

Brainwashed - Staraya Derevnnya, "Inwards opened the floor."

Written by Eve McGivern

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A truly multinational project, Staraya Derevnnya is a collaboration of artists, poets and musicians across Israel, London and New York, released on independent record label Raash Records out of Jerusalem. The lyrics are sung, screamed, and chanted in a combination of Russian merged with a made-up language, with only the track titles — derived from a line of each song — translated to English. Knowing Russian is not required to be transported into a journey of epic aural proportions.

[Raash](#)

With a background in art, my attention was drawn to the cover, an inspiration from Russian interactive multimedia artist (and sometimes group member) Danil Gertman. There has been a lot of discussion around my house as to what the image conveys, with dripping lines of paint like blood, the presence of a floating (or falling) figure, perhaps not quite human. As with all art, the image is open to interpretation, and both the artwork as well as Staraya Derevnnya focus on feeling over message.

The collective utilizes a collection of seemingly disparate instruments in their sound creations: toys, radio interference, kazoo, electric cello, theremin, synths, melodica, dulcimer, bass clarinet, flute, piano, and drums, as well as many others. Heck, there's even a rocking chair in here somewhere. Yet, it all works supremely well, the collective working in a guided experimental spirit. The feel of *Inwards opened the floor.* is initiated by the sound of disarray, a track held together through repeated piano notes and a modulated vocal refrain, vocals, washing over layers of increasingly chaotic drone, irregular drumming, and ambient sounds. From there, "Chirik' is heard from the treetops" offers an industrial dance rhythm with underlying ominous bass notes. A kazoo and pulsating theremin chime in, while the vocalist yelps and howls as if possessed by Blixa Bargeld. Everything works seamlessly, until finally abruptly sputtering out for jarring effect.

Double bass and cello form a chilling backdrop on "Flicked the ash in kefir" before a clatter of

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chains crates a distraught rhythm, accompanied by the impassioned, near screams of the vocalist, building in chaotic saxophone for added tension before pulling back into beautiful ambient drones. Probably my favorite track, the song is billed as a kind of "Christmas song" which translates:

“Powder Snow. Someone's trail. Grayish Day Winter realm. Faint Light You flaked out. As if Flicked the ash in kefir

Many Years. Wait for candy. Smell Pine Inhale. New Year Magic hour. As if Childhood once more upon us”

There is no “theme” here as a whole: this is primal music, focusing on intonation and feel, a journey of aural movements. And in that, it succeeds. While listening to “Flicked the ash in kefir” prior to seeing the translation, I was transported to a place of darkness. Reading the lyrics, I am reminded of the earliest Christmases I enjoyed in innocence and happiness, before they were impacted by traumatic life events like divorces, distance, and deaths. The song then took on a new, more personal meaning: the muddying of purity, like flicking ashes into kefir, and the yearning to return to a more innocent time.

“Burning bush and apple saucer” is a conversation of sorts, initially between male and female, that moves into urgency by the male, as if the conversation has broken down. The song invokes waves of pain, an urgency to comfort and be comforted. While I may not know much of what’s being said, that’s the beauty of this album — I don’t need to know the language. Good music is transcendental, separate from any language, and a distinct language like no other. Staraya Derevnnya nails it.

[Samples available here.](#)