

MUSIC ARCHIVES

Uprostred

by DON ALLRED

February 23, 1999



Jablkon : Czech mates or Marx brothers?

Even though (or because) it's their (and also Czech rock's) main selling point over here, I wonder if the Plastic People of the Universe don't get tired of hauling around their Legend. You know: how they wouldn't back down from unasked-for political martyrdom, and thus inspired the movement that somehow peacefully took over their Government. When the all-clear was finally sounded, the Plastics, whose name signified ingenuity and adaptability (as in Robinson

Crusoe, not Bill Clinton), broke up. Maybe it was like spouses separating only after a long family crisis is past. In any case, three members stepped out to form Pulnoc. Who came to rock away the barnacles of history and chamber fusion, but initially tended toward endless guitarr.

By the time they were robustly *Live in New York* (in 1989, released on CD in 1996), however, guitar was Pulnoc's sweet mighty engine, no longer trying to be the whole vehicle.

Then *they* split, but left piñata goodies. In "Vidiny," on Fiction's self-titled 1996 album, Plastic/Pulnoc person Milian Hlavsa just keeps slo-o-w-ly raising the noize level around a sleepless chantoozie— noize doesn't change til it does, flipping you *and* her like a new wave Flipper (band *or* dolphin)!

Stranger-tasting post-Pulnoc goodies may be found on the 1997 Black Point import *The Black Sampler*, which offers illegible titles, P/P vet Joseph Janicek's Echt!, and a co-op including Plastics Brabenec, Brabec, and Karafiat. Echt! motorvate a rusty sled to run over wolves from wussy Russian fairy tales (okay, so there's also a tenderly growled dream sequence or two). Brabenec's crew float through nightmares like Reed and Cale revisiting an unplugged and un-Nico'd "It Was a Pleasure Then," trapped on a raft. But now everybody's back on Plastic People's li'l ol' atom-brain boogie train, hellbound for a dab of para-Velvet/Stooge/Beefheart glory, judging from their reunion disc *1997*. All aboard for Funtime!

If that's too classical for you geezerphobes, be aware of Uz Jsme Doma, now HQ'd in Brooklyn. Live, or via the 1998-recorded live disc now added to their early-'90s *Uprostred Slov*, they may just prog/ska/punk-ly march your preconceptions right up the wall to spazzercise the night and ceiling away. (I, Allred, immediately associated that word "uprosted" with how I was feeling the day I first saw it scrawled on the parched CD cover: uprooted, roused, roasted even. Though actually, *Uprostred Slov* means "In the middle of words, there's a trap." Even better.)

Down the same jugular vein, *Kniha Psana Chaosem* finds DG 307, old soul-if-not-cellmates of the Plastics, luring an electric violin across cinemascesapes of stealthy psychoacoustics whilst including lessons on how speech can help define melody and vice versa. And further south still, we find Chor Vzskych Muzikantov. This Choir of Important Musicians are said to be the

Slovakian political equivalent to Plastic People. Wonder why: it's just a barnful o' beatniks beerfueling farm implements to play orkystrations of stick-figure jazz-ska. These seeming slackers parody the parody commandos of UJD— why, that's impossible! Book 'em, Dannoskych!

Let's chill. Ali Ibn Rachid's vocalist Lubo instantly engages, with a truly smooov line backed by tiny raging guitar and clockwork drums. I think that these denote tiny raging hormones, and that this is a booty call. Recommended to fans of Gilberto Gil, Belle & Sebastian, *Another Green World*, even. Your sparse but beautifully appointed pantheon awaits this ditto objet.

Later, by campfire, we sense the presence of Jablkon 's *Baba Aga*, in which adroit "gypsy" guitar (and our taste for the exotic) is often jostled by flying lipservice and spoons. They kill with a microscopically titled hookup between the likes of Nilsson's "Coconut" and Mungo Jerry's "In the Summertime." Put de sproing in de skiffle and call me right now! I'd swear they also hootenanny Mountain's "Mississippi Queen" riff under a swooning strip of Cream's "A-h-h, feel free . . .," right thru a ricochet wisp of "Golden Years." This song is distressingly short, but it would have to be. Jablkon also may have taken tips from Harpo's harp and Chico's "cardsharp piano." Recommended to soundtrackers of movies and magic acts (on and off stage).

Back home, uprosted once more, I put on *Liz*, by Czech American group Skulpey. They blow up my impacted rage, shame, and frustration— jagged chunks, right as rain. They're my iron for the day. Other Amerikanskis have been to the well: Jennifer DeFelice moves basslines, and the odd but incisive English lyric, thru the everyday secrets of Slede. Zive Slede's *Milacek Vytvari Krajinu*. And there are cross-cultural bands I haven't heard yet, like Deep Sweden, and Sabot, whose '99 tour begins in the Czech Republic and continues thru China. Cool— maybe Skulpey and I will bumrush a few revolutions (of the Earth, anyway), and pick up Sabot on the last round. See you there?

Czech-rock CD-ordering information can be obtained via www.tamizdat.org. Plastic People of the Universe play the Knitting Factory February 27 and 28.

**MORE: ASIA (BAND) BILL CLINTON JOSEPH JANICEK MUSIC NEWS THE PLASTIC PEOPLE
OF THE UNIVERSE**