

TONI KITANOVSKI & CHERKEZI ORCHESTRA

The group has been working together for three years now. Their album entitled "Borderlands" is a result of the creative joining of forces of two seemingly different worlds, a gipsy wedding band on one side and highly educated contemporary musicians well versed in jazz, popular styles and classical music on the other. Youthful curiosity for widening musical horizons and sheer love for music gives their sound exciting quality and constant freshness of ideas.

Toni Kitanovski is the mastermind and artistic director of the band. He has appeared with extreme avantguardists such as Vinny Golia, with all star formation lead by Balkan jazz frontrunner Teodosi Spassov, and finally he will appear with a whole gipsy wedding orchestra. His distinct guitar style and original compositions have brought him admiration among colleagues, critics and audience alike. With the help of his regular collaborator in all of his projects, master drummer Aleks Sekulovski, he researches the metamorphosis of rhythm called "clave" who came from West Africa. Black slaves brought it to the Americas and it became the foundation of all musical styles from Patagonia to the Polar circle (tango, samba, salsa, jazz, rocks.....all are modified clave). Clave traveled through North Africa, Middle East, Turkey and arrived in the Balkans where it is most distinctly integrated in gipsy music dance form called cocek (that's the one that makes dead man get up and dance).

Cherkezi orchestra got its name after their guru and oldest member in the group; the seventy years old trumpet player Cerkez Rashid. His two sons Asan (trumpet) and Ali (alto sax) along with their father are the main soloists. Other members come from long lines of musicians; whole families dedicated to music.

The repertoire is versatile, melodies from their native Macedonia, gipsy traditional, original compositions as well as Charlie Mingus and Eric Satie pieces. Carefully arranged rhythmic canvases incorporate traditional gipsy grooves intertwined with reggae, samba, African and New Orleans's "second line" makes one think of globalization as a good thing.

This band music is best described as what the great Duke Ellington called "Music of the human kind". It speaks to the music intellectual elite, as well as to fun loving rock folks, to techno aficionados and little kids. It creates confusion in the listener's mind sometimes and makes one wonder; whether he should cry or laugh. It makes you shake your body or at least tap you feet. It reminds you of a festival but also of moments when you needed to be alone...it does many things to you and they are all good! On top of it you have a chance to hear it the proper way – live. And if you don't believe any of this, come down anyways, check it out and make your own mind. But make sure you put on your dancing shoes!