



Amsterdam Klezmer Band: Katla

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"Now here's a group I won't easily forget. Their extraordinary skills combined with their sense of composition stands for a sound unmatched by any other group I know. I'll vouch for them any day, AKB for life!"
Colin Benders/Kytman (actually the most promising new talent from the Netherlands)

The story started in 1996. A few Amsterdam boys with a Jewish background got inspired by the catchy sounds of Klezmer and Balkan music and started busking. Since that time the band has evolved into a seven-strong line-up, representing one of the finest among the Klezmer and Balkan music scene in Europe. It is 2011 and the AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND is blessed with an enthusiastic following in the Netherlands, the whole of Europe and even in Brazil! Their refreshing approach to Klezmer and Balkan music transcends the traditional aspects of this music and results in a very lively mix of Eastern-European sound. Their strength lies in their ability to appeal to a remarkably broad audience across all age groups; they play clubs or theatres, festivals, parties, weddings or formal functions. AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND can both fire up a crowd and create pure listening pleasure with the vibrancy of their playing.

Popular AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND tunes are being covered and AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND remixes are found in many clubs from Berlin to Sydney. Over the past few years the band has performed all around the world. Their years on the road have shaped this band into a strong and highly prolific collective.

Two statements sum up their undogmatic approach to the Klezmer genre:

"This group has very little to offer to 'Klezmer-purists' since Klezmer was never meant to be polished and perfected for concert halls. With their exuberant approach they take the music out of the conservatory corridors into the street." (from renowned Dutch daily paper NRC)

"Amsterdam Klezmer Band are my favourite group. They know what it's like to play in bars. They sound like a Klezmer version of The Pogues. They are giving Klezmer music street credibility". (Joann Sfar, French comic star, who recently invited them to perform the soundtrack for his animated movie "The Cat of the Rabbi").

Now the unmistakable AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND sound is optimally encapsulated once again in 14 brand new tracks which are all original compositions written by the band members themselves. "Katla" is their 9th album. Sirba, Turbo Polka and booty shaking Cocek, Oompah and motley rhythms, all with the characteristic and inimitable AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND virtuosity, are to be found on this album. Of course no AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND album without front men Alec Kopyt (a cult singer from Odessa, who's a renowned specialist of prison songs) and Job Chajes, singing and rapping their way through this new treasure trove of highly infectious and original Amsterdam Klezmer style repertoire.

"KATLA" is the name of the biggest volcano in Iceland. This title possibly implies this new album's explosive character. We all know that volcanoes are usually not to be messed with. But no worries: listening to AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND's "Katla" will just cause uncontrollable eruptions of joy!

The AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND on the SONGS of this ALBUM & the LYRICS

01. **Papa Chajes** (Job Chajes) Dedicated to my father, Simon Chajes. In this song we play a gentle rhythm that I enjoy using. In Holland we have the clog dance, and this feels to me like the Yiddish equivalent.

02. **Katla** (Theo van Tol) An ode to a kindred spirit of the AKB: Katla, one of the most active volcanoes in Iceland, named after an evil woman who, thanks to a pair of magical pants, could keep running without getting tired. She met her end when she slipped into a glacier crevasse while running, after which the volcano underneath the glacier came to life. Everybody is watching Katla. If she was to erupt, the consequences will be felt worldwide.

03. **Naie Kashe** (Job Chajes / Job Chajes & Alec Kopyt) As I started writing a song for Alec, the Ukrainian Kolomeike came to mind, as I really enjoy repetitive music. We ended up writing the lyrics together, and decided to use the idea of shortage of cash – familiar to almost everyone in the World – as a starting-point.

>The spring is in the air, the birds are chirping, my kidneys are aching, I have no "dough", nor I get any sleep! How can I save money, when my pay is being cut and the price of liquor's going up? My memory's getting weaker: not only did I forget my home town, I have only a vague recollection of what happened yesterday?!!! Questions...

Job: "A hundred days of coughing up, / Can't buy on credit, / Shopping at Poundstretcher, / Isn't up to much, / Work for low wages, / Or on the dole, / Whole days doing nothing, / Just watching TV"

There's one answer to these questions: I won't drink any more... I won't drink any less! I won't sing any more... And won't sing any less!<

04. **Forget About the Rest** (Jasper de Beer) This composition inspired by Turkish music is written in a 3-2-2 rhythm. The song starts with the horns playing rhythm section and the bass and accordion playing melody. There is a feature for Theo, who plays a beautiful "first take" accordion solo.

05. **Gogol Mogol** (Janfie van Strien / Alec Kopyt)

>The person who called Amsterdam "Mokum" was a hardcore provincial (there are plenty of those around, God knows!). / Wherever he's from, once in Amsterdam, he'll go straight to the Red Light District's coffee shops and, not so straight, back to his Bed-and-Breakfast. There he will collapse on his cot: totally brain dead.

Look! There's the smartass; he only wants to smoke hashish and he wants to do it now! And in no time he'll drag his feet along the Damrak, his bloodshot eyes staring at an eternity of busy passers-by. And no one notices that there's anyone around....

Chorus: Thai-Thai....<

06. **Nicolosia** (Gijs Levelt) I composed this piece in memory of my uncle, the journalist and writer Joost Divendal (1955-2010). Nicolosia is the name of his book on the Venetian painter Bellini's muse, who posed for all of his Madonna paintings.

07. **Oscar's Cocok** (Gijs Levelt) This lively dance tune is dedicated to my son Oscar who was born in 2009. The song resembles his endless cheerful energy.

08. **Kaas** (Joop van der Linden) My feelings as a professional musician have been described quite accurately in Willem Elsschot's novel "Kaas". We struggle, but do we sell? At least, we can dance!

09. **Marusja** (Theo van Tol / Alec Kopyt) This is a typical cocok rhythm as played by the gypsies in Macedonia. The melody reminds the gypsies of Bucharest. Alec is singing on the marvels of growing older.

>Marusya is not sunbathing on the beach any more, and my heart's beating regularly again,

My sleep has returned, and there's no more sleepwalking....

Where is my sweet home Odessa with its markets and the buzz...? I have been blindfold for a long time and suddenly there's a little twist of fate, and I am the winner once again!

Chorus: Captain, full forward! My youth's back...Seen through the smokescreen I am forever young!<

10. **Toi** (Joop van der Linden) Pour toi, jusqu'a la fin des temps. A 9/4 rhythm I heard on an Arif Sag album, a short sidestep into a giftetelli rhythm, and the idea of a continuous, almost non-repeating melody make this tune an exploration of the orchestral possibilities of the AKB. Toi is dedicated to my wife Janneke.

11. **Geen Sores (No worries)** (Jasper de Beer / Job Chajes) A high speed polka, Klezmer song. The titel "Geen Sores" is Dutch/Yiddish slang for "no problems". I actually had a lot of things on my mind before writing this song but in the same time I thought, "geen sores!" or "what the heck!" let us just enjoy life!

>No frets, no failures / No doubts, no annoyance / No gasses, no leaks / No cages, no fences / No crisis, no loans / No days of boredom / No rows, no taunts / No snakes, no bears / No worries!

No pocks, no teeth / No bites, no burns / No war, no riots / No bombs, swellings / No plagues, no divorce / No poison, pest control / No quakes, no breaks / No scratches, no dents / No worries!

A list of wishes / A boat full of people / A bird that sings / Your sweetheart endeared / Your entire family / Together, Sicily / Your son, your daughter / No one deprived / No worries!<

A project, a trip / A leaf, a shower / A butterfly, a blossom / A glass with dregs / A thrush, a tit / Cosy, a party / A house, a home / And even a hearth / No worries!

The days that march / On heavy, stealthy / Twisted practices / That always seems like / Dreams, stories / In which we lose way / And puzzle over / Faces pale / Don't wander, don't sulk / Don't be glum, don't fib / Don't tease, don't hit / Don't talk crap but move on / With love, with life / With taking and giving / With vigour and hopes / The options are open / No worries!<

12. **Desert Banjo** (Jasper de Beer) The 6 string guitar banjo that was used for this piece is a widespread instrument in North African music. I took inspiration from North African music and made a cross over with gypsy music.

13. **Valentina** (Gijs Levelt / Alec Kopyt) This Macedonian/Turkish/Bulgarian influenced song forms the perfect vehicle for the Amsterdam Klezmer Band's star crooner Alec Kopyt from the Ukraine. The text deals with Alec's platonic love Valentina, who is now living in Berlin.

>How many roads am I still destined to walk, how many shoes am I to wear thin just to look in the eyes of the most beautiful, gentle, sweet and cheerful Valentina?

She's not to be tamed or told what to do! Women like Valya are to be treasured and loved.

There are many stars in the sky, but there's one that shines brighter than the rest. Even the Moon grows pale at her sight! Yes, Valentina is the one and only...

Chorus: I swear by Heaven - there's no one more beautiful and cheerful than the incomparable Valya!!!<

14. **The New Terk** (Janfie van Strien) This tune built on a repetitive and catchy rhythm pattern one will find occasionally in the Klezmer tradition is called 'Terkishe'. AKB developed a particular booty shaking conception of this groove which is in fact closely related to the renowned Turkish Çifteteli (belly dance) rhythm.

STAN RIJVEN, a JOURNALIST WORKING FOR DUTCH TV, RADIO & PRESS on AKB

Mix a helping of Klezmer with a portion of Ska, add a liberal dash of Balkan and a pinch of Gypsy. Garnish with a tablespoon of Jazz and a pinch of Punk. Throw it all in the blender and the recipe for the Amsterdam Klezmer Band is complete. Serve immediately!

Their *vette* (throbbing) Klezmer/Balkan style never fails to leave the audience well and truly 'klezmerised'. As the wind instruments, double-bass, accordion and percussion join battle with pulsating grooves full of raw refinement, you know you are in for a long and sweaty evening; be it in a small club in Canada or Turkey or at large festivals such as Sziget in Hungary or Lowlands in the Netherlands. According to saxophonist and band leader Job Chajes, it's all about the "age-old cross-fertilisation of Hassidic, Balkan and Turkish influences, but in a modern context".

The band members have been plucked both from the street and the conservatory, and have paid their dues within a range of other styles such as Jazz, Funk and Latin. "That's why the wind section can switch so effortlessly between Jamaican Ska and Serbian Bleh music" according to Chajes.

Their secret lies in the surprisingly natural mix of deep-seated tradition and contemporary avant-garde. Trumpet player Gijs Levelt: "Some purists think that we're not nearly traditional enough, and yet the early Klezmerim themselves incorporated the hits of the day into their own repertoire".

It is precisely this 'omnivore' approach which allows the band to embody the true spirit of Klezmer. Klezmer is nothing more or less than 19th Century Eastern European dance music for weddings and parties, as played by travelling Jewish musicians who incorporated the musical traditions that they came across into their music.

The Amsterdam Klezmer Band has been based in Mokum (Yiddish for Amsterdam), itself once the 'Jerusalem of the North', since 1996 and is now celebrating the Klezmer tradition on a Global scale. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the brushing aside of the Iron Curtain, Amsterdam has once again become a magnet to musicians from Eastern Europe. Singer Alec Kopyt, who came to Amsterdam from Odessa, is a good example: "If someone had told me 28 years ago back in the Ukraine that I, a 19 year old rock freak, would end up performing the traditional music of my fatherland and would actually learn to love it, I'd have laughed in their face". This was his comment in 2006 on the release of the album 'Remixed!'. Kopyt is still the front man for the new album, acting as a bridge between the two harbour cities of Odessa and Amsterdam. Now and again Chajes takes over the microphone to sing lines such as: "I was born in a town that was built on stilts and where you can eat *gefilte fish*".

This much is clear: They may be based in Amsterdam, but together they form an international outfit that stands for much more than Klezmer alone. The new CD is a boisterous testimonial to this. In fact, they might as well have been called the Amsterdam Klezmore Gang: Thanks to them, the whole *mishpocha* now laughs when it used to cry.

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Tracklisting

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02. Katla (Theo van Tol)
03. Naie Kashe (Job Chajes / Job Chajes & Alec Kopyt)
04. Forget About the Rest (Jasper de Beer)
05. Gogol Mogol (Janfie van Strien / Alec Kopyt)
06. Nicolosia (Gijs Levelt)
07. Oscar's Cocek (Gijs Levelt)
08. Kaas (Joop van der Linden)
09. Marusja (Theo van Tol / Alec Kopyt)
10. Toi (Joop van der Linden)
11. Geen Sores (Jasper de Beer / Job Chajes)
12. Desert Banjo (Jasper de Beer)
13. Valentina (Gijs Levelt / Alec Kopyt)
14. The New Terk (Janfie van Strien)

All tracks published by Edition Essay

Jasper de Beer: double bass, guitar banjo, backing vocals

Job Chajes: alto saxophone, vocals

Alec Kopyt: vocals, percussion

Gijs Levelt: trumpet, backing vocals

Joop van der Linden: trombone, percussion

Janfie van Strien: clarinet, backing vocals

Theo van Tol: accordion, davul

Midou Akhrif: darbuka (on 12)

Bokkie Vink: cymbalon (on 3 & 8)

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http://www.essayrecordings.com/media/presse/AKB_Katla_Presse.zip

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