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The Rise Of Gypsy Punkers

BEN SISARIO

Article on growth in number of gypsy punk rock groups in New York City, which started seven years ago when Eugene Hutz, immigrant from Ukraine, formed band Gogol Bordello; groups like Slavic Soul Party!, Romashka, Hungry March Band and Guignol play in small clubs and restaurants and on multiple bills at places like Knitting Factory; photos (M)



HOW many Gypsy punk groups does it take to start a movement? Seven years ago, when Eugene Hutz, an immigrant from Ukraine, formed the band Gogol Bordello, the answer might have been one. Its concerts, mingling the passionate rage of punk with the ragtag theatricality of traditional Gypsy music, quickly caught on, and Mr. Hutz, a rangy philosopher-acrobat, established himself as a leading figure of New York's downtown culture, underground and otherwise; in September, he will make his feature film debut, starring with Elijah Wood in Liev Schreiber's adaptation of "Everything Is Illuminated," a novel by Jonathan Safran Foer.

But Mr. Hutz's crew is not the only band exploring the punk side of Eastern European music. In the last several years a high-kicking, accordion-wailing, drum-pounding scene has developed in New York, with groups like Slavic Soul Party!, **Romashka**, the Hungry March Band and Guignol playing in small clubs and restaurants and, more and more, alongside one another on big multiple bills at places like the Knitting Factory. The band members spoke to Nina Roberts, a New York-based photographer, about playing punk rock, Gypsy style. Or is that Gypsy music, punk style? BEN SISARIO

Photos: The Hungry March Band, part of New York City's lively Gypsy punk scene, at the Knitting Factory. "It's so foreign to your ear that it automatically grabs you," says a band member, Greg Squared (not shown).; Luminescent Orchestrii at Galapagos in Williamsburg.; Matt Moran of Slavic Soul Party! at Maia.; **Romashka at Maia**, a Turkish restaurant in Manhattan.; Franz Nicolay of Guignol, practicing in Williamsburg.; Ukrainian-born Eugene Hutz of Gogol Bordello at Irving Plaza. "Gypsy music is becoming part of the counterculture, as opposed to part of pop culture," he said. (Photographs by Nina Roberts for The New York Times)