

ILLEGAL TRADE – ACID FOR THE ROYAL FAMILY REVIEW

1977: *punk* is born. **1994:** **Laurent Hô** is the founder of the label **Epiteth records** and the father of the so called *industrial hardcore*. **1995:** **Atari Teenage Riot** publish **Delete yourself!** **2001:** **Ambassador 21** make their debut in the music world with **Invitation to execution**. **03/19/2015:** **Illegal trade**, *side project* of the former, publish their *debut album*, **Acid for the royal family**, for the label **Hands productions**.

Why this sort of chronicles? **Alexey** and **Natasha** in fifteen years rose through the ranks of the *underground* with sweat, anger, and a *slogan*, until they found home at Hands productions (and recently at the Netherlands' label **Prspct**), which is letting a bigger audience to them. Yours truly saw them playing *live*, and listening to this album made me feel the same energy and estrangement.

The duo is now known better than the time they published **X** in 2013, a very complex and clever work; now they show to the public another face of the *digital hardcore*, a genre born in Germany (but they are Byelorussian), in an easier and more to the point way. By the time *digital hardcore* has took different paths, and when we talk about it, we can't avoid citing the founders ATR previously nominated; but this is a work with a very different scope, and superior to the last album by the Germans, and more modern.

Why is it so? Citing **De Niro** *the bump, the quid*, the smart way is to never rest on what you have already achieved, to never reuse the same schemes that had their success previously, in reinventing every time the wheel. Start at the beginning again to destroy the schemes, to be triumphant in England, to show to the audacious listener a new *Summer of love*, to recall the *acid for the royal family* culture. Because that was the cultural climate of that time, the time of experimentation in any way; the duo's work is fundamental, they give a new energy, and a new fuel to a car that, by now, it seems it can't win anymore any race like it happened in the 90's.

How so? Using the modern day elements of the hardest *dancefloor* music in a mosaic that maybe doesn't revolutionize anything, but that no one can imitate, not with the same freshness and energy. How many people have asked: "Are you not tired of destroying your own music limits?". Well, if these are the results, we can only invite them to go on again and again. *Crossbreed*, *punk* ethos and violence, *digital hardcore*, *early rave* echoes, *wobbles dubstep* if you want to call them that, to the fine line with subgenres (*darkstep*, etc...), 90's *sampling* like *Space hunter's Nevermind*, so much *groove*, and a clear link to the french *industrial hardcore* of once upon a time.

The Byelorussian duo has done with this album the same thing as the *big beat* has done years ago: the fusion of *punk* and *black music* with *electronic music*, all in our time. Now, it could easily seem nothing of important, but in a time where the bands are put in rigid genres, it could be an example for many others. The *label*, no need to say, supports them strongly, being always receptive to fresh, experimental works new in every aspect, to show to the public, making it easier.

Nine tracks for fifty minutes that cleverly alternates the different sides of the genre, putting one to the front in any song; it's not easy to do a track by track analysis, but we can easily say that the opener *Olga is dead*, already broadcasted since some months as a single, is the perfect example of the mixing of elements in a kaleidoscopic and clever track, where different moments have their place: the *hardcore* distorted drum is here, just like the sulfurous *darkstep* openings, the distorted and synthetic *synth loops*, everything with the mindset of going beyond the known and the safe. So, this track is a perfect summit of the *album*: any track has its personality, but all of them have the same will of generating something new, even if with known elements; let's be honest, they don't create genres here and they don't want to, they pay tribute their own way to them, but the way they mix the elements of every genre is the key to the freshness and novelty of their sound.

One of the most original episodes is *Zoom*, a sulfurous track that doesn't become *dark*, hard as a rock, based on a slow and hypnotic *groove* linked to *drum 'n bass* and *dub/darkstep* that shows powerful *industrial hardcore* rides. Even the *titletrack* is a restless *hardcore* machinegun characterized by clever and disturbing *wobbles*. No track is out of place, there are no fillers, only a continuous stream of energy and clever ideas: we can say that the last track *Stalker* is very well developed in its spasmodic *broken rhythm* alternated with an obsessive and fast drum.

Here there is room for a big sense of rhythm, even when it slows down and plays with the *groove*; there is a clear irony and taste for future music shown in the titles: it's funny to picture the duo as *Lucky junkies* (one of the hardest, restless, and cleverest track of the album) or as *Space hunters*.

When we think about the crisis of the genre due to the more playful and lighter *French* school, less aggressive, we understand that the Byelorussian duo recovers the sound of the tradition of the genre and shows its point of view about modern electronic music: the same concept of *nevermind* transferred in the 2015, allowing them to, as a citation, *fuck all systems*.