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Haze - Touching Sock Records - Gag Order - Insane Society -
The Sabala Bacała - Nigdy Wiecej



Never a band for doing things too quickly, The Sabala Bacala's long awaited second album *Urodzeni w PRLu*, finally hit the record shelves at the end of 2016: a little over three years after their quite remarkable and stunning debut, *W Końcu!*, was released to an unsuspecting public.

Being the curious Leo that I am then, I just had to ask the band's vocalist Sylwester Zimon why *Urodzeni w PRLu* had been so long in the making:

Such is life :) It's hard to connect casual stuff with playing in a punk rock band. Everything is based on a compromise and because of that some things take longer than we would like. I think that our third album will be released in 2018 or 2019. At the moment we just want to play some shows with new material and we'll see.

Of course, there is an advantage in a band taking their time in releasing that all important second album; an advantage usually centring around the actual quality of its sound and production. After all, nobody wants to make the mistake of releasing a product that, though containing some undeniably great tunes, nevertheless still sounds like it was made under water, and mixed by a tone deaf engineer: as in the case of e.g. The Damned's *Music For Pleasure*.

And this refusal to simply rush writing new material for release has certainly paid dividends for The Sabala Bacala; especially in regards to retaining complete control over every aspect of *Urodzeni w PRLu*. From its recording and down to its artwork, creative autonomy is a value that Sylwester and the band obviously both value, and hold in much esteem:

Yes. We are (an) 100% DIY band. We released our second album by ourselves. Everything we do is made by us. We are working with our friends to make things happen. From recording to layout, photos and graphic design of our album cover. We want to make this as professional as it is possible, and I think it works really fine. We can do it exactly the way what we want to :).

Of course, stubbornly sticking to the artistic principles of retaining creative autonomy and self-funding your product, will always remain a bit of a gamble. But *Urodzeni w PRLu* more than fully justifies such a stance and stand. From the first notes of opening track "Carpe Dzień", to the last of closing track "Punkowa Legitymacja", *Urodzeni w PRLu* is a veritable masterclass in

what makes for, and what separates a great rock 'n' roll album from, well, quite simply, one that's not. Literally jam-packed with highly addictive, boot stomping, sing-a-long, power-pop-punk-rock gems, *Urodzeni w PRLu* doesn't disappoint or put a foot wrong on any level whatsoever; and unquestionably lifts The Sabala Bacala even further into a musical class inhabited by a very few distinguished, and legendary, acts in 2017. It would not be an overstatement then to say that this is a band who are to Polish music what Charge 69 are to French, Red Shelter to Italian, and the Nic Austin led gloriously majestic Church of Eon to English.

However, that Leo curiosity of mine raised its head once again as, not speaking any Polish myself outside of a basic "Hello" and "Goodbye", and being one of those strange and rare creatures who is genuinely interested in lyrical content of songs, the question as to what subject matters *Urodzeni w PRLu* concerned itself with, was posed to Sylwester:

'Urodzeni w PRLu' means "Born in the PRL". It's (a) reference to (the) Communist times in Poland when we were born. The songs tells about changes that we face today. We are not so young and we see the differences between us as a child and (today's) modern kids. We were raised without (the) internet, social media or globalisation. Now we can see (the) shallowness of relationships, consumerism etc. That's a problem. We're singing mostly about social problems and everyday issues. Our album also tells about being yourself.

Our (present) single "Carpe Dzień" is inspired by Chuck Palahniuk (s) Fight Club book, and tells about personality split. At day you have office (job) but by night you need to fightback and make some dangerous stuff. It's something like (the) Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde story. (Our) Next single "Pozdrowienia z Linii Frontu" ("Greetings from a Frontline") is inspired by Euromaidan in Ukraine, and tells about (the) situation when you have to fight for your rights and you have nothing to lose.

(Ed: "Carpe Dzień" also features Stan from the Warsaw Dolls; whilst "Pozdrowienia z Linii Frontu" features Panku from Mindfield).

One of the social problems being increasingly faced by Poland since the right-wing *The Law and Justice (PiS) Party* was elected into power in a landslide victory a little over a year ago now, is an increase in hate crime.



The Sabała a Bacała



Not least hate crimes directed towards the country's non-EU refugees and non-Polish communities. Polish politician Katarzyna Lubnauer, a member of the country's socially and economically liberal *Modern Party*, angrily summed PiS's first act after its election - the abolition of Poland's *National Council Against Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* (originally set up in 2013 by the then Prime Minister Donald Tusk) - as showing an "increasing reluctance in Poland towards accepting people of another colour, another race, or who use a language other than Polish."

The inclusion of The Ramones "The KKK Took My Baby Away" on *Urodzeni w PRLu* then, didn't seem to be just a mere coincidence. Nor the band posing with a street mural of Lech Wałęsa in the background, or each of its members wearing fake Lech Wałęsa - type moustaches on the album's front cover (Lech Wałęsa: ex-leader of the Soviet bloc's first independent trade union, *Solidarność*, and ex-Polish Prime Minister). Or even the inclusion of Poland's leading anti-racist organisation *Nigdy Wiecej's* (Never Again) logo on the album's back cover. Over to you Sylwester:

We are against racism and artificial divisions. The crisis connected with refugees in Europe has shown that racism is still a current issue. (The) Never Again logo on the cover shows which side of the fence we stand. In this perspective "The KKK Took My Baby Away" is still current. This song will appear also on the compilation album 'Ramones Maniacs Poland', which is a tribute to The Ramones (and) recorded by Polish punk rock bands. It will be released this year. (Ed: i.e. 2017).

Sylwester goes on to expand on this statement this further when asked, from a Polish perspective, what he thought the major issues Poland as a country will face in 2017:

We see some bad things in Poland. Racism, xenophobia...our government is very right-winged. Some bad thing also happened with (the) national media which (reminds) us (of Communist) times. But this is not a

problem only in Poland. People all around the world are radicalized which does not lead to anything good. I have no idea what might happen in Poland because the situation is slightly unpredictable."

But despite these (shared) fears of uncertain times ahead, the simple exuberant joy of playing in a band remains the more obvious driving force behind *Urodzeni w PRLu*; and the emotional, almost soul-wrenching, intensity and sensitivity of the lead guitar work on tracks such as the band's current single "Carpe Dzień" and "Pozdrowienia z Linii Frontu" (the latter due to be released soon as a single in its own right too) is truly outstanding - and show not just an inarguably technically talented and gifted guitarist, but also just how far the band have matured as a creative unit since releasing its 2013 debut, *W KońCu!*

Yes, *Urodzeni w PRLu* retains its predecessors predilection for highly energetic, gasoline-fuelled, raucous sing-a-long slices of 2-3 minute punk-metal-rock. But it also represents a definite musical shift towards more power-based, rock-orientated, melodic compositions like the recently released (and extremely mighty & majestic) Ruts DC singles, "Psychic Attack" and "Kill The Pain".

Urodzeni w PRLu then is a highly recommended must have for any serious music aficionados record collection; and stands as a wonderful credit to The Sabała Bacała's home town of Rzeszów, and to Poland's punk-rock-metal scenes as a whole.

Roll on album number three.

Johnny Heartbreaker

(Ed: 'W KońCu!' Translates into English as 'Finally!' A tongue-in-cheek reference by the band to the fact that, though first forming in 2001, it was to take them a further 12 years before they got around to releasing an actual record. As I said at the beginning of this article then, The Sabała Bacała are *not* a band for doing things too quickly!)

