

Emir Kusturica

& The no smoking orchestra

The No Smoking band (Zabranjeno Pusenje in their original Serbo-Croatian language) was born in Sarajevo in 1980 and soon became the most significant musical expression of "New Primitivism", a cultural resistance movement created in the transition years of post-Tito Yugoslavia.

After two years of live performances in small Sarajevo concert halls, in 1984 the No Smoking (which musical critics have defined as a Gypsy techno-rock band) recorded their first album, "Das ist Walter". One of the songs in the album, "Zenica blues", was soon to hit the top charts in Yugoslavia with more than 100,000 copies sold. In the same period, the band appeared on a TV serial, "Surrealist Top List", a fake newscast that was actually a savage satire of Yugoslav politics. The trouble for the band started when its leader, Dr Nele Karajilic, made ironic remarks on Marshal Tito's death at a lively performance before a huge crowd of enthusiastic supporters.

Boycotted and heavily criticized by the country's official propaganda machine, the band was able all the same to record its second album, "Dok cekas sabah sa sejtanom" ("Waiting for the Sabbath with the devil"), whose title contained words that were borrowed from Muslim Bosnian culture, just to emphasize the band's strong cultural bonds to Bosnia's capital city, Sarajevo.

Sales of the band's second album dropped precipitously due to the official censorship. The hard times took a heavy blow on the band. Some of the original members left and were replaced by others, including, in 1986, renowned film director Emir Kusturica on bass.

The band's third album, "Pozdrav iz zemlje safari" ("Greetings from safari land"), sold 90,000 copies. In the meantime, dramatic changes in the Yugoslav political scene allowed them to embark on a new tour. In 1989, they recorded their fourth album, "Male price o velikoj ljubavi" ("A little story of a great love") and appeared on the sequel to the TV serial "Surrealist Top List", which prophetically heralded the first impending Balkan crisis.

Soon before war broke out in the early '90s, Nele Karajilic moved to Belgrade and in 1994 formed a new band with younger musicians, including Stribor Kusturica, Emir's son, on drums. In 1998 the "No smoking" composed the music for Emir Kusturica's film "Black Cat, White Cat," which won the Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival of that year.

After the "Side Effects" tour in the summer of 1999, which draw more than 55,000 people to the band's live performances, and after their appearance at the Venice Film Festival and their participation as guests at important TV shows, the No Smoking have recorded the album "Unza Unza Time", as well as a video clip for MTV and Video Music, directed by Emir Kusturica himself.

In 2004, Emir Kusturica and The No Smoking Orchestra started a new worldwide tour trough France, Israel, Spain, Italy, Argentina, turkey... After a successful tour of 200 sold-out gigs the band released their first live cd & dvd "Live Is A Miracle In Buenos Aires".