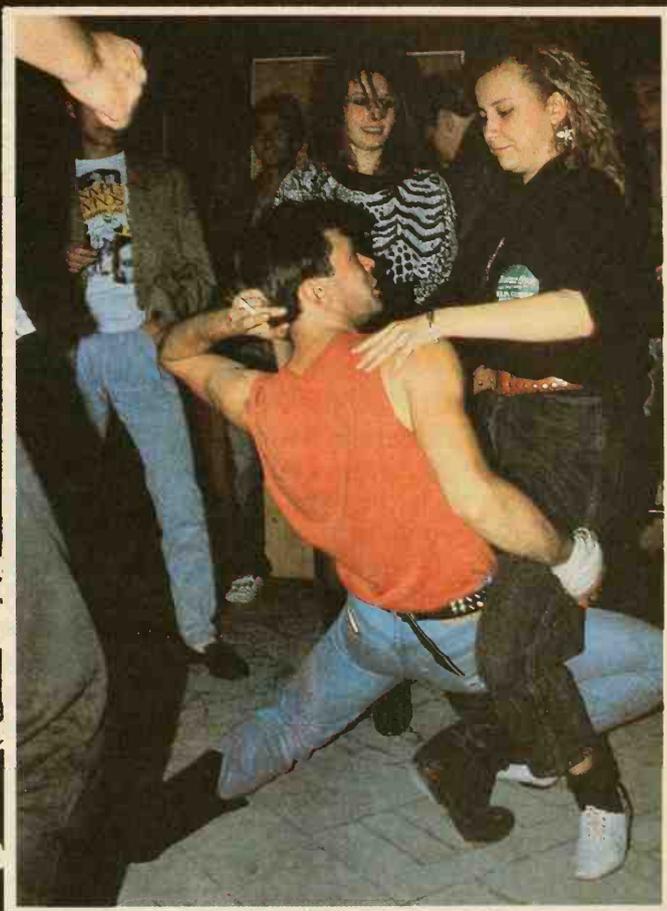
Geydar Jemal



ROCK PHILOSOPHY

interviews with Soviet
rock culture proponents
who claim a theoretical
understanding of the
"youth rebellion"

Introduce
yourself to
ideas of rock-hippies
the credo of a rock punk
the views of a rock New
Waver, the philosophy
of a heavy metal fan
the concept of folk rock



What is a Soviet rock club? Abused metaphors — “rock club is a way of life” or “rock club is a way of thinking” — don’t explain it. So let’s start from the beginning.

The first rock clubs appeared in Moscow in 1967. They were set up by the *obshchepit** and the city’s Young Communist League (YCL) organizations that had found a common tongue with rock music fans. Moscow cafes Vremena Goda (Seasons of the Year) and Sinyaya Ptitsa (Blue Bird) started hosting gatherings of surprisingly disciplined rock fans and musicians. They were quiet and modest and were not so much making music as associating. In their view their activity was in strict compliance with traditional definitions of a club as a “permanent group getting together in specially designated premises”. It never dawned on anybody then that a rock club should have an officially approved code, program and plan. It was just some altruistically-minded activists who organized all those parties and gigs. The sponsors never demanded accounts in writing or reports about the gatherings. However, soon after, rock clubs at the cafes were closed and their membership dissolved. Some attributed the turn-about to the events in Czechoslovakia, others even blamed youth disturbances in Western nations. Some of the clubmen dispersed over innocent rock branches of record collectors’ clubs, while most of the rocksters got entrenched in their homes and began setting up underground recording studios. City streets had by then been saddled with the curfew of the epoch of stagnation.

New Wave bred a new wave of rock clubs at the very start of the 80s. The new crop of youth, hardened in the underground conditions of Moscow kitchens, got enrolled in colleges and decided to introduce their counterparts in the provinces to rock. The organizational initiative came from YCL locals and dormitory councils. The administration of the Moscow Institute of Physics and Engineering was the first to have yielded to their onslaught: a student club, called “Rockwell Kent”, was set up. It became the pivot of Moscow’s rock clubs and even published its magazine *Zerkalo* (Mirror). “Rockwell Kent” sponsored weekly concerts that featured all of the best bands of that time. Even Greek classics contended that practice cannot get far without theory. The rock phenomenon in the USSR demanded

* A network of state-owned cafes, restaurants and dining rooms.

an analysis. As a result, the National Research Center for the History and Theory of Art opened a seminar to deal with Soviet and foreign rock music. It was led, I believe, by Artemy Troitsky. It is no use guessing whether the work of the seminar precipitated the closure of "Rockwell Kent" or the club put paid to the seminar, but the fact is that both got lost in the swamp of Stagnation 1982.

Leningrad has made a name for itself not only through giving the nation "citizens of a new type", but through spawning rock clubs of a new type. First of all, the organizational initiative itself was coming from rock musicians themselves. Second, none other than the regional committee of the Communist Party, upon receiving their collective letter, gave its OK to allot premises for the club in Rubinstein Street. Third, the club members used the virtually unknown term "cost-accounting" — which officials probably did not understand, but which gave them financial independence at the height of stagnation. There were other advantages, too. Be that as it may, the Leningrad Rock Club became the Soviet Union's first organization of unofficial rocksters that acquired juridical status and an account in the local bank.

Thanks to the rock club Leningrad rock outpaced Moscow's to secure undisputed leadership. Leningrad rock had been a leader on various stages until 1983. As it usually happens, the rock club failed to stand the test of success. Even objective observers referred to it increasingly as a "reservation", hosting only "prestigious" events, attended only by "bosses" and "friends at court". The year 1984 was critical in the life of the club, torn apart by clashes between official sponsors and members. Artistry was pushed into the background. By the mid-80s the role of Leningrad rock music began to dwindle. Still, at times of trial Leningraders kept their loyalty to the club that broke the barriers and lent official status to Soviet rock. The Leningrad club has now opened its doors to the whole country. Its groups go on tours, play in rock festivals and cut records at Melodiya. Its role in the history of Soviet rock can be likened to the role of the French Revolution in the history of humanity. But Soviet rock has since witnessed a "great provincial revolution", rock centers mushroomed throughout the country, and Leningrad has irretrievably lost its monopoly in rock culture. The authority of the provinces has acquired impressive dimensions.

The second rock club in the USSR was set up in Riga in 1984 with the help of the city YCL committee. Since its very first days it veered off from the bureaucratic highway onto a democratic path. The leader of Tsement (Cement) Andrei Yakhimovich was instrumental in that. He was elected President of the club.

Perestroika was only dawning in the country, while the Riga Rock Club gave a taste of the late 80s: elections of the club's leadership

by general and direct vote, due account for the opinion of every member, renunciation of administrative methods and the diktat of the Ministry of Culture functionaries and so on and so forth. The spirit of freedom and independence spilled out into the streets of Riga, but, to the surprise of the city authorities, no mass disturbances were in evidence. On the contrary, discipline reigned at rock concerts and other undertakings of the rock club, reminding one of the atmosphere in the Bolshoi Theater where even the whisper of an usher is considered sacrilege. The Riga YCL leaders were surprisingly democratic. Unprecedented, truly exceptional benevolence and a sincere desire to help the club did it. Probably, in the first few months club members would not have managed rock festivals, would not have found the money for equipment and instruments. But the YCL successfully penetrated the bureaucratic defenses, obtained funds, rented premises, printed tickets and supported the rocksters in its press. Perhaps YCL leaders explained all that as “new forms of work with youth” – but the rocksters were none the worse for it.

The third rock club of national prominence was set up in late 1985 in Sverdlovsk under the aegis of the regional committee of the YCL. Sverdlovsk, incidentally, has a good rock tradition: it produced the popular Urfin Juice and then the phenomenally successful nation-wide Nautilus Pompilius. The Sverdlovsk Rock Club has the biggest claim to intellect, since it is headed by professional musical critics and managers, elected by rock musicians quite democratically. YCL functionaries are also on the club council, they vote and have an influence on its work. But even the most radical members of the club admit that the YCLers never “step on the administrative pedals and work on a par with everybody else”.

The situation is funniest with Moscow’s rock clubs. Nobody really counted, but it seems the capital has about 1000 big and small, hot and obscure rock bands. That seems to account for the emergence of three rock clubs in Moscow, or, in the rocksters’ parlance, *rock-tusovka*’s.* However, the consensus is that Moscow rock is stricken by extremely inefficient organization, division and fluctuation, as a result of which Moscow is lagging behind other cities. The pace-setters today are Leningrad, Riga, Sverdlovsk and Novosibirsk. True, conceivably, the situation may change at any moment.

The three *rock-tusovka*’s in Moscow include a rock-laboratory, a professional rock club headed by a Soviet rock veteran, Alexander Gradsky, and the so-called underground, an unofficial rock association that doesn’t have an office in Moscow. As a rule, the underground gets together in rock clubs of towns near

* *Tusovka* combines hanging out and socializing in meaning.

Moscow – Podolsk, Zelenograd and Khimky – that are willing to give shelter to rock bands in opposition to the rock laboratory. The brain drain from Moscow helped the Podolsk Rock Club to achieve nation-wide recognition. In October 1987 the Podolsk Rock Club sponsored a national festival on an open air stage of the city park. Over 20 groups from all the rock centers of the country took part. The 5000-strong party hooved down much of the lawn over the three days there.

The rock-laboratory was born in 1986. According to its founding fathers it should have united burgeoning rock bands that would have been supervised by professional vocalists, musicians, producers and managers. The founders sincerely wanted to create a lab-based artistic school. They instituted an artistic council that approved concerts by bands. The laboratory people kept talking about “cost-accounting” and “self-management”, terms of great currency in the USSR.

Alas! The theory was stillborn, and the tree of practice shot out in a totally different direction. The rock-lab confronted a wall of problems and contradictions. On the one hand, it is part of the administrative structure of the Chief Department of Culture* and is a branch of the Integrated Research and Instruction Center for Cultural Education and Folk Arts. That is it is one-half bureaucratic. On the other hand, the lab’s internal self-management is fully in operation. That is its other half is democratic. And so the rock-lab adopts a democratic decision that is automatically obligatory for all the non-professional rocksters of Moscow, because decisions of the Integrated Center are compulsory for all amateurs. This is where democracy ends. The “sly administrative machine” scares off many bands from joining the lab. Nevertheless, the Moscow lab unites about 200 rock groups. Many of them took to the wing and joined the philharmonic society.

The year 1987 was the year of a rock club epidemic. In many ways, the process was stimulated by the growth of *glasnost*. The sponsors of rock clubs are most diverse, but their list is uninspiring: departments of the Culture Ministry, trade union councils, amateur art centers, folk talent centers and YCL committees. In exceptional cases, rock clubs can be set up at central bodies: there is one at the Central Committee of the Byelorussian Young Communist League.

Then came a milestone in the history of the Soviet rock movement – a national seminar of rock clubs held in Sverdlovsk in October 1987. Nobody had expected the seminar to declare itself a constituent conference of a National Federation of Rock Clubs. Although it was another instance of a transition from quantity to quality. Envoys from 26 rock clubs that had gathered

* A division of the Ministry of Culture.

for the first time did not want to work in the framework of a seminar — but a Federation. Perhaps, it was a logical outcome of the broad representation of formal suits and ties there: the delegates included Culture Department functionaries, officials of city and regional YCL committees, one was an executive of a city committee of the party (!), and also journalists, art critics, researches and a handful of rocksters.

Naturally, the delegates worked out and approved the following documents:

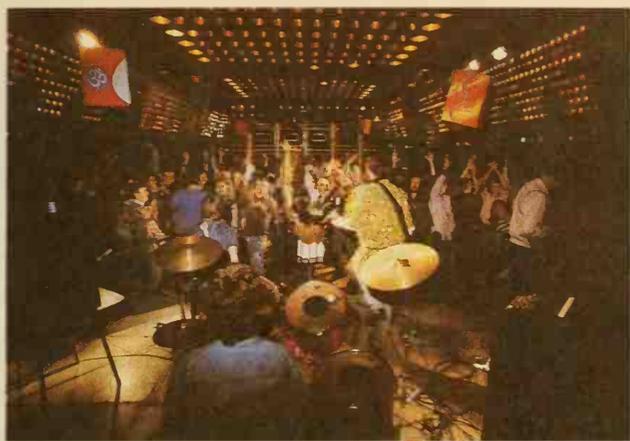
Rules of the National Federation of Rock Clubs,
A Declaration of the Constituent Conference of the National Federation of Rock Clubs,
A Protocol of the Constituent Conference.

Having grown tired of paperwork, they called it a day. But here is something of their output.

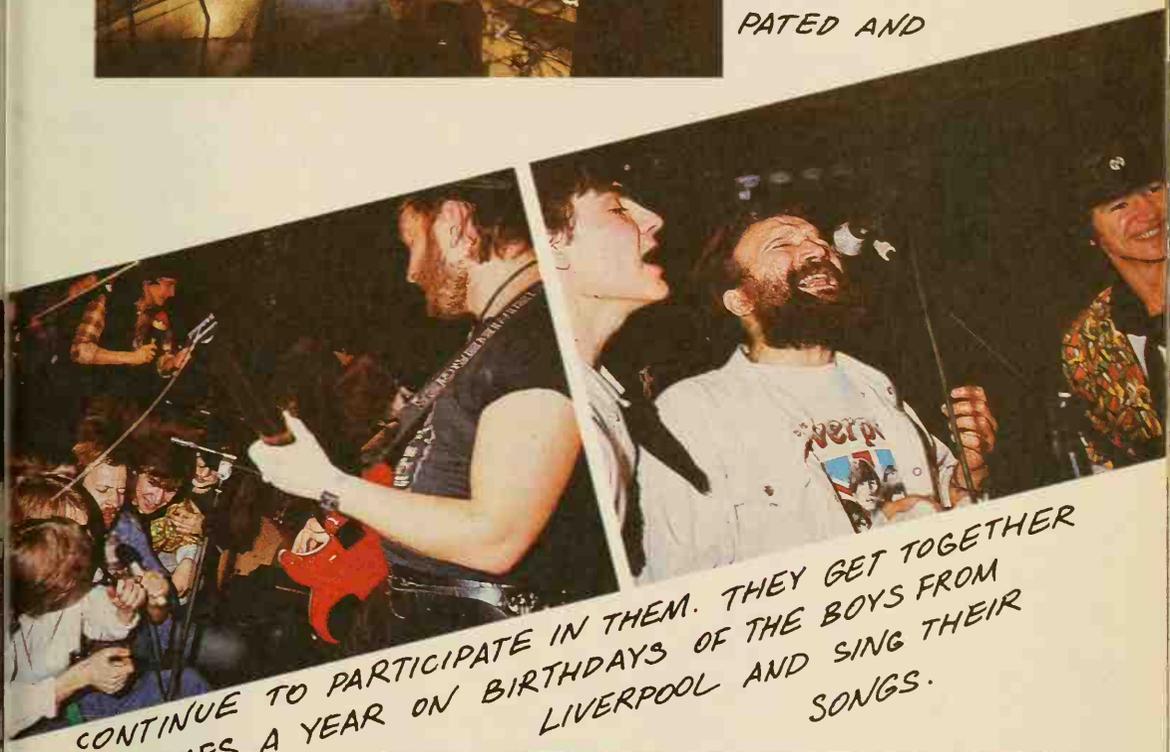
RULES OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF ROCK CLUBS

The National Federation of Rock Clubs is an organization of grass-roots initiative of the working people, uniting rock clubs and other public organizations, promoting the development of Soviet rock music... The Federation's tasks include the coordination of the activities of its members in their work to further develop Soviet rock music with the aim of promoting the social and artistic initiative of the youth and its moral and aesthetic education... The tasks of the Federation are to be pursued with the help of exchanges of progressive experience, the promotion of the best achievements of Soviet rock music, information exchanges, organization of artistic cooperation in rock music between various regions of the country, research into rock music, the development of progressive organizational forms of perfecting the genre, establishment of necessary contacts with state and public organizations... Control over the activities of the Federation shall be exercised by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet... Members of the Federation have the right to participate in general conferences, to elect and be elected to the Coordination Council and propose amendments and additions to the Rules...

And so on and so forth — for another six pages.
Pretty steep *styob*, isn't it...



SINCE 1976 THERE
HAVE BEEN
CONCERTS IN
LENINGRAD THAT ARE
DEDICATED SOLELY
TO THE BEATLES.
MANY MUSICIANS AND
GROUPS HAVE PARTICI-
PATED AND



CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN THEM. THEY GET TOGETHER
FOUR TIMES A YEAR ON BIRTHDAYS OF THE BOYS FROM
LIVERPOOL AND SING THEIR
SONGS.

THIS HAS BECOME
A TRADITION AND
A SPIRITUAL NEED.

THIS HAPPENS
ONLY IN RUSSIA.

IT IS SAID THAT
THERE IS NOTHING
LIKE IT ANYWHERE,
EITHER IN EUROPE,
OR IN AMERICA.



KOLYA VASIN

To the uninitiated Soviet in the street the world of rock music seems mysterious and anarchistic — metallists, Satanists, fans, New Wavers, Breakers, rockers, systemers* and others... Besides musicians, there are thousands of rock fans, for whom rock is the meaning, ideology, passion of and even life itself...

From the point of view of the man in the street a rock session is made up of a weird, motley crowd, quaint and arrogant, so unlike "normal" people. One sports a crest of glue-greased red hair on an otherwise shaven head, another one wears an officer's tunic with one shoulder-board, all covered with Octobrists' stars, ** still another one is almost lost in a huge coat and cap from his granny's chest, another has hair coming down to the middle of his back, another still is all in leather with spikes and pivots, and the guy next to him is for some reason wrapped in foil paper...

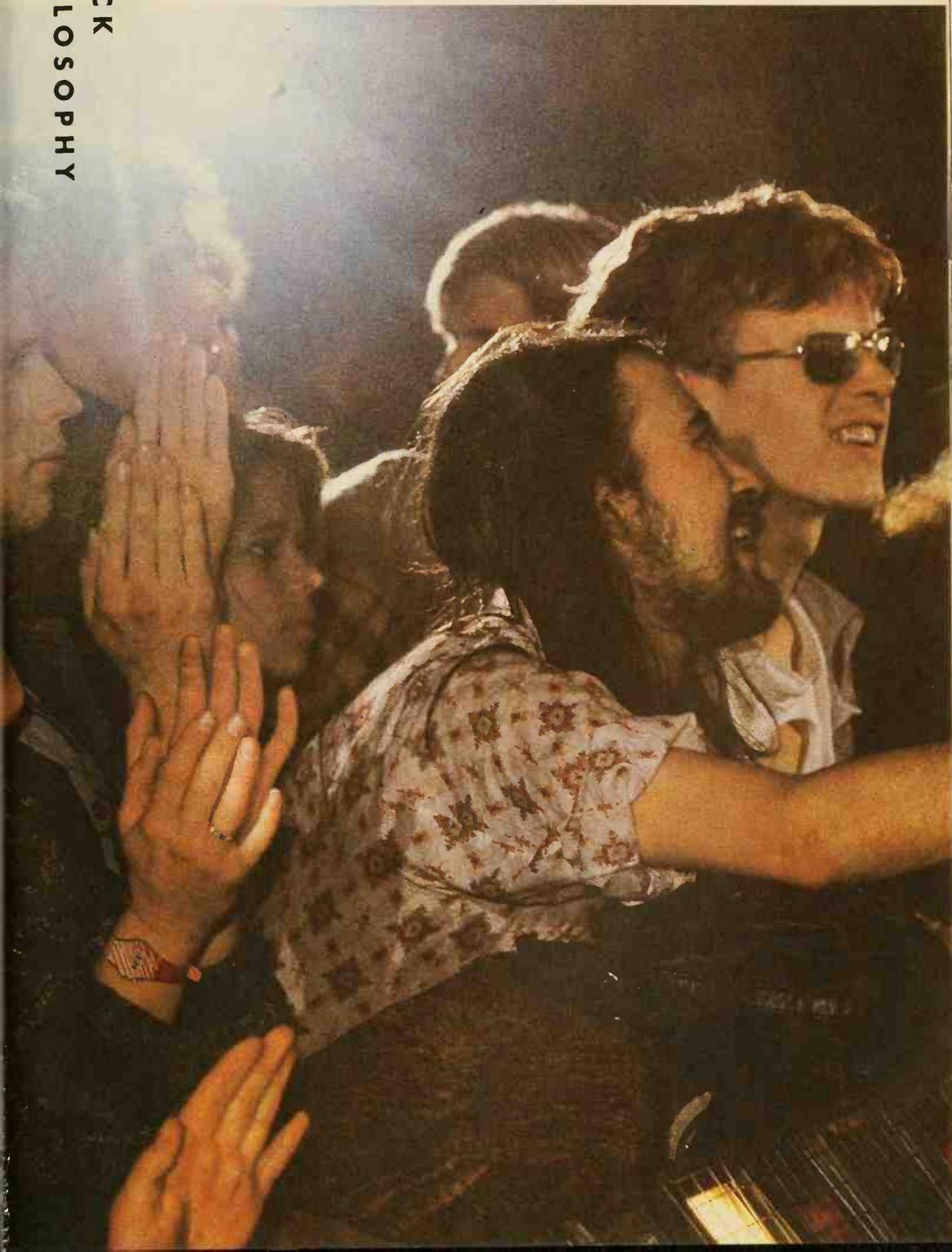
The same applies to music: some shake up the hall and deafen the audience with a wall of noise, others tinkle saccharine sweet melodies of the 1930s, still others croon to the accompaniment of an acoustic guitar, or burst into choral chanting of meaningless, absurd words, making out to be like wax effigies, or striking symbolically chance sounds from instruments and shouting obscenities...

The anarchistic roundelay of masks, costumes, grimaces, hysteria, tragedy and shock is called the "youth rock culture of the age of *perestroika*": it is at the center of heated debates, it is condemned to hell and lauded to the skies. However, neither proponents, nor opponents of rock culture in the USSR have yet provided a description of its styles or musical trends, its ideological or aesthetic peculiarities. Many a spear has been broken over whether rock is the "spiritual AIDS of cosmopolitanism" or a "national phenomenon", whether "the decibels are deleterious to the immature organism of the teenager" or make it stronger. However, Soviet rock incorporates bands, singing in English and outrageously folk in style, drowning out the sound of a plane taking off and whispering to a barely audible melody. All these phenomena, so different but piled together under the heading "rock culture", are therefore in need of further detailed study.

* All the more so that most of the names are not translated into Russian but are English words with Russian endings, e.g. *niyu veivery* (New Wavers).

** Octobrists — primary school pupils' organization, its name is derived from the Great October Socialist Revolution. They wear badges in the shape of a five-pointed star with Lenin's portrait in the center.

Do rock fans themselves make a distinction between the various styles and trends of rock? Or are their preferences in favor of this or that band just a matter of personal taste? Let's hear some of them.



HIPPIES/ PUNK

New

Long hair, glasses, flowers embroidered on his trousers and a big copper cross over a denim shirt:

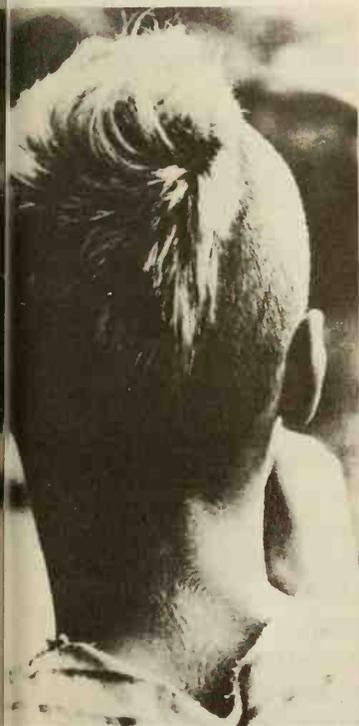


"I am one of the System. A hippie, that is. Of old Western bands, of course, I prefer Morrison, Janis and Jefferson Airplane. Of later bands — Led Zeppelin, King Crimson, psychedelics, in general — Yes, Emerson. Of ours — I like Grebenshchikov, especially his early stuff, Zoopark, Kino, Alice, Nautilus. I don't care a hoot about the vogue. In general I don't like being fed and cynical. And then I think ours are different from those in the West. Ours are mostly hoodlums. And their lyrics are dumb. Hoodlums, that's all. With them it's just developmental — they'll grow up and stop fooling around. While for me the System is everything, it's my life, it's for real. I quit the Philology Department of Moscow University in my fourth year. By the way, I majored in English, learned something in four years. And then I studied it on my own... And I got fed up with the University. Everybody is too big for his boots, they think they are an elite. I sent it to hell and went on a hike to Kazakhstan — on foot, without a kopeck. It's more honest that way. Perestroika? Restructuring? But I didn't construct any of this. One thing is good: they say conscription is going to be scrapped, so folks won't have to spooof in lunny asylums. The place is going to be lousy with hippies..."

METAL

Wave

A skinhead with a violet-orange tuft, wearing an outsize suit. He is pert and spits on the floor:



"I consider myself a punk. All people are shit. They just make hogs of themselves, sleep, tell lies and vote 'for': Before, they voted for stagnation, now they vote for perestroika. But everything is the way it used to be... We, punks, show them with our life and our appearance and music just what kind of people they are, and they don't care. They consider us thick. Hell, let them. So we are thick. It's all right with us. 'I am thick, I forgot it all' — that's our motto. We are going to be disgusting, and let them get fat and continue telling lies, it's their business. I wear YCL badges for styob. People that still believe in that are either accomplished idiots or the worst kind of bastards. They make use of the ideas to push their own careers. And when we put on their badges, nobody even digs it. There goes a punk — a regular beast, brazen mug with saliva dripping — and sports such a badge. What the hell for? Just look in the mirror — maybe you'll get it. We like Brezhnev a lot — he started the fad for badges. He was a regular punk inside!

"But in general, punk is no fashion. Punk is ideology. It is Apocalypse and complete degeneration. It's true not only of this place. Otherwise there wouldn't have been

Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols, or the Clash in England, or Iggy Pop in America. They didn't stamp swastikas because they are fascists. They thought they were living under fascism. Computers, VCRs, villas, coziness and comfort — but in fact the people live like beasts. Man is oppressed, intimidated that he'll be fired, or killed. Thousands of hang-ups. An ordinary man is like a slave there... That's why they got punks there. And it is the same here — they got money, we got slogans. They got economic terror, we got police terror. Same bloody thing. That's what our bands sing about. Narodnoye Opolcheniye, NII Kosmetiki, Tupye, Kali, Chudo-Yudo. They sing about that we are fed up with everything and fear nothing. It is all the same..."

A neatly dressed boy wearing a 1950s-style suit, sharp-pointed lacquered shoes and fake diamonds on his fingers:



"I am a romantic! I prefer riding around in Chaikas with tinted windows and spending nights with colleagues or young ladies in fashionable restaurants, where people without tuxedos or gloves just can't get in.

"I used to be a punk, but not for long. When my parents pointed to the inconsistency of my appearance and the commonly accepted norms of decency, I gave it up right away, and I have been observing the norms of decency ever since then.

"All people dressed this way when my parents were young. I value highly the personal qualities and family advantages of my parents! I want to model my life after them in everything. I not only obey them, but I try to copy all the details, making me like them. The main thing is to unquestioningly subject yourself to the will of the elders, to comply with everything that society demands, to study well, to dress neatly and enjoy yourself in moderation. And then you won't have to notice that the times are changing. Then time stands still and opens up horizons for romanticism... For great, heroic romanticism of day-to-day living: in an office, a research center, at a factory, in a Ministry — any place where we come at the call of our fervent hearts and in the quest of the Unknown, Novel and Beautiful!

"Formerly, young people tried to confront older people, especially bureaucratic moralizers. But that led to nothing — the older folks simply donned popsy jeans, punk jackets and began listening to Leontiev. But that didn't make them any younger: they just brought their rotten stuff into our fad. We don't confront the older folks any longer, we confront the young. We don't want to be young! We are fed up with the problem of fathers and sons. Let there only be a problem of fathers. No sons! They really got my goat with their 'Dad, why do you say one thing and do something completely different?' Anyway the older folks have nothing to say in reply. And we believe they don't have to say anything. Just live the way everybody does. Just be honest, truthful, loyal, sincere, neat, nice, kind, well-fed, rich, young, lucky, tall, strong, decent, independent, respectful and unobtrusive. The only thing is that we are perhaps more romantic and lyrical. After all we are young. By the way, you don't know how I love beautiful music! I adore classical music. But I see nothing wrong in pop music. I like*

* A popular Soviet singer representing pseudo-rock-style.

the rhythms that were popular in my parents' youth — shake, twist, samba.

"There are several groups that are listed in rock only by a misunderstanding. In fact they are true classics. They are highly artistic and morally fulfilling. They are Nicolai Copernicus, Nochnoi Prospekt, Center, AVIA, Megapolis, Bioconstructor. What I like about them is beautiful harmony, especially with Nochnoi Prospekt. The Jungle is very interesting poetically, Nicolai Copernicus is amazingly clear and simple in its lyrics. Sometimes Bravo is nice to listen to — sweet tunes and the mellow voice of Zhanna Aguzarova.*

"Of Western bands I like Talking Heads, Spandau Ballet, Psychic TV, Swans... In a word, everything that is beautiful. Even if the beauty comes from madness."

A black riveted jacket, leather pants, spikes on his wrists:

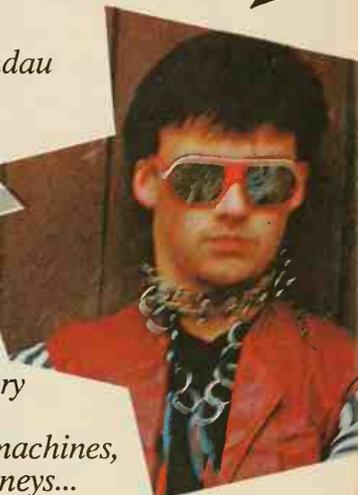
"I am the Satan incarnate. I have been living on Earth for 200 years. The end of the world is coming soon and I came to witness the victory of Evil.

"I am a legion of demons that emerged from machines, from welding, from streetcars, trains and chimneys... The spirits of Hell got into people's souls and they cut into metal. We are all children of metal! And metal is evil.

"Whenever I hear the electric guitar — Satan enters into me. It really gets me high! I rise above the world, humanity... And I am omnipotent. I can kill. I ain't sorry about anything. I am the king of demons and elements.

"I was chucked out of junior college for my garb. Before I didn't know who I was. I just listened to metal, that's all. But when they kicked me out I realized I was Satan! I received my education in the tusovka with Korroziya Metalla (Corrosion of Metal). That band is the boon of our metal. Real metal, and not the gibberish done by Aria, Chyorniy Kofe (Black Coffee) or Dubl I (Take One). They sing about the good, about labor victories — just as ordinary pop slobs — only they try to look like metal. Metal is in vogue — so they started playing it... And they don't know beans about it... Metal is Evil! It is metallic life and Satanism! That's what it is in the West and should be the same here. And those guys are trying to make it into lukewarm brew — neither here nor there... True, there are fools who will listen to anything. They are mostly suckers from the provinces. And do I care about social problems? The first thing that I care for is that the cops shouldn't rope us in. Second — that they

* Incidentally, the music of Nochnoi Prospekt is carnal industrial clangor, the Jungle don't write lyrics, while the texts of Nicolai Copernicus are a hard nut even for expert linguists.



should play metal on radio and TV. Real metal. And third is that they should stop telling lies. Before, I was scared of everything – that the parents would scold me, that I would be kicked out of the college, that I would be pulled in to the police, that I would become a janitor. Now I don't care. I am free.

“And all politics is crap! What the hell do they need those labels for? Fascists, Communists, pacifists, avant-gardists... And we are on our own.”

In big Soviet cities more and more often one gets to see young people displaying folk motives in their clothing – both at rock gigs and simply out in the streets. If they are Russians they would wear Russian shirts with high collars, Tajiks and Uzbeks would wear oriental robes and turbans, Georgians would sport tall astrakhan *papakha* hats and cartridge-belts on their chests. Is it a peculiar Soviet brand of New Wave?



*ESTONIAN
ROCK FANS:
THEY HAVE FOLK
THEIR OWN!*

A girl in a traditional Russian embroidered sarafan:

“We like precise rock. Kalinov Most (Guelder Rose Bridge) are playing tonight. We are their fans. They are typical folk rock. It is time we got back to the roots of our folk music. The Beatles, Rolling Stones and almost all the other English groups took their source in English folk. Nothing appears out of nowhere! And we all too often just copycat Western styles... It's just silly! Everything worthwhile in Russian and Soviet rock is closely linked with traditions. Even many punk groups, such as Zvuki Moo, go back to the traditions of jesters, bazaar shows and Russian ditties. Rock and folk music don't rule out each other. They should augment and enrich each other.”

Alexander Lipnitski, Zvuki Moo:

“Incidentally, the fate of the first rock groups is strikingly similar to that of the only inimitable musical phenomenon in

Russia – skomoroshestvo. Our rock music of the 60s was totally care-free. They played whatever they wanted and wherever they wanted. To school No. 30 where me and Mamonov studied, gangs of the first hippies shuffled in together with rocksters and the fun began!*

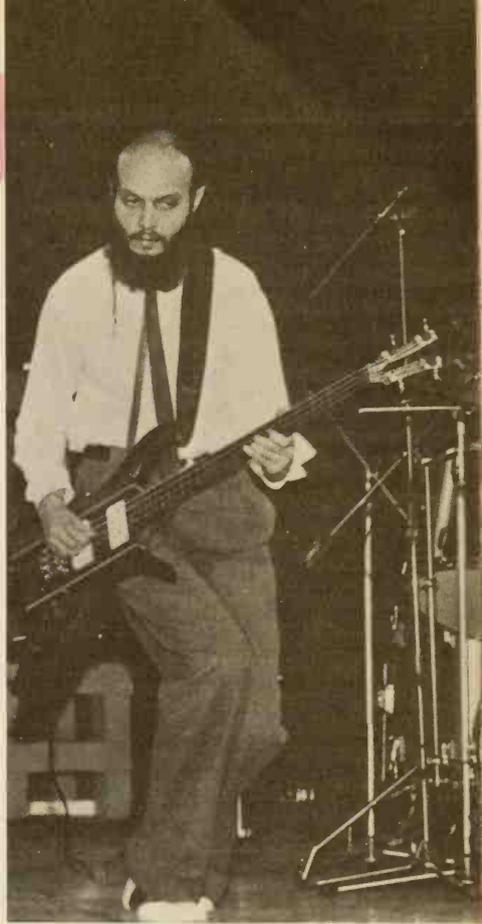
“It was the same with skomorokhi, the jesters, who wandered about and agitated Holy Russia in gangs of up to 100, armed with ‘satanic psalteries, pipes, trumpets and bagpipes’.

“Our ancestors were more resolute in stamping out the heresy. The leader of old believers Archpriest Avvakum in the 17th century confessed: ‘To my village they came, dancers with bears, with tambourines and domras. In my zeal for Christ, I, the sinner, chased them away, broke many of their masks and tambourines all alone in the field, and took two great bears from them. One of the bears I beat so that he barely stayed alive and the other I let escape into the field.’

*“In the second half of the 16th century the Russian Orthodox Church, effectively subjugated by Ivan the Terrible, as an organization was already devoid of any asceticism and devoted itself entirely to promoting the despotic power of autocracy, uprooting pagan songs and establishing calm everywhere. ‘Skomorokhi or Magi ... shall be beaten and dispossessed and chased out of the volost’.** But the hypocrisy of Ivan the Terrible knew no limit: mourning the loosened customs and persecuting satanic games, music and skomorokhi, he was himself an accomplished sinner in all of that, he loved the skomorokhi and pipers that were dispatched to him from Novgorod complete with trained bears.*

∴ The nearest equivalent is jesters.

** An edict of the St. Sergius Trinity Monastery, 1555. The agony of skomorokhi lasted another 150 years and only by the start of the 18th century the church and lay authorities heaved a sigh of relief: the uncontrolled jesters were uprooted.



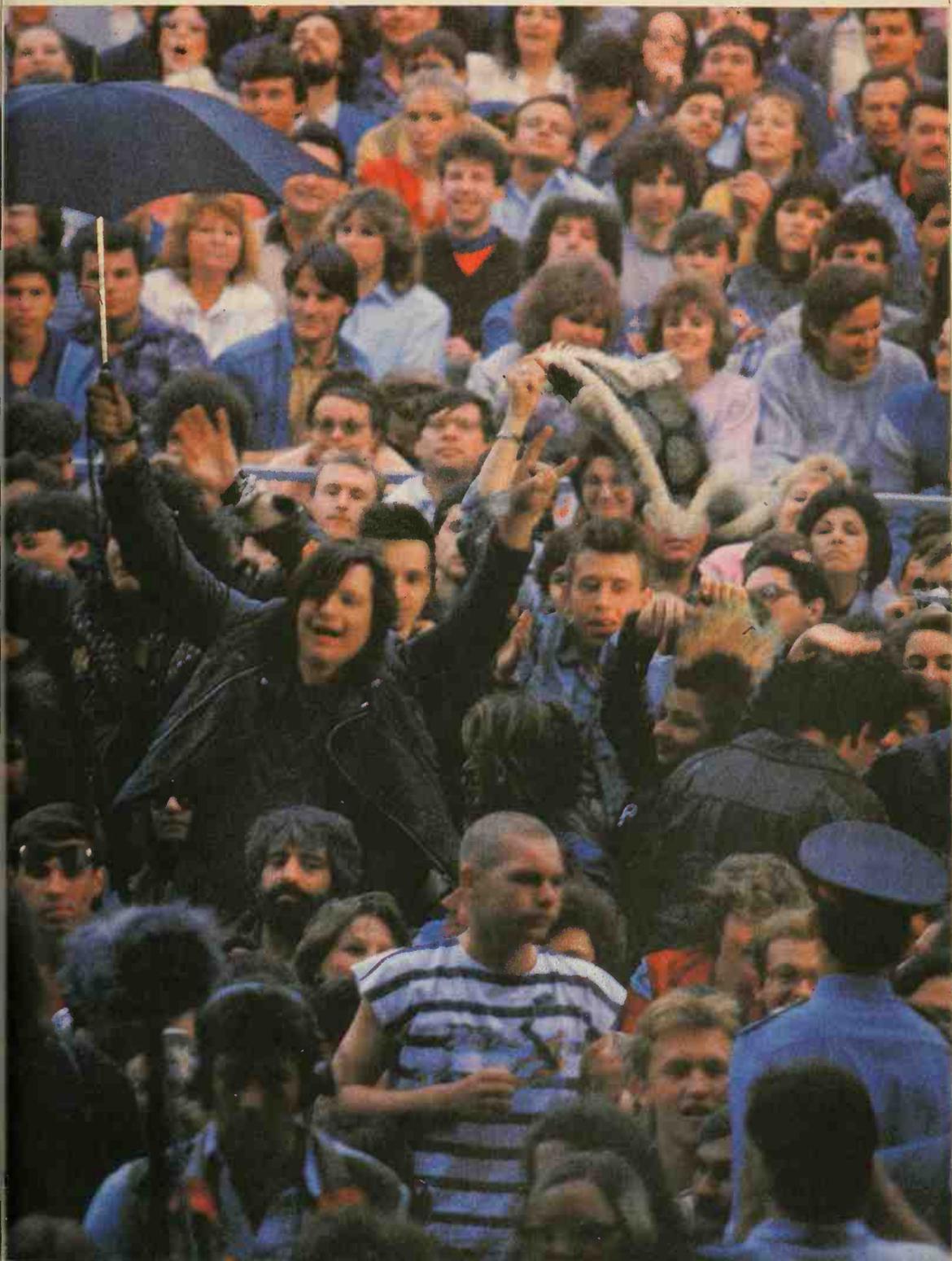
"Folk rocksters are a special trend in the gamut of styles. In some ways we are close to the hippies. The hippies have always had a yearning to travel to villages, small towns. The hippies yearned to get away from big cities into the open, where they inevitably encountered the folk traditions, customs, costumes and religion of our ancestors. There are still villages in Russia where people know old songs and music... Folk rocksters and some hippies find morality and truth in that. But there are quite a few cosmopolitans and intellectuals among the hippies. Everything folk and national is alien to them. They haven't got a feel of their roots. We are completely different from that kind of hippie."

Boys with long hair, wearing Russian high-collar shirts and bast shoes, with electric guitars, whose belts feature Russian national design... They are the Kalinov Most, one of the brightest and most popular folk-rock groups in the Soviet Union. Surprisingly, the blaring of speakers doesn't deprive their music of its national coloring. The vocals of Revyakin combine a Siberian accent, the breadth of a Russian epic, social protest and admiration for Jim Morrison — a brother in spirit the other side of the border, a symbol of purity and tragedy to all hippies of the world. Folk rock also helps in understanding other styles. Russian folklore reveals a striking regularity: most of the Russian folk songs are profoundly tragic. The famous "Steppeland All Around", "Hey, Barguzin Wind" and church chants and Russian romances of the 19th century — they are all imbued with sadness, and a premonition of hard trials and inevitable end. Even in ditties and folk humor the grotesque and bold gaiety shroud the tragedy of the absurd, horror of the conventional and death. Optimistic, buoyant music, historically, was never native to Russia. Asserted in Soviet society by Stalinist totalitarianism, it never reflected the true mood of the people. Therein lies the intense interest of young people in the folk rock of the Kalinov Most. The tragic disposition of folklore merges with the tragedy of the young generation — the hippies, punks and even New Wavers. It is the spirit of tragedy that unites them all and makes them listen to the same bands. Despite the differences, despite the frequent lack of understanding of each other, youth rock culture is consolidated by not a formal, but an inner spiritual principle of Common Tragedy and Common Misfortune.

Nautilus Pompilius says about it:

"The Holiday of Common Misfortune is when a really Great Misfortune comes."

A punk, rushing from a drunken orgy to a suicidal attempt; a hippie, taking trips with the help of hitch or grass; a New Waver, a romanticist and proponent of scientific and technological progress that he believes leads us all to a precipice;

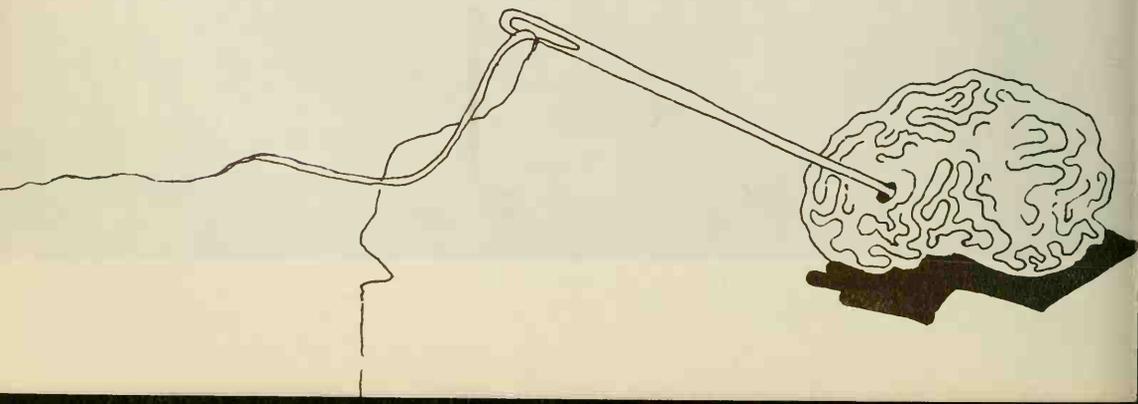


a folk rockster, seeking in the ethnic tradition an answer to his questions, going back to the archaism of the Russian Orthodox Church and pagan forms of being – all of them celebrate the Common Misfortune Holiday in rock culture, they are all its guests and prisoners.

We talk about the Common Misfortune, Tragedy and Alienation of the lost generation as underlying the youth rock culture in the USSR in the second half of the 1980s. But the rock movement in the USSR embraces hundreds of thousands of young people: are they all aware that they are lost? Of course not. Many go in for rock and get to be punks or New Wavers by inertia – after their neighbors, friends and elder brothers. And of course an enhanced level of reflection is rare. But getting to be fans of bands and styles the young people get involuntarily involved in the energy and ideology currents denoted by those bands and styles. So the fans of the “easy listening”, conformist Rondo, caught by the superficial fake, sooner or later begin to dig the grotesque and keenly social Bioconstructor, doing New Wave Hyperhard, and then Nicolai Copernicus, the intellectual and aesthetic leader of New Wave Cool. Or, caught on by the counterfeit money of Master, formerly a variety stage band, they finally become initiated to the Corrosion of Metal with everything that goes with it.

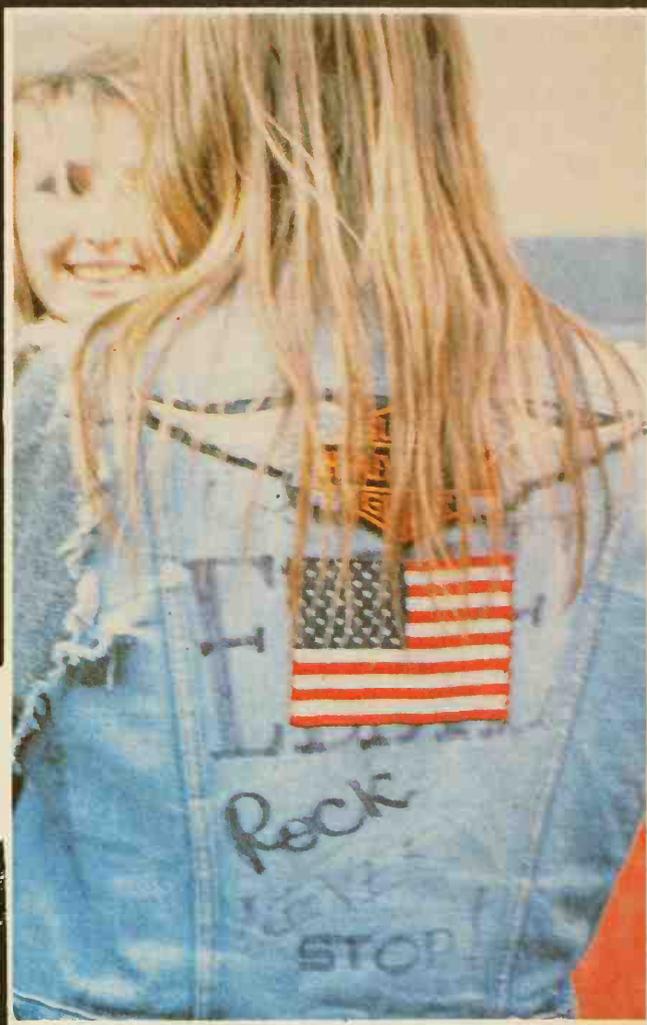
Of course, not all young people like rock, and not all young people that like it really dig it. Still, the tragedy and the sense of Common Misfortune gave birth to all of the best in contemporary Soviet rock culture and produced a crop of non-conformist contestants. And the emasculation and destruction of this spirit gave rise to conformist rock culture which also exists and vigorously develops, unaware of misfortune or grief. True creators and conscientious bearers of the Youth Rebellion remain the keepers of its purity. Today and always they are a minority. But their conviction, belief, strength, hope and desperation trigger off in the young a chain reaction. And increasingly more young people begin to understand the message of rock ideology. Increasingly immersed in the Tragedy, they open up the eyes of our lost generation.

Alexander Dugin



ROCK DANGER

a guide to the viewpoints of opponents of rock in the USSR, among them officials and clergymen, members of fringe groups and Philistines, fans of classical music and easy listening

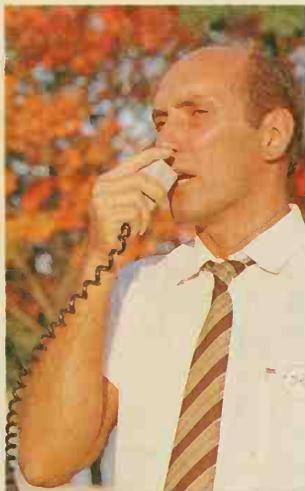


Acquaint yourself with criticism of rock from the standpoint of

- ideology
- bureaucracy
- mysticism
- culturology
- psychology
- music theory

Rock is poison!
Rock is disease!
Rock is a danger!

Rock has come under scathing criticism in the USSR since wearing its waddling clothes. The kind of names slung at Soviet rock bands and their fans can make you cringe: “cosmopolitans”, “degenerates”, “accomplices of imperialist intelligence services”, “ideological subversives” and even “fascists”. Rock music was branded a “cheap surrogate of art”, “primitive hack-work”, “a new narcotic”, “catalyst of hysteria and crime” and “social calamity”... The ranks of rock’s opponents, critics and enemies included Communist Party and YCL functionaries, Culture Ministry officials, philosophers, art historians, physicians, police officers, lovers of classical and folk music, psychologists, scientists and ordinary Philistines. Waves of rockophobia ran over the youth press. Antirock campaigns often ended in noisy clampdowns on underground rock gigs, recording studios and clubs, arrests of rock fans and fines for rock musicians. But even now, when glasnost and perestroika stopped the onslaught and the situation is becoming normal, attacks on rock continue, the criticisms getting to be more profound and radical.



A member of the unofficial public organization
Popular Front:

“Actually, I am not a rock fan. But as a Marxist philosopher I am interested in the phenomenon of the Soviet establishment’s recent struggle against rock culture. Also interesting is the view that dominated the minds of party and YCL circles that rock music is not appropriate for Soviet youth for ideological, aesthetic, psychological, medical and other reasons. But if one takes a closer look at the ideology of the rock movement – the similarity between the rock philosophy and many Communist ideas is striking. Rocksters hate the State as a system that, according to Marx, should disappear under Communism. Rock

music is based on the psychological stimulation of the masses, the fusion of people into one huge organism and the overcoming of alienation between the individual and society. But that is totally in tune with Communist ideals. Rock hates capital and private property: members of rock communes have always clubbed together helping each other. Rock aesthetics is imbued with futurism and is closely linked to the French 'Communist surrealism' of Breton and Aragon and the experiments of LEF, RAPP and Meyerhold**... The erotic freedom, professed by rock ideology, was also an element of Communist revolutionism. Recall Kollontai's 'glass of water' theory and the 'Down with Shame' mass movement.*** The rocksters' aggressiveness is a theatricalized version of the 'Red Terror'*

of the first years of the proletarian dictatorship... All that was inherent in the traditional rock of the 1960s and 1970s. It is also to be found in the new upsurge of rock in the 1980s. Besides, punk and New Wave have set a stable fashion for 'Communist symbols'.

The rocksters' arsenal features sickles, hammers, stars and portraits of the leaders of the world's proletariat. So why has a phenomenon, so close to Communist ideology been officially branded not only 'profoundly alien' in the USSR, but also 'destructive', 'subversive' and 'hostile'?

"I do not think we will be able to understand this paradox unless we examine the profound social transformations that occurred at crucial moments of Soviet history – in 1936, 1948 and 1965. Those years marked shifts to the right in home and foreign Soviet policies. In 1936 Stalin finalized the primacy of state interests over public interests. That signalled a turn to values that had nothing in common with Communism, to a 'socialist' brand of archaic morals, to the development of administrative-bureaucratic machinery, to 'socialist realism', to great power ambitions. From 1936 everything that bore on the Communist line was considered 'leftist', while any attempt at the slightest democratization was pinned down as 'bourgeois fascism'. In 1948 the short-lived postwar thaw ended in Zhdanov's speech that finished off the liberal literary magazines and anathematized the work of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova. In 1965, after Khrushchev's attempts to turn back to Lenin's track, Brezhnev put Soviet society into a 20-year period of stagnation. "The emergence of an interest in rock in the USSR in the 1960s came at a time when the pseudo-monarchist state totalitarianism had just donned a new version of a 'Communist theory' attire. The Gulag was replaced with mental institutions or exile from the country, while the Stalinist military tunic gave way to the square suit of the Brezhnev bureaucracy.

* Avant-garde literary-artistic associations in the USSR in the 1920s.

** Founder of Soviet avant-garde theater.

***A Bolshevik revolutionary, Kollontai believed that changing a sexual partner in Communist society would be as easy as drinking a glass of water. "Down with Shame" was an organized movement of streakers, advocating sexual revolution.



“Rock culture served as a litmus paper of Soviet ideology. The authorities’ treatment of rock was perhaps more indicative than their treatment of dissent. Most of the dissidents did not adhere to the Communist platform. In the rare instances of polemics with them, the officialdom resorted to ready-made recipes, borrowed from political arguments of Marx or Lenin. Rock culture never advanced any practical principles. Outwardly, its proponents were ordinary young people, brought up in line with the compulsory Soviet curriculum. Inwardly, the basic features of that culture coincided with the notion of ‘building Communism’ as understood by the classics of Marxism.”



“The Brezhnev establishment’s attitude to rock belied the hypocrisy of the ‘Communist’ declarations. In fact, rock culture, while not claiming a complete political program, was an adequate component of the ‘ideal’ society of justice – Love, Freedom and Equality.

“The advent of perestroika marked a total change with regard to rock. Complete acceptance is perhaps not the word – but toleration is certainly there. Rock concerts have been legalized, and rock music is all over the TV and the radio. Alternatively dressed young people roam the streets of Soviet cities. The police are increasingly acquiescent. But the argument over rock has flared up with renewed force. The aversion toward rock has united people of completely different cultural and political outlooks. Now one can speak of the emergence of an anti-rock ideology as an essentially united movement. In the years of stagnation the criticism of rock boiled down to meaningless clichés. With regard to Western rock, criticism was levelled at the rocksters’ romantic illusions, or the fact that rock was a surrogate for Revolution, distracting the young from class struggle. With regard to Soviet rock fans, the critics labelled them renegades and Westernized Philistines. Now they have begun calling a spade a spade and the charges against rock are clearer. The possibility of a normal debate is backed by the fact that the Communist Party has adopted a course of democratic pluralism. There is no longer any need to drape the criticism of rock into pseudo-Marxist robes. The authorities are more tolerant of viewpoints disagreeing with party dogmas. That’s why many opponents of rock have had a chance to speak their minds. A look at the anti-rockers’ logic will reveal fascinating features of what was called Soviet ideology and what it has turned into.

“Opponents of rock can be divided into four groups. The first includes those who don’t want perestroika – they are the so-called economic and ideological mafias. The second group are people profoundly alien to the Communist ideology. The third – people of the older generation, kept by inertia in the culture of the stagnation period. Their unacceptance of rock is emotional and aesthetic. The fourth group includes young people that identify themselves with totalitarian socialism, such as the ‘Afghans’, ‘Lyubers’** and many YCL functionaries. I believe they are all united in opposing the truly Communist ideals and non-acceptance of Marxism, or in adhering to the ‘barrack-room socialism’ interpretation of the Marxist theory.”*

* Veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan.

** Members of ideologically loose sports groups (unofficial).

One can hardly find a bureaucrat that would be outspoken about his disgust for rock. One of the Communist Party documents stated unequivocally that rock is an admissible phenomenon. The bureaucrat, therefore, draws the conclusion that opposing rock may be wrong. But he finds it hard to get reconciled with his ideological defeat.



Here is a functionary responsible for musical activities in a district of Moscow:

“Overall, rock is a positive phenomenon – with the exception of instances of extremism. When there is too much democracy it spills over

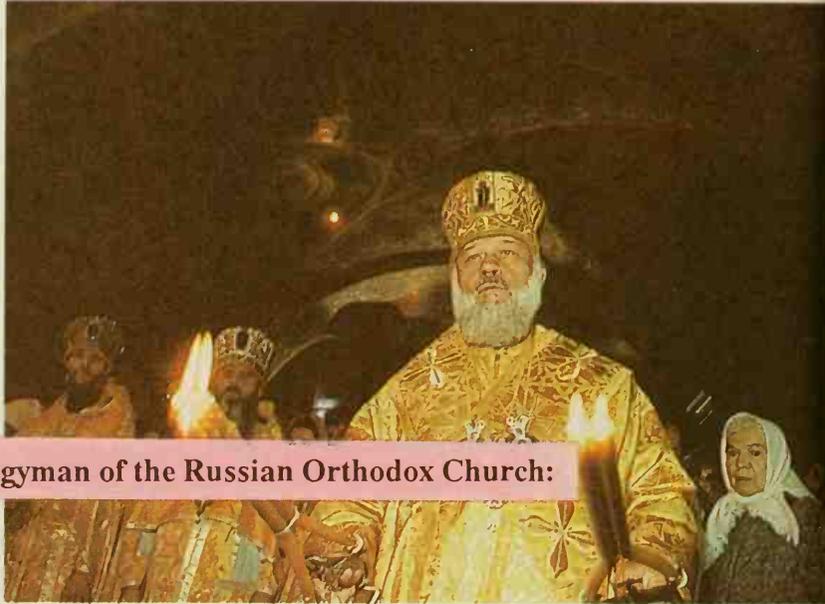
into dissoluteness and permissiveness, and that ... you know... Take, for instance, the group Center. They are talented guys, even though they have no formal musical education. But their lack of depth gets them into thoughtlessness, pure and simple. Take their escapade with the Song of the Rouble. Of course, it is infantile, but the message is downright offensive! They come out with a painted ten-rouble note. It is senseless, but they discredit the purchasing power of the Soviet currency. They don't even know what they are doing... We forbade such acts, and they pretended to be very offended, saying we infringe on their artistic freedom. So there is just one step from true democracy to loose morals.

“As a rule, rock concerts go well. No violations of order – though sometimes they do occur. Once, a group of teenagers tried to dance in front of the stage at a Bravo concert. But we always have the police at rock concerts. It doesn't always go smoothly. The time isn't easy. And we get more and more problems every day. New bands keep cropping up, and the names they think up – just can't get them through your head. People's Militia, Evil Spirits, The Dumb or plain profanity. So we have to work against such deviations.

“Honestly, I prefer Kobzon, Leschenko, Pugacheva and new variety stars. To be quite honest, I don't think I am young enough for rock.”*

* Official mainstream singers.

Even though the Church is officially separated from the State in the USSR, its point of view has been getting increasingly weighty and respected. Samizdat copies of a Canadian priest's book, criticizing rock from the positions of mysticism, have been spread in all of the major cities.



A clergyman of the Russian Orthodox Church:

"I, and all children of the Russian Orthodox Church cannot be but aggrieved by the spread of rock music. It cannot be otherwise, since advocates of this music are deprived of virtues and develop vices. The music itself and its words contain a direct invitation to sin. Special anxiety is caused by the fact that the young do not fully realize what rock music leads them into. They consume it indiscriminately, and the ideals of God, Kindness and Light disappear from the youngsters' souls. Children, attracted by rock, lose faith, and without faith no one can live a day or even an hour. "Rock concerts are always accompanied with bare debauchery, sin and blasphemous obscenities. The sight of it is really frightening. What will be the life of those that spend their time today in dark halls, filled with smoke, filled with the clangor of monstrous music, bearing no image, thought or feeling? Who will plant in their souls seeds of spiritual zeal, love of kindness, purity and righteousness? Rock does the opposite.

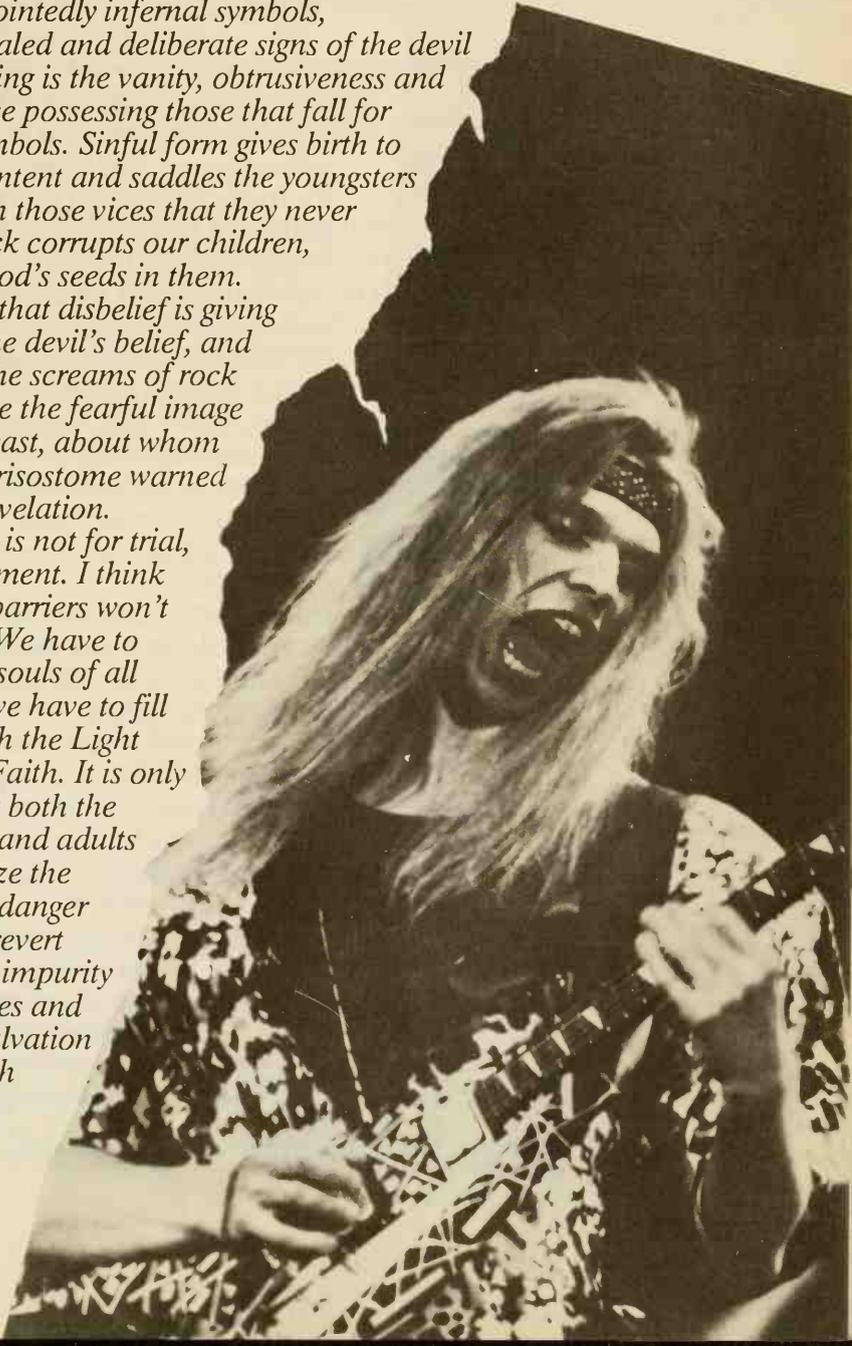
"I don't wish to judge all stricken by this spiritual disease. God alone knows who is the victim and who is the tempter among them. And may be with God's help many of them will leave this path and turn to the Truth, repent their delusion and purify their souls. But as a Christian I say that rock music displays features whereby one can recognize the enemy of the human race, Satan.

It is Satan that marked himself evident in the form and contents of rock, in the clothes, grimaces and behavior of musicians, in the sinful fervor that imbues the youngsters that have fallen for rock. The evil is multifaceted and treacherous, and if the enemy of the human race can no longer provoke people into destroying shrines and cathedrals and the rape of faith, he then chooses another road and lures the young onto the precipices of disbelief, vice, impurity and dejection. And dejection is a great sin for an Orthodox Christian.

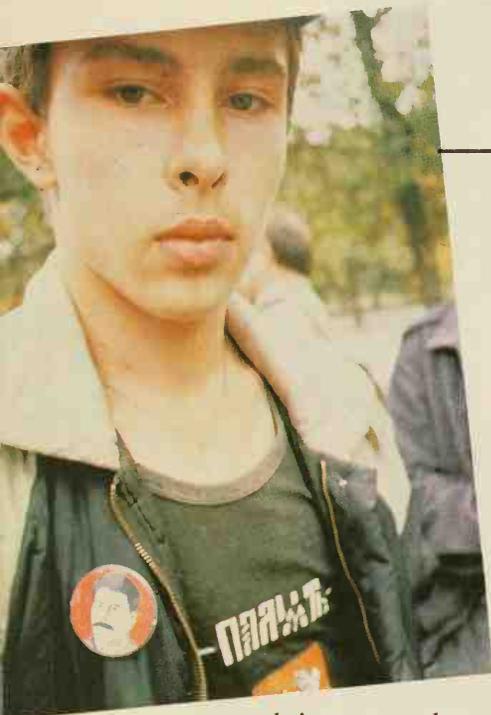
“Demonic signs in rock are self-evident. One cannot help noticing them. The ‘horns’ gesture, black leather clothes, metal spikes — these are all pointedly infernal symbols, unconcealed and deliberate signs of the devil. Frightening is the vanity, obtrusiveness and arrogance possessing those that fall for these symbols. Sinful form gives birth to sinful content and saddles the youngsters with even those vices that they never had. Rock corrupts our children, killing God’s seeds in them.

It seems that disbelief is giving way to the devil’s belief, and behind the screams of rock idols I see the fearful image of the Beast, about whom John Chrisostome warned in his Revelation.

“Church is not for trial, but treatment. I think bans or barriers won’t help us. We have to cure the souls of all people, we have to fill them with the Light of True Faith. It is only then that both the children and adults will realize the spiritual danger of rock, revert from the impurity themselves and attain Salvation and Truth in God.”



Conservatives, affiliated with the National-Patriotic Front "Pamyat" (Memory), favor a return to archaic ideals, having little in common with Communism. "Pamyat" is equally hateful toward rock and free-masonry and the authors of the Northern rivers project.* "Pamyat" believes in the power of the State and the Nation, whose enemies, they maintain, are cosmopolitan forces, spliced with Zionist capital.



This is a member
of the National-Patriotic Front
"Pamyat":

"Rock music is not simply a peculiar youth fad. It is profound and fearful cultural subversion: A young man or woman going in for rock cannot be a patriot and citizen of his or her country, being unable to adhere to proper moral principles. Rock weakens the spiritual strength of a person in confronting hostile forces. Legitimate condemnation of the crimes that for decades were perpetrated in this country acquires with rock musicians the character of a cynical witches' Sabbath and malignity. Instead of cutting through to the Truth, drowned in blood and in camps, instead of asserting love of Light and understanding Russia's great history, instead of seeking strength in it to overcome the tragic past — instead of it all rock leads the youth into anarchy, witlessness, debauchery and drugs. Rocksters develop a new type of individual — arrogant, rude, cynical, aggressive and, most important, superficial. The dumb music fills and maims the soul of the adolescent. Rock culture offers dozens of false alternatives. Those who stifled all that was pure and wholesome under Stalin and Brezhnev are doing it still — though their means are different. The place of variety shows with bohemian debauchery and the musical mafia had been taken by the immoral ethos of rock. What was done discreetly before is done now openly and impudently. The same applies to the cooperatives. The moguls of the shadow economy, linked with the underworld, have turned into respectable cooperators. Petty black marketeers have turned into brokers and businessmen. It is absolutely the same with rock music. It gets the green light on television and the radio, in clubs and concert halls. Somebody benefits from giving official

* The project envisaged the turn of part of the flow of northern rivers to the South of the USSR. Was scrapped as ecologically and economically erroneous.

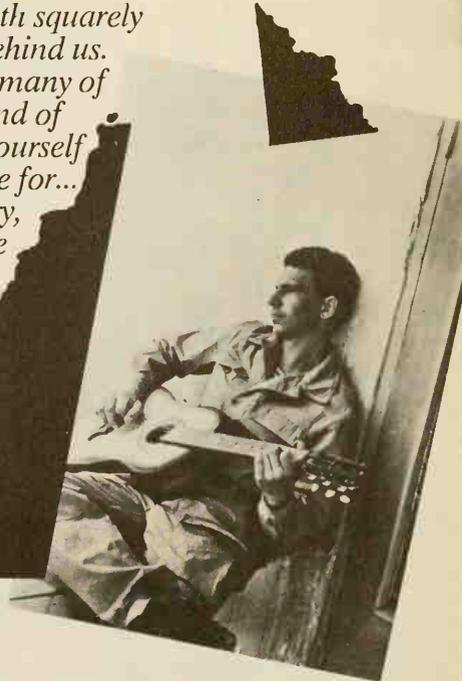
recognition to this muddy current. Some people make money from it, others peddle themselves as liberals, still others get their doctorates on it. But the main thing is that rock renders our children impassive. It sucks up their energy, making them indifferent and stupefied. The rocksters' vulgar collectivism destroys the sense of civic individuality. Our children are turned into bio-robots and automatons. We are convinced that definite forces are behind the propaganda of rock. One rockster spilled the beans, saying the name of the band Master meant a degree of Masonic initiation and the musicians knew about it. Besides, rocksters are set against patriots, those who care about the destiny of Russia. Many rock groups have been slinging mud at 'Pamyat'. And some of them wear rings with Zionist stars.

"Free-masonry is a mafia, endangering humanity, states and peoples. It benefits by rock music, this AIDS of the spirit, turning the younger generation into cosmopolitan beasts – impudent, noisy, but servile and dumb."

Older people don't like rock for historical reasons. But they cannot account for their attitude to it. When asked – "What is it that you don't like about rock?", they say sullenly – "Everything!" They advocate a crusade against rock, demanding that it be abolished, banned or that the rocksters should be imprisoned or even shot!

And this is a veteran of the Afghan war:

"Back in Afghan when we looked Death squarely in the eye, we knew our country was behind us. Her image was grand and solemn. To many of us she was like a 'paradise lost', the land of peace and purity. When you commit yourself to death you should know what you die for... And we had the answer: for the country, for peace, for the people. When I came back I realized it was a hoax. Nobody can tell us what we were dying there for... Nobody can say who sent us there... And here, back home, we find these brazen-faced and cowardly youngsters. They are scared to cut a finger, but they revel in the garb age heap of their rock music. And the country

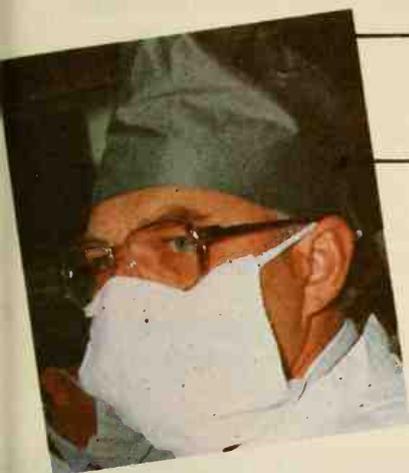


is totally different from the one we were giving our lives for. Every punk or metallist is like a slap in the face to me and my friends. To be honest, I would never give up my life for scum like them. They are so much like those who spit on us, those who don't give apartments or pensions to the invalids. Their parents bailed them out, all those metallists, punks and hippies. They sat it out behind our backs. Rock is their way of hiding and masking their cowardice and treachery. Their guitars bellow in order to suppress the groans of our wounded. They smoke grass so as not to see the stumps of our arms and legs. They make out to be strong because they are ashamed of their weakness.

"The Afghan vets also have their own music groups, but they are not rock. They sing about the pain, death and trial. They sing about our longing for our country, the one we never found. Our groups continue fighting — against those who double-crossed us here in the rear. I guess after Afghan we are only capable of fighting. Until the world gets back to what it was before Afghan. But that world will have no place for rock. It will have Russia, patriotism, discipline, courage and loyalty — but not rock."



There is another dimension to rockphobia which, as distinct from all the others, doesn't enjoy a serious following and rests upon a sound scientific basis.



This is a psychiatrist who has carried out a psycho-physiological study into elements of rock music:

“Rock is a complex phenomenon. Despite its consumer orientation, it holds quite a few mysteries that cannot be explained on the level of routine musicology or primitive sociology. For instance, how can one account for rock’s stable interest in non-traditional religions? Why is it that rock pieces, devoid of talent or aesthetics, exert such a powerful emotional influence on teenagers? Why is psychic destabilization, as a consequence of rock

addiction, spreading among young people? It is also worth noting that those young people are aware of the process, they welcome and canonize it in rock mythology. Where does the unfeeling and somber aggression originate in the atmosphere of rock concerts?

“Rocksters themselves and the ideologists of the rock movement lash out against society, engaging in discourses about alienation, violations of social justice, about the feeling of being lost. Of course, their criticism contains a grain of truth. Contemporary society is far from ideal. It has been successful only in proclaiming ‘humanization’: ‘Everything for man, everything for the benefit of man.’ Hence, any criticism of contemporary society is readily accepted as fair. But then – why does rock music confront the alienated outside world with its own perverted plebeian aesthetics? Why do the rocksters respond to the ecological catastrophe of civilization with the audio-catastrophe of their own equipment? Why does rock culture attempt to cure soullessness with immorality, orgies, and vulgar and derisive mysticism?

“Love of rock and the voluntary commitment to the forces of rhythmic decay and disintegration of the personality are based on two related psychological phenomena – criticism and destructivity. Criticism of the lowly, mean and soulless leads not to the affirmation of the Lofty, Noble and Soulful, but on the contrary – to revelry in one’s own lowliness, meanness and soullessness. That is a singularly destructive tendency. Punk, proto-punk and post-punk along with New Wave are aware of it. Mainstream and the hippies are not.

“The criticism and destructivity of rock culture could never have acquired more than marginal significance if it were not for the means at its disposal. What makes rock so effective is its appeal

to the unconscious and its exploitation of young people's peculiar position in modern society. The activation of the unconscious is modelled through a rhythmic structure, borrowed from African folklore. Students of archaic religions have shown that ritual music is based on an almost mathematical knowledge of the human psyche, of its rhythms, features and functions. However, the awakening of the vital force during an orgy is accompanied with a special warm-up of the audience. It is done so that the vital force, released with the help of rhythm, should not get out of control and lead to disintegration of the personality. Rock does not offer similar preparation of the audience, so the stream of unconscious energy overwhelms the young, subjugates them and hypnotizes their will and consciousness.

"The metronomics and peculiar pattern of African ritual rhythms became the hub of rock music. As distinct from jazz, where



FOLLOWING LENIN'S PATH, THE PATH OF THE REVOLUTION-
TYPICAL OFFICIAL SOVIET SLOGAN

the African prototype has been washed out by improvisation and European arrangement, rock retains its canonical commitment to a rhythmic standard and instrumental minimalism. Tens of thousands of rock songs are rhythmically similar. And still, their number continues to grow. In that sense, rock is just as conservative as ritual shaman folklore. This is explained by its very essence — the need to activate the energy of the unconscious.

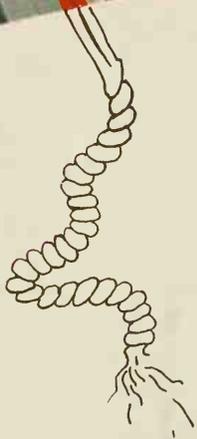
“In their compositions, rock groups employ the most diverse instruments and musical patterns. What do most rock musicians resort to to expand their potential? The entire history of rock gives a single answer: the Orient, archaism and non-traditional religions. That is, the interests of rocksters do not go beyond the area of activation of the unconscious. Sitar, gongs, tambourines, glossolalia of Buryat shamans, rhythms of Zen Buddhist practices and Sufistic melodies — all this is adopted and digested by rock, losing its peculiar features. But if the musicians undertake to adapt European harmonies or Christian hymns, such experiments place the group in question outside of rock. Ritual psychedelics is a must in rock, it is evident even in its commercial, ‘easy listening’ forms. It is the psychedelics of the orgy that form the attributes of rock, define the ways of its development, aesthetics and textual contents.

“Rock is a pseudo-religious movement, based on a psychosomatic change of the personality and on overcoming social traumas through releasing the irrational in the human being. Rock attracts like a magnet everything that disintegrates the human ego, acquired through religion, state and society. That is why rock culture is linked with neo-spiritualism — be it transcendental meditation, Zen Buddhism, neo-shamanism or occultism. Characteristically, the accent is always on the practices of this or that doctrine. As a rule, neither the musicians nor their fans are familiar with the original sources. They get by with surrogate booklets that describe in great detail rituals of neo-mysticism, having nothing in common with tradition. Rock culture turns to drugs, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat theory, liquor, sex, schizophrenia and violence — everything that releases in the human being an unconscious striving for Death and Destruction.

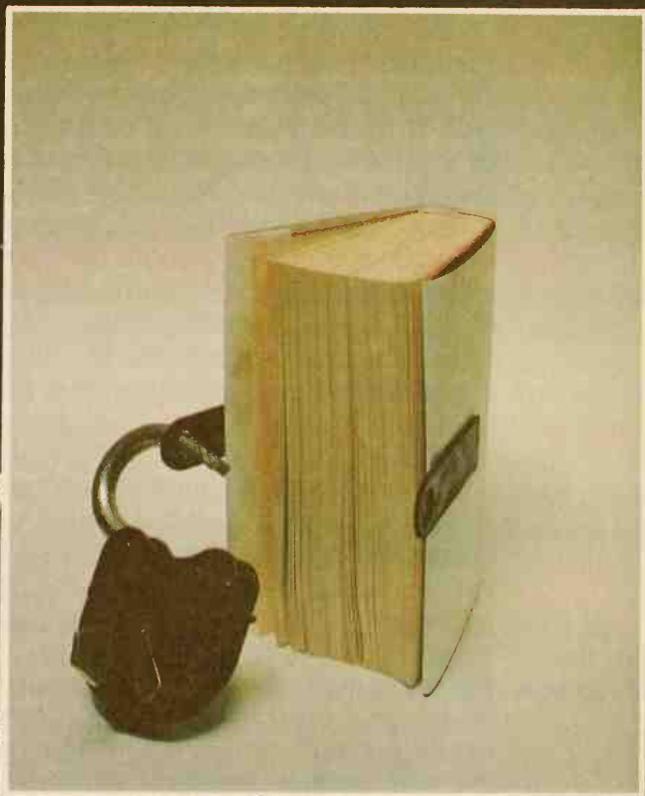
“All this applies equally to Western and Soviet rock. Claims to the effect that Soviet rock is unique and unprecedented are based either on chauvinism or lack of understanding of the structure of rock. In the Soviet Union rock is perfectly traditional. An analysis of the Soviet groups’ rhythmic patterns reveals complete identity with Western or, to be precise, African patterns. Social and aesthetic aspects of Soviet rock, its civic and political demagoguery only mask its irrational nature. Even the most perestroika-oriented bands cannot maintain the social slant to the end and inevitably slide into clear-cut psychedelics and occultism.

“Any experience — however brief — of stimulating schizophrenia which is the essence of psychedelics, is always fraught with

a recurrence. Consequently, everyone who propagates rock should realize that it will result in the 'schizophrenization' of all of humanity, it will cast humanity into the abyss of Thanatophile piety, prophesied by Spengler. Stopping the tide of rock is the job of every honest person who is devoted to the health and good of civilization."



ROCK JOURNALISM



an insight into a
little-known world of
rock-magazines that
have just emerged
from the underground
Reveal the secrets
of
collecting rock info
samizdat technologies
rocksters' letters to the
editor and back

ABA
ANARCHY
TO
PEACE



A rock dilettante-turned expert recalls:

About nine years ago I laid my hands on two home-made type-written books with photographs glued onto some of the pages. Those were two issues of *Roxy*, a samizdat* magazine published in Leningrad. It was a very interesting reading and I liked the fresh, ironically wise, purposely rude and sometimes mockingly polite manner of the articles, reports and interviews. Back then I didn't know that all that was embraced by one short word of youth slang: *styob* (close in meaning to "jive"). I took the *styob* very positively. I thought it was a natural and clever alternative to the pompous officialese of many publications of that time. *Styob* hit hard at the bureaucrat and functionary – though I don't think they ever read *Roxy*. *Styob* was a way of conveying ideas to "one's own".

Being at first an outsider, I couldn't make head or tail of all those groups, names and nick-names that told me nothing. Who on earth is Mike? Who the hell is the "great BG"? Why would a band call themselves "St. Petersburg"? Do they play baroque music or something?...

Roxy had an air of enticing impropriety and the charming ugliness of its world that was more natural and cheerful than the unsmiling and regulated world surrounding me. That was one of the reasons that I began to dig rock music.

But any mention of *Roxy* in the official press was taboo. Such magazines in our country then simply "did not exist" – just as drug addiction, prostitution, corruption and, naturally, rock. However, unlike negative and criminal phenomena, this form of home-talent activity was a natural and necessary form of communication, taking its course, incidentally, in family and high-school hand-written magazines. It is a deep-rooted tradition, so home-talent journalism can be classed as a form of culture.

ALEXANDER STARTSEV, EDITOR OF ROXY

The story of *Roxy* goes far down into history. I think I was in the 7th grade when I heard The Beatles for the first time. I was simply knocked over with their harmony, energy and freshness. Nothing in common with our pop stars of those years! Then I got

* Samizdat – literally, Self-Publishers.

my first tape-recorder, I remember the first records I got hold of. The Big Five of the school years: Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Slade, Uriah Heep and Pink Floyd.

We were hungry for info: the official press had none. That meant hunting down magazines in English, copying down all the line-ups and other data. It was perhaps then that I first got a whiff of an idea to start a magazine, offering information about all that. I remember the rumors: "Hey, have you heard that Procol Harum have been killed in a plane crash?", "Have you heard the Frank Zappa album, *Life at Barents Sea*?" "Do you know Freddie Mercury is of Russian extraction?" It was easy to build up your reputation in a company of friends by dropping a piece of the latest rock news. But where was one supposed to get that news?

Soviet papers and magazines were sloppy about rock. They would carry the caption "Ringo Starr" under a photograph of nobody knows who. They would call Slade a rock-orchestra. Gradually, from slinging mud at The Beatles they went over to referring to them as "ordinary working class guys from Liverpool". By then some of us had read Hunter Davies and an interview with Lennon and known better than that... The media went out of its way to smear rock. But by then some of us already knew that in 1956 rock had been branded "Communist subversion" in the United States: we just laughed.

Since the mid-70s there appeared a crop of fans that came to concerts of the first Russian-language groups with their portable tape-recorders: at the concerts one could almost never make out the words, so the recordings were handy. Time Machine revolutionized the scene.

The situation underwent a qualitative change. The form adopted by an entire generation all of a sudden was filled with our own, perfectly comprehensible content. Rock became complete.

It demanded a new look and a new understanding.

This is where there was a catch. A rock fan that used his tape to copy — instead of another Nazareth — Time Machine, Rossiyane (Russians), Aquarium, Voskreseniye (can be translated from the Russian as "Sunday" or as "resurrection") or Myths couldn't decorate the tape's casing with a list of songs or a photograph of the band. There was nowhere to get them. They were still available of Western bands, though not easily obtainable: one could obtain a copy of the *Rolling Stones* or *New Musical Express*. But there was no way in 1976 for a Soviet rock fan to read a review of a Time Machine concert or an interview with Volodya Kozlov, the leader of the Union of Rock Music Fans. A year later, however, such a chance made itself available to some of the fans: they had to ask friends for a copy of the type-written magazine *Roxy*.

...The very first issue is in my hands. Time-yellowed, fingered pages, a blurry photograph of kinky-haired Makarevich, Volodya Kozlov, still a novice, knowing nothing about reggae yet. Re-reading some of the stuff is fascinating, such as this topsy-turvy story.

"I woke up in my three-storey villa. The weather was fine. Looking out the window, I saw all three of my cars were in place. I put a new Voskreseniye album on my state-of-the-art VEF* turntable and went up to the swimming pool on the roof. Two airplanes were towing a huge pair of jeans — an ad of the Volodarsky Clothing Association...

"A police squad was walking down the street, singing 'Yellow Submarine'. It was a fine summer day."

There's an article, attributing the success of Time Machine to John Lennon's absence. I don't think our attitude to our own rock artists was serious then.

The idea of the mag originated with Boris Grebenshchikov and Nikolai Vasin, a great fan of The Beatles. Why *Roxy*? I asked them about it, but they failed to come up with a comprehensible explanation. Was it from Roxy Music, a London band? One way or another, everybody got the idea of what the magazine was about.

So, BG wrote and collected material about Aquarium, then fairly obscure. Kolya Vasin pursued his Beatles slant. But most of the articles were still about Time Machine and lyrics in Russian. Right from the start, the magazine acquired an analytical character. Now one realizes that that was a definite drawback, too. A future chronicler of Soviet rock will find in *Roxy* sociological articles, interviews with leading musicians and critiques of various bands. He may smile while reading a gossip column. But — he won't find any chronological record of the events of those years.

"The Abbey Road is gone, along with Orbit and Saigon, there is so little left of those fairy-tale times..." sang Grebenshchikov in one of his early albums. There is so little left. So sad. There are interviews with Zhora Ordanovsky, his pictures, poor-quality recordings of his band Rossiyanе, but we will never see him in action: nobody ever filmed him and video was not around in those years. For many writers that have now latched onto the fashionable subject, rock has appeared out of the blue, after the word broke out of the inverted commas. But we have our history and our casualties... On the other hand, how would they know? Not from *Roxy*, indeed, since it was issued with intervals of up to two years!

Reels of tape went round and round, airplanes swooshed and trains choo-chooed. The AIDS in morals — as it was dubbed at

* Radio factory in Riga, Latvia.

a congress of the Writers' Union* — spread across the country with mind-boggling speed. Young boys and girls began to realize that that music was much closer to them than that of the well-fed Elton or the Boney M puppets, they rushed off to a store to buy some tape or erased Western stuff to copy Aquarium.

"Who's that? What's that? What's the song called? Who's playing with them?" — it was the same old story: no info, no critique.

Occasional barking in the press about Time Machine or Zoo could hardly amount to serious criticism. *Roxy*, its issues few and far between, was not enough for the growing army of readers.

I have covered the same road as many of our rocksters. They first heard The Beatles or somebody else, then took up guitars themselves. I started reading *Roxy* first, then I started writing for it and then, without even noticing it, I got seriously involved in organizing stuff, running around getting photographs and paying the typists with tickets to the Leningrad Rock Club that had opened by then.

And things got rolling! We picked up pace, issues were frequent and illustrated with photographs. The mag got to different cities and various people. They read it and copied it. We hit something like popularity. It was partly because the articles were written in normal conversational Russian, and touched on things one could read about in no other publication.

And then I was asked: "Sasha, what do you need it for?"

The people that asked it had a right to. They could have put harsher questions and in a different place.

"Indeed, why? You have finished one college, now you study in another... This diverts you from your studies and may divert you forever."

"If it isn't me," I mumbled in reply, "it'll have to be somebody else. The music is there, but the papers write only bad things about it. We just try to get it sorted out..."

"If the papers write bad things about it, than it's for good reason," they told me. "The papers know what they are talking about. [We had heard nothing about stagnation as yet.] Take these interviews of yours with Grebenshchikov — now he is Zen Buddhist, now a Russian Orthodox!"

"That's what we want to get sorted out! He belongs to the Orthodox Church all right — because he doesn't accept the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope. And then, why would he be a Catholic, anyway?"

"Anyway, Sasha, why don't you give it up? You might run into trouble."

I didn't give it up. And troubles I ran into — right after the next issue. I won't go into a sudden dismissal and a many-month hunt for a job... But *Roxy* flourished. From 50-60 pages we burst into

* The official organization of Soviet writers, in a way similar to the Mark Twain Society.

130 and more. Just typing it out and re-typing it three times!.. But I want to tell you how such magazines are made.

Articles are written first. Different people have their own different ways of writing. One of *Roxy's* permanent contributors, for instance, can roll off 15 pages in a single paragraph. Another says that he won't fit his stuff into less than 35 pages and that it should be headlined "Big Summer Article"...

Then — photographs. Imagine two idiots crawling about on the floor and gluing, gluing, gluing 500 pictures onto the pages.

To say nothing about the cost of the photographic paper and the cost of the services of photographers and typists: their labor, just as any other, has to be paid for.

And what's the result? *Roxy* comes out two times a year now, and news of a summer rock fest will reach you by November, at the very latest. So what is to be done? Now nobody stifles or threatens us, the times have changed. What is to be done now?

Home-baked magazines are now in abundance. People who didn't want to risk getting involved before have now gotten down to it in earnest. A fairly thin magazine *RIO* has emerged in Leningrad, for instance. It comes out once in six weeks and is a welcome supplement to *Roxy*. It is quicker to react and provides more specific information about the events on the rock scene.

The situation in the Sverdlovsk Rock Club is the same — there is the fat *Sverdlovskoye Rock-Obozreniye* (Sverdlovsk Rock Review) and the thin *MAROKA* (*MAYatnik ROKA*, Rock Pendulum).

There are a host of other publications — *Tusovka* in Novosibirsk, *Audi-Holi* in Kazan, *Pop-Dynamo* in Kuibyshev, *Rock-Courier* in Kharkov, *Pro Rock** in Gorky...

Some of these publications level sharp criticism at *Roxy* for being too academic. I don't feel like asking them where they were before, because I know they were sitting in their flats and arguing half-heartedly. Others ask why don't we print four-letter words any longer.

What should I say? On the one hand, we have been made to run a gauntlet that couldn't but affect the way we write. On the other, take my word for it, we just don't want to write the way we did.

It's uninteresting. I think a punk grown bald is bound to be funny.

And when everybody starts shouting slogans and brandishing truncheons — I don't think I want to join them. I think that rock music is an art — no matter what they say. And if so, it shouldn't be subjected to considerations of time. It should deal with perennial human values.

* Rocksters are fond of pun: **pro rock** (about rock) is homonymous to **prorok** (prophet) and **ma-roka** to **moroka** (trouble, confusion).

ANDREI BURLAKA, THE EDITOR OF RIO

A type-written monthly, devoted to the people and events of the local rock scene was launched in Leningrad in October 1986. It is called *RIO* (a Russian acronym for “Advertisement and Information Review” – though there are other versions, too) and is published by a group of young people having an interest in rock music and dissatisfied with the way it is featured in our press. I am the *RIO* editor and also an author and co-author of many of its features.

About two years ago I undertook to write a story about the famous Leningrad band Argonauts – on the eve of their 20th birthday. I tracked down the musicians and interviewed them, asking them about their biographies, people’s names, dates and so forth. Seeing how many things escaped their memory I regretted for the first time that a history of Leningrad rock had never been compiled...

Still, I wrote the article, but realized that, first, one has to collect all the data available, all photographs and reminiscences and, second, one has to chronicle all the events so that future students would have it easier. I started out with a big ledger where I entered dates of concerts, repertoires and line-ups, as well as information about press publications and TV and radio programs about the rock club. Then I got the idea of *RIO*.

I took it upon myself to compile the first issue of the “information bulletin”: I wrote it up, re-typed it in several copies and sent it out to various cities. The very next issue was prepared by an improvised editorial board including some of my friends and my friends’ friends. Right from the start we agreed to try to avoid some of the mistakes of our predecessors. The thing is that most of the current home-made rock mags are not really magazines in the proper sense of the word: published irregularly, depending on when the necessary amount of material is accumulated, they are more like almanacs. We intended to produce an issue a month even if it killed us. Another common drawback is the absence of a framework of permanent features and columns that help the reader to find his way about and help the editor plan his work for months ahead.

In *RIO* any information is fitted into any one of the permanent features, each of which has its own supervisor. The sorest spot of rock journalism is the eclecticism of the stuff published.

Regrettably, only very few of the contributors can write professionally: the amount of generalities, musical illiteracy, heavy-handed style and lavish praise of this or that group turn one off, though the article may be essentially decent. Quite a few people continue to write “a lot”: if they tell you about

a band's concert they are sure to tell you all they know about it, if they review an album they will start out with The Beatles. This is where the editor comes in — and the job is tough.

RIO is not a mass-circulation magazine. The editors presume the audience to have an amount of prior knowledge of the context (the system of values and traditions of rock culture, terminology, slang and the overall situation in rock music) and count on the circulation to those who “dig it”.

RIO was originally conceived as a data bank and a source of readily available information for correspondents in other cities. However, on sending out the first few issues we suddenly received in response a host of reports about rock events in the provinces which gradually evolved into a special feature “In Your Neck of the Woods”. We have a company of permanent contributors in Sverdlovsk, Moscow, Kazan, Gorky, Archangel, Novosibirsk and other cities where rock clubs and rock magazines emerged on the wave of “legalization”.

The magazine from a modest eight pages swelled to 120 (*sic!*), quite a burden on executive distributors. We don't even know the exact number because the magazine is re-printed (or, rather, re-typed) in the provinces. Some of the features have disappeared, others were altered, though most of them stood the test of time. “Pops Live” is a list — often with brief reviews — of all the concerts of the month. “Looking at the TV” is about how rock music was featured in television programs.

“Walls and Bridges” is devoted to inter-city ties and contacts between rock clubs. “On the Move” tells about the changes in line-ups. “Press Round-up” features information on new albums (both on vinyl and on tape). “Where Have the Good Times Gone?” offers sketches of the Leningrad rock scene of five, ten, fifteen and even twenty years ago. Yet another feature, “Sock on Rock”, tells about what makes life hard for us, about overt and covert opponents of rock, about self-styled experts and aggressive duffers, about the “Lyubers” and... The list can go on.

There is also a digest of foreign press publications, letters from correspondents in other cities, movie news and ... all manner of trash. That's as much as the hundred type-written pages of book format can accommodate. The photo-cover features the magazine's logo, a portrait of some of the “big stars” and headlines. That's all we can manage in the circumstances.

RIO lives on and quite a few people like it. Although can one speak of a magazine that is “widely known in a narrow circle”? What is ten issues for the hundreds of thousands, even millions of rock fans in this country?

ANDREI GAVRILOV, A MOSCOW ROCK CRITIC

Home-talent rock journalism emerged in Moscow at the start of the 1980s. The indications are that the *Zerkalo* (Mirror) magazine was the first. *Zerkalo* revealed those tendencies of Moscow rock journalism that are there still. Moscow rock magazines always allot some space to poems, prose, drama, journalistic writings and archive publications. Fragments of a TV program about the Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev can be carried next to a faultless way of making acquaintances with girls in the street, and the lyrics of a rock ballad may be followed by an avant-garde play.

The other specific feature of Moscow's rock magazines is that they devote only about half of their space to music as such. The rest deals with "round and about". It is not even that "guitarist A quit his band and joined another", but something that can be called in-crowd gossip. Bearing in mind the scarcity of the magazines and their orientation, this is quite natural. But to an outsider, uninitiated in the system of relations or nicknames, the meaning of much of the stuff is lost.

Ukho (Ear) magazine was an heir to *Zerkalo* (both lasted for about ten issues combined). Here are the contents of *Ukho* for 1983: articles about New Wave, about the bands Kino, Zoopark, Football, DK, Aquarium and Track, a review of Western rock festivals and an article about rock music in Romania (*sic!*). There is also one witty observation. Describing a definite period of stagnation in Moscow's rock, the author of one of the articles notes: "One is bound to get the impression that in Moscow after the year nineteen-seventy-nine there came nineteen-seventy-ten, then nineteen-seventy-eleven..."

And the '80s are too long in coming."

Moscow now has several publications. The better known include *Zombie*, an illustrated review; *Begemot* (Hippopotamus), a digest re-printing articles from other publications – both official and non; *Smorchok* (Morel or Shrimp), representing the "right wing" in rock music; and the leftist *Urlight* (a combination of *urla* – "hoodlums" and "all right"). Their approaches differ, but the structure is the same – interviews, reviews and critical articles. All of Moscow's rock magazines have been trying to find a new, pioneering language for their articles. As a rule, the writers don't get published anywhere else. But there is one thing that gets me down: normal polemics between magazines often deteriorates into enmity, sometimes exceeding the Parliamentary vocabulary. Rocksters don't have a single rock magazine that is above all this, yet there is a great need for them.

Thence the conclusion: this country has to have a professional rock magazine, one that would make no difference between

professional and amateur bands, “central” or “provincial” rock, one that would follow only a single criterion — the music is good or it is bad. We need a magazine that would be honest. And then no interests would be infringed, no enmity fanned. And those enthusiastic folk that type out their articles about an Aquarium or Nautilus concert or classical guitar technique would not feel like criminals, doing something necessary, but not quite approved.

The Leningrad group Televizor (TV set) made its debut in 1984. Its emergence on stage in front of a thousand fans was marked by the smashing of a TV set. In 1987 the band was disqualified by the Leningrad rock laboratory and deprived of the right to play gigs, first for six months and then a year, for their hard-hitting and scandalous hit "Fish Starts Rotting from the Head!". The group is unprecedentedly bold and uncompromising. In a popular TV program "The 12th Floor" the band's vocalist and frontman Mikhail Borzykin was just as outspoken in a discussion on the war in Afghanistan as he was at concerts. "Let's call a spade a spade," the Televizor leader said on television, "Afghanistan was an irresponsible and monstrous adventure of the Brezhnev regime that took the lives of thousands of Soviet soldiers for no reason at all!"

The group rarely appears on stage or goes on tours, though they produced two albums — one on the Melodiya label, *The Travel of Fish*, and the other — on tape, *Home Country of Illusions*. I saw Televizor for the first time at a semi-official concert in Khimki, near Moscow. The concert organizers were until the very last moment certain that it would be banned.

The band struck me with unexpected, paradoxical images. The frail figure and cat's graciousness of the leader, his nervousness, fine plasticity and aestheticism provided a stark contrast to the angry, piercing songs. Every line of their lyrics molded into a slogan of non-conformist youth rebellion: "Get Out Of Control!", "Fish Starts Rotting from the Head!", "I'm Fed Up!" The songs required the image of a punk with a distorted face, aggressive like Kostya Kinchev, or tragic like Victor Tzoi. But Televizor offered a different type — that of tender, wary youths, unsure of themselves, reacting painfully to any hitch in the equipment. The Leningraders — pale faces, lean bodies, nothing aggressive or shocking about them. Mikhail Borzykin seemed to be looking into himself — his shoulders stooped, he didn't look at the audience and seemed generally distrustful of the outside world. He didn't hate it, he just didn't trust. Sometimes he lay his hands on the keyboard, quivered and made a round of the synthesizer, awkwardly waving his arms. The disquieting show hypnotized the audience — they yelled, clapped their hands and whistled, responding to every little gesture and barely discernible intonation of the vocalist...

That night Televizor played their album *Home Country of Illusions* that earned them irreconcilable enemies in all the official circles up to top hierarchs of the Ministry of Culture.

*Right from the kindergarten we are under surveillance
Of good ladies and kind gents.
We are flogged like cattle,
We got it in our sorest spots*

*And we grow up like an obedient herd
We live the way we should and sing what we should
We lick off our sweat and set our happy eyes
On those that do the flogging.*

*Get out of control! Go out and sing
About what you see and not what you're allowed
We have a right to a groan!
Out of control, farther away from these walls!
Out! Freedom to the free! Go out and fly away!*

*So here we are and it is not easy to deal with us
Take away your birch rods, you won't have enough for all!
We are ten today and twenty tomorrow
That's the way it was and will be...*

These words provided a clear indication that Televizor indeed "got out of control" of censorship, warnings and threats... The fact that the guys looked nothing like revolutionaries, militants, destructors, denouncers and anarchists only brought into bolder relief the stark social slant of the songs. The period of showcase revolutionism in Soviet rock was short-lived. With the advent of *glasnost* the bans of many years on blaring decibels and emancipation on stage tumbled down like a house of cards. And then, tired of the punks and metallists, rock audiences rushed into talent, depth and sincerity. Halls that didn't have the new intellectual idols of the young — Kino, Aquarium, Nicolai Copernicus, Nautilus Pompilius and Brigade S — remained half-empty. The young wanted Lyrics, they wanted a Program of Action, they wanted an Idea. It was the Idea that rock fans sought at the concerts of Televizor. And they found it — naked, angry and piercing:

*Who's going to believe you now! You kept mute for so many years!
You weren't simply silent — you strangled those who spoke!
Your slogans remained on the pages of yesterday's papers.
But your heroes stay firmly entrenched where they were!*

185 *They all tell lies! Fish starts rotting from the head!*
They all tell lies! Fish starts rotting from the head!

No way of catching you now — you all vote “for”.
Suspicious swarming in my head.
But when an office slave tells me “No”
I know the string goes up again!

Slogans of the “Soviet New Left”, picked up by Televizor were at the same time a result of its own pain-laden quest, tragedy and loathing. But the slogans were not foisted on the youth. Borzykin seemed to be saying: “My words are not a dogma, they are not binding. But it is just the way I think, and I have a right to think the way I want to!” And this position found an instant response in the hearts of hundreds of young people. The misgivings and the quest were laid bare in the lyrics:

My head as a gunshot is wandering about the corridor,
My own and others’ thoughts keep up an endless argument,
Like rivers they flow from the West and from the East,
But my head is no garbage heap, so leave me alone!

Home country of illusions — inside out!
Home country of illusions — the farther the worse!



This is "Home Country of Illusions", the title song of their best album. From the point of view of the group, immersion in a world of illusions has a double meaning. On the one hand, illusion is the choking nightmare of the routine, of alienation, social injustice and social myths. On the other, it is the only alternative to the real world. Borzykin seems to be reviving the 1968 slogan "Freedom to Imagination!":

*They can break my body, they can put me in a barrel,
They can shut it with a lid and commit it to a blind wave.
They can make me cry, they can make me talk,
They can make me do, but I'll remain myself in my dreams.*

*Who can take my dreams away from me?
I'll retreat into my dreams! Who knows what's there inside!
I am free to have my dreams! Free to have my dreams!
Who knows what's there inside!*

Perhaps, Televizor's mythology is old-fashioned and naive. A Western intellectual that has lived through the disillusionment of 1968 no longer appeals to the world of imagination as a last refuge of freedom. He suspects that the realm of dreams is also controlled by society, that this control is more sophisticated and ominous, that it can be disguised as "libido" and archetypes of the "collective unconscious". Meanwhile, Televizor reminds us only of the blunt control, power and restrictions that evoke the protest of the Soviet rockster. The Soviet "Master"* is not as refined as the bourgeois one and so far doesn't make use of surrealist or Freudian methods...

One of the band's best numbers is "The Kids Are Leaving". It is about teenagers who "leave into the Night" never to return to the "empty" apartments of their old folks. They are kids who "don't want no revolutions", "don't want to interfere with those who just bide their time", but they are the kids to whom the future belongs. These kids are very much like the frail boys from rainy Leningrad, whose Televizor makes one think seriously about the lost and alienated generations. Is ours the only country providing stark evidence of the historical deadlock facing the fathers-who bequeathed no spiritual values or aesthetic ideals to their children? One is sorry for the kids, disappearing into the Night, but is more sorry for the parents, abandoned and drowned in lies. How great is their guilt? These are the kind of thoughts provoked by Televizor.

Pity for the parents highlights the monstrous existential trauma of the kids, and Televizor takes a closer look at those who they think are to blame for the tragedy and who deserve no pity:

* Meaning "society" in the parlance of "new philosophers".

187 *Three or four buggers get on my nerves!
Three or four buggers interfere with my life.
I don't know who's there behind them.
But I know they hate rock!
They may be not three or four, but hundreds of millions.
It's all the same!
Sooner or later, like those pigs
They'll go from the precipice straight to the bottom!*

Televizor's unbridled social frenzy appeals to the evangelical story of devils exorcized by Christ from a man possessed, devils that then moved into a drove of pigs. It could be a hint at Dostoyevsky's *The Devils*. As *glasnost* fills in "blank spots" in Soviet history, the face of Petrusha Verkhovensky shows more and more clearly in the smug faces of the former "leaders of the nation". Petrusha Verkhovensky intentionally inflated the number of "revolutionary circles" in Russia to impress neophytes with figures... *Perestroika*'s younger generation also sees behind the empty talk about the "people", "masses" and "millions of tons" just a handful of charlatans and criminals, three or four devils...

The band's music is highly unusual. Scarce instrumentation, jagged rhythm, lack of bass and preponderance of keyboards, build a frail musical castle in the mind of the audience.

The music is sometimes reminiscent of New Wave, but the bluntness of ideas and lyrics and serious treatment of social issues and masked optimism can best be defined as neo-social mainstream with elements of New Wave. Moreover, the band's concerts assume the role of an anti-Televizor (anti-TV set).

The New Left have always regarded Television as a brainwashing machine. Televizor undertook to achieve the opposite – brain cleaning. It counters self-assured lies with passionate Truth, it counters labels and hints with real names for everything and everyone. It counters the fear of "spilling the beans" with the courage of admitting a mistake.

As a phenomenon, Televizor is a prototype of new, non-conformist mass media, independent and deliberately anti-censorial. Soviet rock fans are therefore hoping that this kind of "Television" will be the television of the future.

In Televizor they see a symbol of sincerity and chastity, a herald of new consciousness and an honest social atmosphere.

*Some ideas are covered with dust,
Others wear a coat of armor.
That is a trifle, what's important is
Who stands behind them.
Televizor, "Your Dad Is a Fascist"*

Natalia Melentyeva

ANTIS OR HOW DOES A ROCKSTER GET TO BE A PRESIDENT

“I have a hang-up with regard to intellectuals: my grandad was a farmer, my father — a clerk, pure and banal as a land surveyor. I don’t consider myself a real intellectual, I have too much of the rural left in me — both zeal and conservatism, and, as in every Lithuanian, fear of authority... We are weird folk, we lived in the village for centuries. The authorities and the nobility were never our own — now Polish, now Russian — that’s why with regard to authority we adopted an attitude of estrangement and wariness: we want just to be left alone. We had no intellectuals in the cities either — all our culture is rural, it is not in writing. Though it is inimitable, of course — there is much of the pagan times left in it... We only began to develop our ethnic intelligentsia in the years of the bourgeois republic, and then came the tragedy of the 1940s. Before the war the Stalinists deported Lithuanians to Siberia en masse: all those that were seen to be for some reason above the rest — intellectuals, people of independent views, the better farmers. Then came collectivization... * That’s when they ‘de-farmed’ the rest of the farmers, doing short work of rural culture along the way. “That’s how we developed a culture of refugees from the village, forced to build up industries... It is a bland, tedious, Philistine culture. And our rock is the same — lacking vitality, candor and world outlook.”

These are the words of Algis Kaušpedas, a man of 35, two meters tall, with a nice big face and dark hair neatly combed back. He is an architect. Moreover, he is Secretary of the Architects’ Union and Director of the Union Club in Kaunas. He is also one of the leaders of the Lithuanian Popular Movement in support of *perestroika* and the leader of the rock group Antis. I had quite a few occasions to see Algis’ latter statement prove correct: coming to dearly-loved Lithuania annually I couldn’t help noticing that rock was barely in evidence there, and even then it took on the most boring and provincial forms. I even thought of a logical explanation for it: why would genuine rock, music of rebellion, emerge in Lithuania of all places — if they have the nicest girls, the most cosy towns, the best beaches and an abundance of meat and dairy products... In short, the star of Antis rose in a fairly uninspiring sky.

• Predominantly forced herding of peasants into “collective farms” — Tr.

The first time I heard about them was in November 1985 from a friend, a Kaunas journalist Šaurys: "The architects knocked together a crazy show-band, called Antis — 'duck' in Lithuanian. They are awfully funny, but can't play. Some punk." I noticed a long time ago that people describe as "punk" anything that doesn't fit into the notion of conventional, anything that is livelier and bolder — and not necessarily having any relation to punk as such. That's why I became interested, remembered the name and was happy to find out that they would play at the Lithuanica-86 festival in May.

Antis was not allowed to appear in the contest program: the local cultural officials were yellow. They could overlook some heresy from the outside (let the Russians get it sorted out with their own bosses), but letting through some "controversial" stuff from their very own Lithuanians — no way! The Antis concert was the last and the best at the festival. The vocalist (I hadn't known then his name was Algis) was transported onto the stage in a catafalque and from there, having produced a phone receiver with a mike from the garlands of paper flowers, he began singing the first number "Hello-Hello" — about the life of the artistic intelligentsia. On emerging from the coffin the vocalist turned out to be a large-size "*homme fatal*" with seducing manners. The make-up and manners reminded one of a hero — lover or villain — of a silent movie melodrama of early this century. But, as distinct from most foolhardy rock vocalists, his manner and appearance were not giving the sexual glad eye to the audience. The man was clearly sarcastic and he certainly hadn't come to entertain the public.

The show was flawless and full of purely theatrical inventions. On both sides of the stage there stood two women mannequins wearing veils. The hall just gasped when, half-way into the concert, they suddenly came alive and walked graciously arm in arm with the vocalist. In the pauses between numbers the lights went up in a corner where a "newscaster" was sitting at a desk and, in an official voice — mimicking official TV — read out the "news", providing a lead-in for the next song. The lyrics were satirical, though far from the "limit". On the other hand, one should know the staleness of Lithuania's pop culture to correctly assess the boldness of even these lines:

Antis



*Why are you standing under the weather
Like the Tower of Pisa,
Leaning against the wall
Of a vodka shop?
Why are you smiling so goofily?
Do you see your daughters cry?
Drink, go on drinking your brain dead
For there is no life for you without vodka...*

My favorite was a song about a card punched with a program that is inserted into small holes in the heads of the citizens, who immediately calm down, finding themselves in a world of pleasant illusions: a clear hint at television.

Antis' music didn't have much in common with punk and on the whole was fairly interesting. I would describe it as "grotesque R&B". Traditional blues harmonies, accented by the respectable "jazz" sound of the horn section, were lavishly dotted with sudden changes of pace and weird melodious deviations, now into Lithuanian folklore, now into kitsch hitlore. It was slightly reminiscent of the ironic eclectics of Frank Zappa. True, the band was uneven: the brass section was good (it turned out it was "borrowed" from Chekasin's professional band) but fitted poorly with the rhythm section, always half-asleep. Well, nobody is perfect — but Antis was nearing it: never before had I seen a rock band in the Soviet Union that combined brilliant showmanship with a clever stage image. That was when I met the founder and lead vocalist of Antis, Algis Kaušpedas. Here is how he described the story of the band:

"I graduated from an architectural college and got a job in a respectable design bureau. I took part in 15 international contests and blue-printed five hospitals. After I did the fifth design I just lost interest. I was oppressed by office life: I got fed up with those corridors, smoking breaks every forty minutes and the meaningless conversations with colleagues. I got fed up with looking out the same old windows, bored and boring... I felt like getting out of the official world, but it was difficult: I had been fairly well known by then and everybody thought 'the guy is well-placed'. In general, being 'different' is unacceptable in Lithuania. There is only one, 'normal' way of life and slight deviations are allowed only to artists. So that's the kind of life I chose: I took the job of supply manager of the Architects' Club in Kaunas. My salary was a mere 80 roubles a month, but I was foot loose and fancy free. It didn't last long, though. They decided to pull me up to a decent level and made me the Director. That's when we managed to get it going — we set up a real center of new culture. Shocking exhibitions, an experimental theater. We just held a Rock'n'Roll Championship where we invited anybody from the street to sing with the backing of a professional band. Even now [the interview was taken in May 1988 — A.T.] I am afraid to leave the job: this is real life, I got my bosses here... And rock is just a game. And that's the way it started — as a game... For a New Year party in 1985, with a few of my architect friends we prepared a parody show of six songs (including 'What Are You Standing For?'). We had no ideas about any kind of future, but the party was a smash. We repeated the show on Women's Day, March 8th. Then we got together with several pro musicians. Of course, we, architects, are the weakest performers in the band,

191 but we provide the ideology. We don't know any musical theory — and this lack of knowledge in lots of ways is the basis of our aesthetics.”

It becomes clear, therefore, where Antis got its original polystylistics from: they proceeded not from avant-garde, but from complete primitivism. Plus a long-standing interest in post-modernism? One way or another within a very short time, Antis became Lithuania's cultural sensation number one and rivalled in popularity the famous Žalgiris basketball team. That autumn they were featured in an hour-long video film and started working on their first record. There was something strange about the sudden “green light”: was it that the functionaries had really got the feel of the new times, or that they longed for something interesting, or were they afraid of more confrontation with the young?

“Our relations with the functionaries have always been smooth — even when we challenged them directly. We never submitted any of our texts for approval. I think the authorities felt: these are no boys, they are responsible people, they can be allowed... That is, they sort of showed their high-level trust in us. May be there is a danger for us in it, I don't know. Though the Kaunas authorities don't like us. They believe that all people in the arts are like circus dogs, they are enraged at independence. We still are not allowed to play in this city — but, after all, that's a good advertisement.”

Kaunas is the mainstay of the Lithuanian burghers, a city much richer and more conservative than the bohemian Vilnius. From what I have seen of it over the years, the residents of Kaunas go in for: making money, building their own cottages, polishing their Lada cars to a Western gleam and rooting for Žalgiris. (Of course, there is a good theater, art galleries and “avant-garde” — but they don't make the image of the city.) It is here that Algis Kaušpedas lives — in a four-storey home of his own design — together with his wife and daughter.

But let's go back to the issue of bureaucrats, bans and trust. In their second concert, performed in 1987, Antis concentrated on anti-bureaucratic satire — to reaffirm its image of a “pro-*perestroika* rock band”. One of the songs is “Comrade Tatatavicius”:

*He writes and writes — Comrade Tatatavicius
He makes speech after speech — Comrade Tatatavicius
He keeps nodding his small head,
He keeps assuring us of our cloudy tomorrow.
And a Japanese watch glistens on his wrist.
And a computer stands on his desk — and all in disco style!*

The image of this bureaucrat, wonderfully recreated by Kaušpedas on stage, has more than one meaning. I would describe this personage as a “popular bureaucrat”. Here is how Algis explains the genesis of the image: “I don’t want to be a one-sided rebel. The thing is I am aware that all the vices of our system are in me, too. Let’s say, too much freedom gets on my nerves — I don’t know what to do with it. And I am sure that a petty narrow-minded bureaucrat is to be found inside every Soviet person, no matter how progressive. That’s why my ‘bureaucrat’ is not a monster, but a human being, having something in common with everybody in the audience. I don’t feel like destroying him right there and then — he can even be liked.” “Liked” perhaps is not the word, but he can be pitied. As in the song “Medals”:

*Give him a medal —
Blue, green or iron.
Give him a couple —
We won’t grudge...
Go on, give a medal
To our Naked King —
Let him enjoy
A decoration free.*



The attitude to “Him” is condescending, a mixture of pity and contempt — which indeed was predominant in the popular attitude to the prototype of the song, Brezhnev... We are only human. Algis Kaušpedas sums it up: “Why is *perestroika* so slow? Simply because we ourselves are not in a hurry to get to a new life, we are afraid of abrupt changes. Perhaps for good reason, too. I was in Poland recently and saw how dangerous it is to force developments: we have had enough social cataclysms. So there — I often get these ‘backward’ ideas. And Antis is just as contradictory as myself. Our songs are not sheer jeering, our parodies also contain sincere feelings.”

This dialectic approach is what makes Antis so different from Russian groups, especially those in Leningrad. Alice, Televizor and DDT offer 100-percent opposition to the establishment: it is black, they were white. One would think there are two different nations, even planets — and, of course, they have to “get the bastards!” Kaušpedas’ stance can be viewed as more inclined to compromise, but it is more honest in the sense that it is devoid of false heroism. And it is certainly more realistic. “It is to be found in life everywhere, but not on stage. That’s why people like Antis,” says Algis. “I might add that in real life these ‘popular bureaucrats’ oppress you and drive you crazy, and then you can stand back and look at them, you can laugh at them and chant

‘ Functionaries – pilots of briefcases, functionaries – Pontius Pilates ’.

But this is not the whole answer to the question about Antis’ paradoxical popularity in Lithuania. Paradoxical – because by ordinary standards Antis is far from a “pop” group, an idol of the mob. When they first came to Moscow for the Rock Panorama-87 festival and were almost a total flop, all the experts were identically sympathetic: it is a most interesting group, their music is complicated and original, their show is refined – but they can’t play in a big stadium! They are avant-garde, they should play in small clubs for connoisseurs. When I said that in Lithuania they played in stadiums and tens of thousands sang with them, drowning out the PA, people just wouldn’t believe me. So what are the reasons for the popularity of the “elitarian” Antis? First, the effectiveness of their satire, the “glasnost factor”. Second, the “national factor”. Yes, Antis is completely devoid – as distinct from some Estonian bands – of songs plugging national pride or fanning chauvinistic sentiments. The problems that Antis deals with concern any Soviet person – but the form they assume is consonant with the Lithuanian national character and cultural tradition, combining the contemporary official style, the pre-war sugary chivalry and the very old village motifs. “I think professional pop composers never take heed of folk music,” says the Antis leader, “and they lose a lot. I love folk songs, they contain truly hypnotic force.”

With time, Antis has been increasingly interested in this “ethnic” pursuit. Antis’ “ethnic rock” is liberating and inspiring. Some of the band’s latest concerts have reminded me of something I had known only in theory – real folk carnivals in their original, profound meaning as described by Mikhail Bakhtin.*

However, the honorary “folksity” medal also has a reverse side. Therein lies the third – and regrettable – cause of the Antis phenomenon. Let’s call it the “kitsch factor”. The thing is that much of what Kaušpedas and the group subject to refined mockery as Philistine mass culture, is taken at face value, without any irony, and gobbled up by the audience. The balance is delicate: the band has to rope-walk on the precarious brink, torturing their sense of balance in order not to stoop to overly accented parody or, on the contrary, turn into pop-vulgarity themselves. “There is much bad taste in rock, a lot of self-satisfied eroticism – and it is easy to get trapped in it. The lure is there – so one has to be smarter than that...”

Honestly, I was almost positive that little by little, keeping the frame of its image and even a touch of irony, Antis would turn into a “normal” pop band. It would even have been an honor: not every republic has something so elegant and as popular as the

* Soviet literary historian and art critic.

cheaper smash hits or heavy metal... The pressure of popularity and hypnosis of success are forces very few artists can cope with. Antis began to waver, too: I remember how sad I was to hear their biggest hit of 1987 "On the Trolleybus", which was not only empty in content, but in tune a take-off of their own previous knockout, "Something Happened". That was a hit-hunt, pure and simple.

Luckily, it turned out I had underestimated Antis: their 1988 program was more complicated and, most importantly, sterner and more unconventional than earlier ones. "We always made fun of the kitsch culture, but now I've realized we can't live by it all the time. My stage character has changed — he has turned firmer and cooler... There is a breath of Siberia." Algis Kaušpedas appears on the stage in the side-car of a motor-bike, clad in buttoned-up leather coat. The opening, program song is called "Shut Up, Intellectual!".

*Shut up, intellectual! Good-for-nothing pauper,
What can you give to your country?!*

*Shut up, intellectual! I wonder how you manage to stay alive
Want to borrow some dough, you sponger?*

*Shut up, intellectual! You are a weird social stratum...
Whoever needs you — smart and noble?*

*Shut up, intellectual! — Go dig potatoes!**

But if you want to complain to the papers — please yourself.

Hey, Professor, better buy yourself a Lada:

*Put the checkers** on and drive the folks around.*

The stage is decked out with slogans — white on red. There is also the band's poster — a set of black and white photographs (either from a file or a Board of Honor***). During a big-time Leningrad Television contest called "Musical Ring" Algis did not shed his "totalitarian" mask even talking to the audience:

Question: "You sing only in Lithuanian. Doesn't it smack of nationalism?"

Answer: "You said — nationalism? It is a complicated issue — we have to consult the bosses."

Question: "Don't you think your musical expertise leaves much to be desired?"

Answer: "Comrades! We have no expertise. We have been appointed to fulfill our duty and that's what we have honestly been doing."

* People in the non-production sphere in the USSR are routinely sent out to the country to lend a hand during the harvesting season.

** Taxicabs in the USSR have checkers on their doors.

*** Every factory and institution has one, featuring photos of foremost workers.

195 Regrettably, the Leningrad audience (probably accustomed to rocksters' ingenuousness) failed to get the joke and play ball with Antis. One of the spectators, quite hurt, even asked them: "Don't you have a sense of awkwardness because you say such rubbish to our questions?" The reply was: "No, comrades, we don't get a sense of awkwardness. We get a feeling of profound satisfaction."*

Antis' songs grew more acute, their political credo — more stark. "I try to not only understand politics, but also to get involved in it. Reading papers is not enough for that... I am certain that a human being is able to do something — that's my conviction as a person and citizen. Of course, I have a 'censor' inside — and it isn't bad either. I 'talk' to him and that creates artistic tension. Every risky step is the result of an inner effort, it has depth..." It was noticed a long time ago that when rock musicians — even greats like John Lennon — deliberately shift the balance in favor of greater conceptualism, their work as a rule loses some of its spontaneous appeal. They try to delve deeper, but instead seem to go further along the same plane. For the first time the curve of the group's popularity that was constantly going up levelled out. Does that mean a crisis?

"Antis is going to hold out for another year," said Algis Kaušpedas in May 1988. "We are about to reach our peak and I don't want to go over it. I think we'd better quit the scene while we're on top, rather than overstay the welcome and get boring. In general, rock is second-rate music in Lithuania, the lot of the weird. In the eyes of the intellectual elite rock compromised itself as a product of mass culture: it is considered to be something like a circus for fools and under-developed teenagers... Of course we have been working against the stereotype, but we are hard put to break it single-handed. I am sorry to say we never had any rivals in the republic."

"So what happens after Antis?"

"As for me, I will be a public leader."

That's what he said — not "I will go in for public activities", not "I will go in for politics", but monumentally cool — "I will be a public leader". The expression on his face left no doubt he was dead serious.

Strictly speaking, Algis Kaušpedas has been a "public leader" before — and I don't mean in his role as a rock tribune. Ever since the inception of Lithuania's Popular Movement for *Perestroika* in early 1988 Algis became one of its leaders. On the Day of the Press** an Antis concert assumed the form of a political meeting. From his "grand rostrum" Algis Kaušpedas proclaimed slogans, habitually ironic: "Long live the friendship of small people of the

* One example of Soviet officialese that gained proverbial currency under Brezhnev.

** Professional holiday, marked on May 5th, the day the first issue of Lenin's *Pravda* — the Communist Party daily — was released in 1912.

USSR!”, “Down with the old bureaucrats, long live the young ones!” One slogan, though, was perfectly in earnest: “You live in Lithuania – you are Lithuanian!” Kaušpedas explains: “I am a realist, I try to assume a quiet and dialectical view of things. Lithuania will never turn into another Karabakh,* our people are very cautious. But Lithuania will be pressing for independence and will want its own Constitution, not a stenciled one. The republic should grow stronger – that’s why non-Lithuanians, living here, should also be concerned with Lithuanian interests and show respect for its language and culture. I don’t believe Russian culture is detrimental to Lithuania – but bureaucratic anti-culture is. Totalitarian centralization is detrimental – it has been wreaking havoc with both Lithuanians and Russians. I am the most genuine specimen of an internationalist. My program is simple: democracy, sovereignty and mutual respect.”

Statements by Kaušpedas the politician reveal a carefully weighed approach, that healthy and realistic “centrism”, rooted in folk tradition, that I made note of with regard to his artistic stance. I recall a phrase he said with a tint of regret: “I can’t do anything without thinking twice.” It was probably that that, despite a great potential, didn’t allow him to become a great rock artist. But – God help him! – that quality should help him become a major “public leader”.

We are thus on the verge of a Historical Precedent. For the first time in this country (and the world?) a citizen of the toy world of shocking “political rock” takes a step towards real, adult politics. It is perfectly legitimate that this is taking place in the Baltics, so far the Soviet Union’s only region where the process of de-Stalinization and renewal has imbued all the strata of the population from top to bottom. For the first time catchy refrains stand a chance of turning into responsible political declarations, for the first time young people will be able to vote for one of their very own. This is more than rock’n’roll – and I like it.

“I would like to seek nomination for President of the Republic.” On seeing my smile Algis says calmly: “It is normal. I think every person should have a sense of complete, ‘Presidential’ responsibility for his country. And, for its part, the country should respect every one of its citizens as a potential President... We have forgotten about it in the past few decades. In general, we have forgotten and discarded so much – we don’t even remember whether we are still alive or not.”

P.S. In late October 1988 Algis Kaušpedas was elected to Lithuania’s Council, Presidium of the Sejm of the Republic’s Popular Movement.

Artemy Troitsky

* Nagorny Karabakh has been the scene of recent inter-ethnic clashes.

--GRAPHY



In its proper sense the word "discography" still sounds like mockery to most Soviet rock groups. For a long time, albums of rock groups were distributed on reels or cassettes exclusively through private channels. The cassette cases carried the basic information — the album's title, list of songs and the line-up. The recordings were made at home or — semi-legally — at government-owned studios. The first LPs of Soviet rock groups appeared in the West. The double album *Red Wave* was the first, released in the United States with the assistance of Joanna Stingray. It carried numbers by four Leningrad groups — Alice, Aquarium, Kino and Strannye Igra. Cruise cut their first English-language record in Federal Germany, *Va Banque* — in Finland. In January 1989 CBS Records released an LP of Boris Grebenshchikov, the leader of Aquarium. In France, Barclay Fonogram issued an album of Vassily Shumov and his group Center. In the spring of 1989 a *Zvuki Moo* LP was released in Britain, which was recorded in Moscow by the well-known musician and producer Brian Eno. Despite the lifting of bans and the appearance of the first discs of Soviet rock groups, there have been quite a few complaints over the shoddy work of the national record company Melodiya. This is a list of tape albums of the Soviet Union's most popular rock groups.

! R O C K
S T A R S
● profiles of best known groups and solo artists



ALICE (Leningrad) and KOSTANTIN KINCHEV

Kinchev has been writing songs since he was 14. He made a claim to success in 1984 when, together with musicians of Secret and Alice, he recorded the album *Nervous Night*. But Kinchev reached his pinnacle on joining Alice, founded by V. Zadery in 1984. There emerged the problem of two leaders in one band. And though nothing like a personality clash ever occurred, Zadery elected to quit and set up his own band, Nateh (Take It). Kinchev possesses fine vocals and artistry, his music is energy laden and his subjects are always very topical. Kinchev has been in the cast of Ogorodnikov's film "Burglar".

Albums: *Nervous Night* (1984)

Energy (1985)

Block Ada (1987)*

206, Part Two (1988)



AQUARIUM (Leningrad)

The group was formed in July 1972. The songwriter/lyricist Boris Grebenshchikov, in his "Truthful Biography of Aquarium", cites the following formula: "AQUARIUM = BG + Gakkel minimal working line-up/and the rest in any combination." Besides music and lyrics Grebenshchikov writes prose, goes in for painting and has been featured in Nekhoroshev's film "Ivanov".

Albums: *The Temptation of St. Aquarium* (1973)

Fables of Count Diffusor (1974)

Minuet for the Tiller of the Soil (1974)

The Other Side of the Looking Glass (1976)

All Brothers Are Sisters (1978)

Blue Album (1981)

Triangle (1981)

Acoustics, The History of Aquarium, Vol. 2 (1982)

Taboo (1982)

Radio Africa (1983)

Ichthyology, live (1984)

Day of Silver (1984)

Children of December (1985)

Ten Arrows, live (1986)

Equinox (1988)



AUCTION (Leningrad)

Having emerged in 1985 the band is highly reputed for its innovative arrangements and wonderful showmanship.

Albums: *Come Back to Sorrento* (1986)

All Is Quiet in Baghdad (1987)

How I Turned a Traitor (1988)

* *Block ada* is literally translated as "Block of Hell". *Blokada* in Russian means "siege" (referring to the Nazi siege of Leningrad).



AVIA (Leningrad)

The band was set up in late 1985. The musical brain consists of musicians who worked with Strannye Igry. The band's concert is a theatrical show, making use of the imagery of the revolutionary working class theater of the 1920s.

Albums: *The Life and Work of Composer Zudov* (1986)

To All and Sundry! (1988)



BRAVO (Moscow)

The first concerts of the band date back to 1983. Bravo is noted for its reinterpretation of the music of the 1950s and early 1960s. The band owes its success to the appeal and clear voice of the vocalist Zhanna Aguzarova.

Albums: In 1987 Melodiya released Bravo's first LP, untitled. It includes a string of new songs and several re-worked numbers of 1984 and 1985.



BIOCONSTRUCTOR (Moscow)

The group, formed in the fall of 1986, professes technopop, using a lot of computer music. Alexander Yakovlev takes care of the music, lyrics and vocals.

Albums: *Dances on VCR* (1987)

Alexander Yakovlev and "Pop-Amalgamation" (1987)



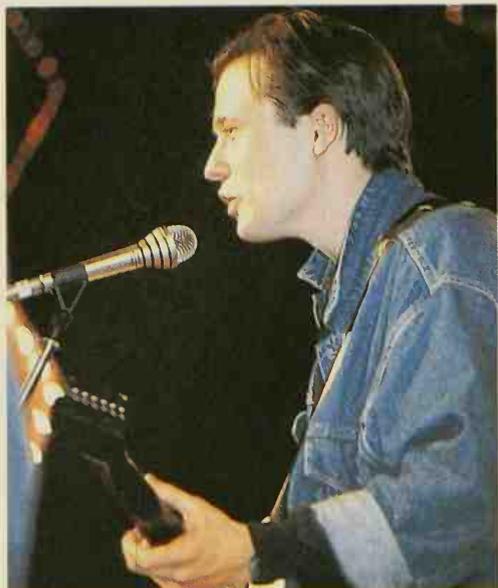
BRIGADE S (Moscow)

Set up in 1985. The leader, Igor Sukachev, described the band as a "proletarian jazz orchestra". Brigade S has been on tour in Poland and has appeared in Finland.

The music of Brigade S reveals features of the most diverse styles and trends.

Albums: The band's first tape album of 1987 was distributed without its consent, therefore it has no title.

Welcome to the Restricted Area (1989)



CENTER (Moscow)

Moscow's first New Wave band which is easily recognized by the voice of Vassily Shumov, being totally devoid of any intonation. The lyrics are often clusters of nouns or prohibitive slogans that form a logical sequence, evoking thoughts of life's absurdity.

- Albums:** *Center* (1982)
Stewardess on Summer Flights (1983)
Bed-Sitter (1983)
Reading on Public Transport (1983)
Keen on Machines (1984)
Flower and Moth (1985)
Signs of Life (1985)
Learn to Swim (1986)
Arthur Rimbaud (1986)
Favorite Songs (1986)
A Remarkable Man (1986)
Russians in Their Own Company (1987)
Papoose (1988)
Ablution (1988)



CHAIF (Sverdlovsk)

One of the best bands of the Sverdlovsk Rock Club. The leader, Vladimir Sharkhin, clarifies the etymology of the name [*chaif* = *chai* (tea) + *kaif* (gusto)]: "We practiced and kept drinking tea all the time. We found both enjoyable, hence the name. And the word is easy." The Chaif music is rooted in early Rolling Stones. The lyrics carry a bit of humor, are simple and street-wise.

- Albums:** *Zinaida* (1986)
Neither Hide Nor Hair (1987)
Leatherette (1987)
 Vladimir Sharkhin (solo): *Life in Rosy Smoke* (1985)
Bad Dreams (1985)



DDT (Ufa-Leningrad)

The band was founded by Yury Shevchuk in 1981. DDT pursues Russian national traditions in both its tunes and lyrics. Shevchuk focuses attention on the lyrics which, as distinct from those of other socially-conscious groups, reveal a degree of optimism.

- Albums:** *Pig on the Rainbow* (1982)
Compromise (1983)
Periphery (1984)
Time (1985)
Thaw (1987)
I Got This Role (1988)



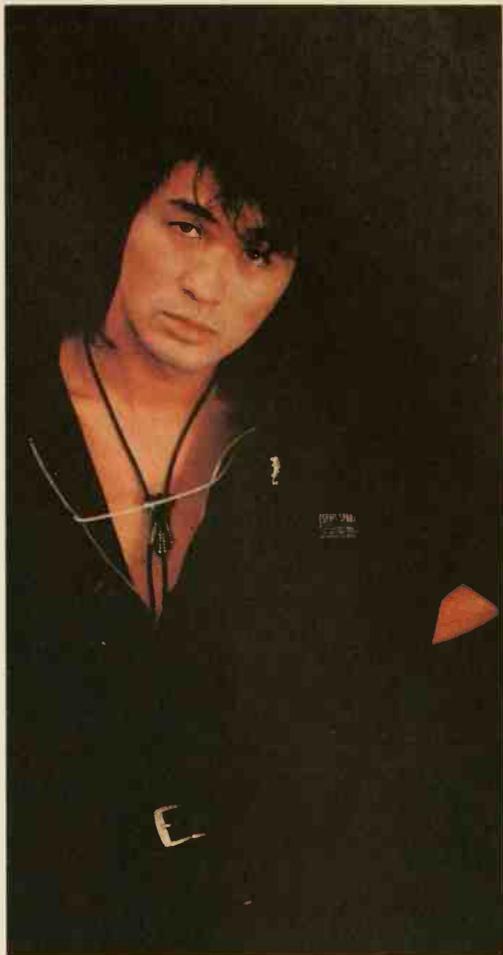
EST (Moscow)

The EST (Russian acronym for Electro-Convulsive Therapy) band was set up by Andrei Gerneza and Zhan Sagadayev in 1987, and was an instant success. EST has won two Moscow rock festivals. Andrei Gerneza defines their music as a “synthesis of punk rock, Russian folklore and heavy rock’n’roll”.



IGRY (Leningrad)

The group was born in 1986 out of a fragment of Strannye Iгры (Strange Games), now defunct. In most of the songs the musicians make use of French poetry. Some of the lyrics are penned by the Leningrad poet Andrei Solovyov. The band has been on successful tours of Poland and Italy.



KINO (Leningrad)

In 1982 Victor Tzoi and Alexey Rybin recorded a semi-acoustic album *45* in which they were helped by Aquarium musicians. The simplicity of the lyrics and catchy tunes ensured its success. The album remains one of the group’s most appealing. The hero of Tzoi’s songs is a heavy smoker, sharing a bottle of liquor with a company of friends, walking about the nocturnal city – he is unsure of the morrow. Beginning with the *Kamchatka Boss* Kino’s music acquires an increasingly electronic sound, inclined towards New Wave. Victor Tzoi has been featured in Nugmanov’s film “The Needle”.

Albums: *45* (1982)

46 (1983)

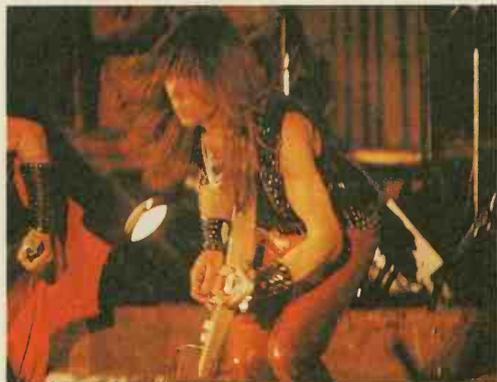
Kamchatka Boss (1983)

This Is No Love (1984)

Night (1985)

Blood Group (1988)

ROCK STARS



KORROZIYA METALLA

(Moscow)

Korroziya Metalla (Corrosion of Metal), one of Moscow's leading heavy metal bands, has been on the scene since 1985.

Albums: *The Power of Evil* (1985)

Concert - 87 (1987)

The Order of Satan (1987)



NARODNOYE

OPOLCHENIYE (Leningrad)

Narodnoye Opolcheniye (People's Militia), one of Leningrad's first punk bands, was set up in 1982. It is noted for its atomic vocals.

Albums: *Requiem for Brezhnev* (1982)

Jamba 1 (1982)

Jamba 2 (1983)

O.S.N.O. (1983)

Och, Malice, Och (1983)

Up To and From (1983)

Crazy Day (1984)

Prophylactics (1984)

New Year's (1985)

Official Version (1985)

Official Subversion (1985)

Alexey Stroy, Selected Works (1985)

War (1986)

Cremation of the Toy World (1987)

Concert at the Sixth Festival (1988)

Give Me Caviar (1988)



NAUTILUS POMPILIUS

(Sverdlovsk)

One of the Soviet Union's most popular bands in 1988. Vyacheslav Butusov, the leader of Nautilus, is a fine melodist and arranger. Much of the band's success is attributed to the lyrics of Kormiltsev.

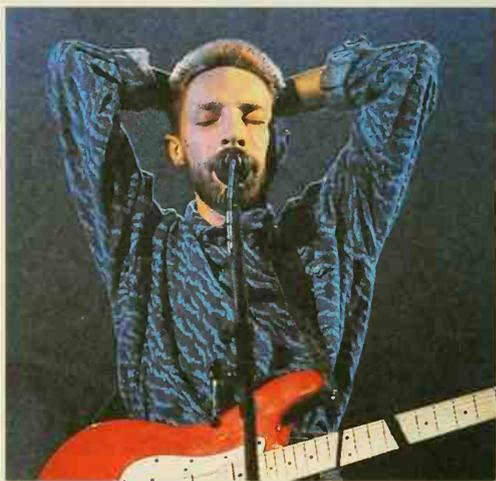
Nautilus Pompilius is the Latin name of a mollusc that breeds by biting off pieces of its flesh with its shell.

Albums: *The Invisible* (1985)

The Crossing (1984)

Parting (1986)

Nautilus' Best (1988)



NICOLAI COPERNICUS

(Moscow)

An adherent of New Wave, the band concentrates on the quality of sound. This explains the existence of only one studio-recorded album, though the songs are many.

Album: *Motherland* (1986)

NOCHNOI PROSPEKT

(Moscow)

Nochnoi Prospekt (Night Avenue) was founded in 1985 and has existed as an electronic duo. Before that Borisov and Sokolovsky worked with the group Prospekt that did twists and rock'n'rolls. Nochnoi Prospekt was one of the first in Moscow to take up electronic New Wave. Following a crisis in 1987 the band launched a search for new ways in music, which resulted in the recording of *Democracy and Discipline* in the spirit of meditative avant-garde. The new program was non-commercial. Nochnoi Prospekt was a success at the festivals Lithuanica – 87, Rafes – 87 and the First National Festival of Electronic Avant-garde Music in Vilnius.

Albums: *Strange Faces* (1985)

Gems of Love (1985)

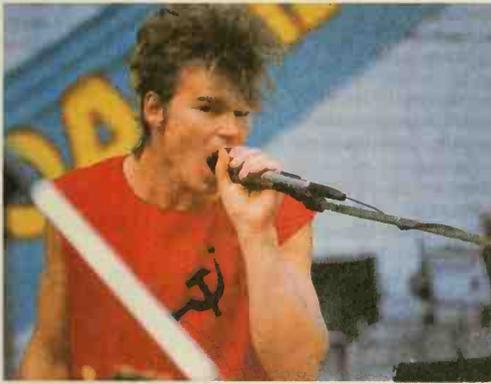
Colors of Gilded Years (1986)

Life of Humanities (1986)

Democracy and Discipline (1987)

Resorts of the Caucasus (1987)

Acids (1987-88)



OBLACHNY KRAI

(Arkhangelsk)

Oblachny Krai (Cloudy Land), one of the best Soviet hard rock groups, employs Russian national traditions. The leader, S. Bogayev, reputed to be one of the country's best guitarists, writes both music and lyrics.

Albums: *Cloudy Land* (1982)

Cloudy Land II, or Agricultural Rock (1982)

Home Talent (1983)

The Pinnacle of Idiocy (1984)

Mongrel's Lot (1984)

Stirrup and People (1985)

Grand Harmony (1987)

PROKHODNOI DVOR and

YURY NAUMOV (Leningrad)

Yury began playing the guitar at the age of 14. His repertory includes about 70 songs. Naumov is a fine blues guitarist and composer. He never got around to making a quality studio recording: the lyrics of his songs don't have a commercial appeal, so he would find it hard to pay for studio time. All of his recordings he did by overdubbing, all alone, as the Prokhodnoi Dvor (Connecting Courtyard) doesn't have a permanent line-up.

Albums: *Blues of 1000 Days* (1986)

Not Subject to a Check (1987)

Rolling Stone (1988)

STRANNYE IGRY (Leningrad)

The band was set up in 1983. A. Davydov provided the inspiration. Strannye Igrы (Strange Games) wrote music to French poetry and professed the ska style, quite rare in the Soviet Union. After Davydov's departure the band's music acquired an increasingly commercial slant. Recently, the band split into two – AVIA and Igrы.

Albums: *Metamorphoses* (1983)

Watch Out (1985)



TELEVIZOR (Leningrad)

Televizor (TV Set) has been around since late 1983. The lyrics of Mikhail Borzykin are noted for their acute social slant and uncompromising character, which was often a hindrance to public appearances. Televizor's music is harsh New Wave. The band has been on a successful tour in Italy.

Albums: *March of Fish* (1985)

The Home Country of Illusions (1988)

ROCK STARS

TIME MACHINE (Moscow)

One of Moscow's oldest groups. Andrei Makarevich, the band's leader since its inception, put together the first line-up back in 1969. Quite a few talented musicians played with the Machine: Kawagoe, Morgulis, Degtyaryuk, Phokin, Ilchenko, Ryzhenko. The group's recordings are plentiful. Prominent among them is a cycle of songs — illustrations to Saint Exupery's fairytale "Little Prince". Andrei Makarevich acted in and wrote the sound tracks for Stefanovich's films "The Soul" and "Start from the Start".

Albums: *Good Luck* (1986)
Rivers and Bridges (double, 1987)
Ten Years After (1987)
In a Circle of Light (1988)

URFIN JUICE (Sverdlovsk)

The band was formed in December 1980 by Alexander Pantykin. Ilya Kormiltsev wrote the lyrics. In April 1982 the band recorded a double album at the Sverdlovsk Film Studios. The album, *15*, formed the core of a gala show. The same year the group took part in the Opus-82 Festival in Vilnius, where it merited a prize for currency of style. In 1985 the band collapsed.

Albums: *Travel* (1981)
15 (1982)
Life in Heavy Metal Style (1984)



VEZHLYVY OTKAZ (Moscow)

Vezhlyvy Otkaz (Polite Refusal) was set up in 1985 by R. Suslov who was then with another band, The 27th Kilometer. The lyrics — taking after the ironic symbolism of early this century — are written by Arkady Semyonov. Refined and elitarian, the band's music combines features of jazz and reggae. In 1986-87 concert sets and

production of the band were directed by the Moscow artist and poet Gor Oganesyanyan.

Albums: *Opera '86* (1986)
Dust on Boots (1987)

VOSKRESENYE (Moscow)

The group Voskresenye (Resurrection or Sunday) was founded in 1979 by ex-Time Machinists Morgulis (bass) and Kawagoe (drums). The line-up also featured Romanov, Sapunov and Makarevich (not of Time Machine). The core of their repertory was made up of songs by Romanov and Nikolsky. Their lyrics carried an air of pessimism, fatigue and loneliness. The very next year the group ceased concert performances. Voskresenye staged a comeback in 1981 with Nikolsky, Sapunov, Shevyakov and Romanov. The line-up stayed intact only until 1982, after which the band hit its demise. Romanov kept the name and enlisted a crop of new musicians — and though much of the program was retained, too, the spirit of the old Voskresenye was not there. The band never reached the heights of popularity of previous years. Currently, Romanov leads the band SV (Russian acronym for Medium Waves or Sleeping Car), Nikolsky is the pivot of Zerkalo Mira (Mirror of the World), Morgulis and Kawagoe carry the leadership of Shanghai, while Sapunov works with Lotus.

Albums had no titles:
"Voskresenye 1" (double) (1979)
"Voskresenye 2" (1981)

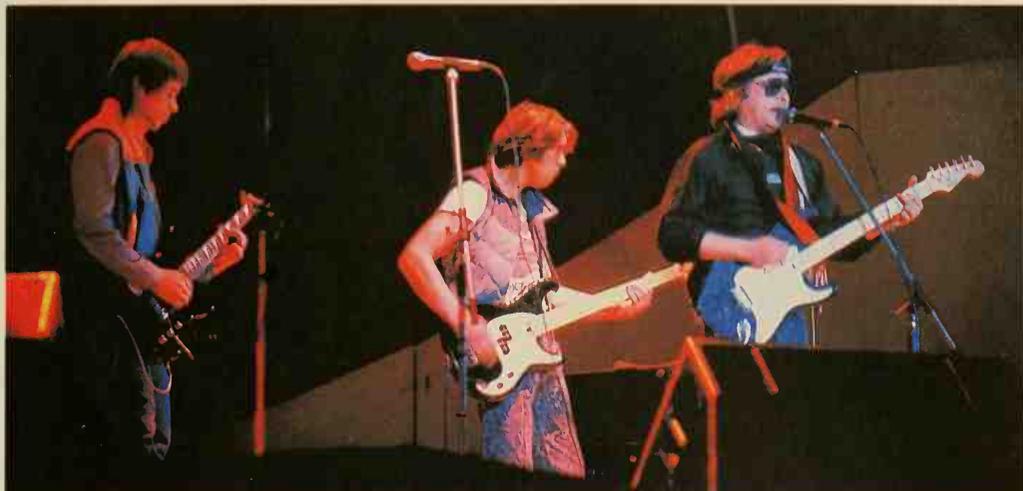
VYKHOD (Leningrad)

Vykhod (Exit) has been in existence since 1981. The leader, Sergei Selenin, initially conceived of the band as electric, but for practical reasons they played acoustic music until 1984. Black humor is prominent in their lyrics and the music gravitates towards hard rock. Vykhod doesn't have a permanent line-up.

Albums: *Brother Issiah* (1982)
Me, You and Moo-Moo (1983)
Eleventh Floor (1984)
We Know the Word (1985)
Rock'n'Roll Is More Than Age (1986)
Miscarried Concert in Moscow (1986)

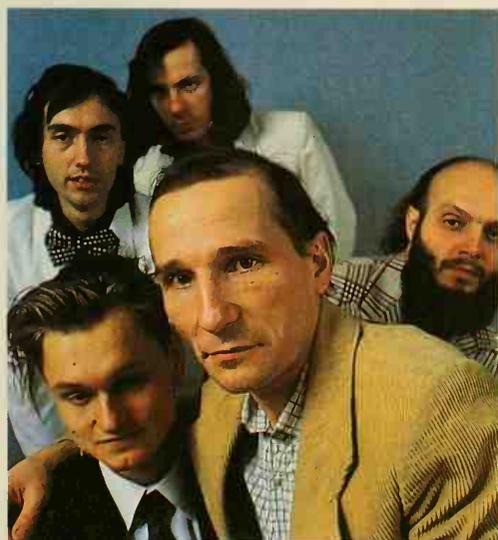
ZOOPARK (Leningrad)

Ever since its emergence in February 1981, Zoopark (the Zoo) and its frontman



Mikhail Naumenko have maintained a lively interest from their audiences. Dozing in the fumes of liquor and clouds of smoke, their songs' heró tries to make head or tail of various of life's situations. Naumenko's songs are heavily peppered with self-irony. Zoopark's music is simple and is closest to rhythm-and-blues.

Albums: *Blues de Moscou* (1981)
LV (55) (1982)
Yesterday and the Day Before in a Provincial Town (1983)
White Stripe (1984)
 Mikhail Naumenko (solo): *All Brothers Are Sisters* (1978). Jointly with Boris Grebenshchikov
My Sweetie and Others (1980)



Albums released by the national record company Melodiya:

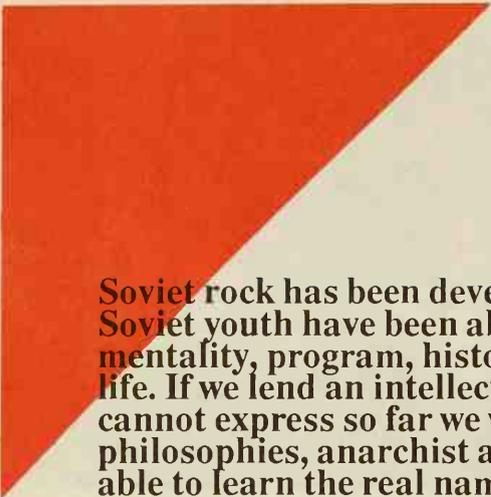
ALICE – Energy (1988)
AQUARIUM – Aquarium (1987)
AVIA – To All and Sundry (1988)
BRAVO – 10-song LP (1987)
CENTER – 2-song single (1988)
STRANNYE IGRY – Watch Out (1988)
TELEVIZOR – March of Fish (1988)
TIME MACHINE – Good Luck (1986)
Rivers And Bridges (1987)
Ten Years After (1987)
In a Circle of Light (1988)
ZOOPARK – White Stripe (1988)

ZVUKI MOO* (Moscow)

The year 1981 may be considered the year of its emergence, as at this time Pyotr Mamonov and his brother Alexei began working on a program. For a number of years the group played only at private parties and didn't venture into their first electric concerts until 1985. Pyotr Mamonov played the main part in Nugmanov's film "The Needle".

Albums: *Simple Things* (1988)
The Crime (1988)

* Clipped "Sounds of Music" turns into "Sounds of Moo".



Soviet rock has been developing, growing far and wide. Soviet youth have been absorbing it as part of their mentality, program, history, philosophy and day-to-day life. If we lend an intellectual form to what the teenagers cannot express so far we will see an array of rebel philosophies, anarchist and religious ideas, we will be able to learn the real names of the moral problems that torment our society. Maybe then we will obtain dependable recipes for recuperation.

The time is near when the young will produce their theoreticians to sum up the experience of the "Common Grief Holiday" and translate it from the language of intuition into clear-cut and precise formulas of their new philosophy. They are coming!



*We shall sing, whistle and clatter,
We shall get through your skin to your bones.
Hey, brothers, do you sense in your kidneys
The stormy ringing of Russian bells?*

Alexander Bashlachov

СОВЕТСКИЙ РОК

на английском языке

Редактор русского текста *И. Н. Зайцев*

Редактор английского текста *Н. Л. Некрасова*

Художник *А. М. Ефремов*

Художественные редакторы *А. М. Ефремов, Л. В. Гришина*

Технический редактор *В. А. Юрченко*

ИБ № 17397

Подписано в печать 5.11.90. Формат 70×100^{1/16}. Бумага офсетная.
Печать офсетная. Усл. печ. л. 16,77. Усл. кр.-отт. 67,72. Уч.-изд. л.
19,53. Тираж 4545 экз. Заказ № 767. Цена 1 р. 50 к. Изд. № 45581.

Ордена Трудового Красного Знамени издательство "Прогресс"
Государственного комитета СССР по печати.
119847, ГСП, Москва, Г-21, Zubovskiy bulvar, 17.
Можайский полиграфкомбинат В/О "Совэкспорткнига"
Государственного комитета СССР по печати.
143200, Можайск, ул. Мира, 93.

¹⁵
THIS ~~IS~~ NOT QUITE AN ORDINARY BOOK, IF EVEN
FOR THE FACT THAT IT IS ABOUT A
PHENOMENON WHICH HAD FOR TWO
DECADES EXISTED UNDERGROUND
AND "CAME TO THE SURFACE" ONLY
SOME FOUR YEARS AGO. THE TOPIC
IS TERRA INCOGNITA FOR THE
READERS BECAUSE A FEW
UNCONNECTED PUBLICATIONS
ON THE **SOVIET ROCK** CULTURE,
APPEARING FROM TIME TO TIME
IN THE WORLD'S POPULAR
MAGAZINES, CANNOT EMBRACE
EVEN A TINY PART OF THE
EVENTS THAT HAVE OCCURRED
IN THE HISTORY OF **SOVIET ROCK**.

ISBN 5-01-001983-3