

Zywiolak

Nowa Ex-Tradycja

Karrot Kommando

Remember 2008? Barack Obama was elected President of the United States; there was a huge earthquake in China; and the world economy began to come apart at the seams, prefaced by the collapse of Lehman Brothers. Dramatic times, for sure, and they keep rolling on! Well, dramatic times call for dramatic music, and perhaps it is no surprise that in the midst of our collective cosmic meltdown, the Polish band Zywiolak's *Nowa Ex-Tradycja* is just coming to light.

Zywiolak describe themselves as a 'folk-metal' band, but I'd beg to differ as their influences are much too diverse. Zywiolak aren't folk-metal in the way that the Norwegian band Asmegin is folk-metal, with their buzzing and crunching guitars and cookie-monster deep-throated vocals. Nope; Zywiolak are far more witchy and pagan and punk, drawing on thunderous pounded drums, hurdy-gurdies, and a positively feral mix of the acoustic and the electric that tattoos itself onto your consciousness. Zywiolak's music lies at a hypnotic crossroads somewhere between the Warsaw Village Band's trance-inducing string interplay, and Hedningarna's Swedish/Finnish spell-casting rave-ups. Honestly, Zywiolak remind me very much of Hedningarna's acoustic-industrial music, and it is wonderful to see a current band exploring such sonic territory.

One of the distinctive hallmarks of Zywiolak's sound lies in the twin vocal presence of Iza Byra and Anucha Piotrowska. Together, Byra and Piotrowska explore the edges of their voices, calling and keening and uttering come-hitherings that bring to mind the work of both Hedningarna and Värtinā. The whispered incantatory work found on "Czarodzielnica," for instance, mashes into something akin to a plucked banjo and feverishly beaten skins and sawed fiddles, and the women utter blood-curdling screams as if they were attending a witch's sabbat.

Nowa Ex-Tradycja is heavy folk: witness how the spacious bass work and cavernous ambient sphere on "Oko Dybuka" gives way to something completely other, a lurching crazed beast of ergotized folk madness and downtuned power-chords. The album features a few traditional tunes, and many of the band's self-penned compositions also incorporate traditional melodies and lyrics. Zywiolak's music is thus a variety of 'revival' music, and what is being revived is just as much an ancient attitude as it is the use of ancient instruments. Zywiolak have also opened up shows for the fantastic Faroese folktronica band Valravn, and so it is clear that bands who push the envelope on the European folk scenes are finding one another. For those who like their folk-rock furious and belching flame-tinged fumes, Zywiolak may well prove to be one of the best pants-off listening experiences yet. - Lee Blackstone

The artist's web sites:

www.zywiolak.pl

www.myspace.com/zywiolak



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