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The Siberian band that won the hearts of millions

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[1]
The music style represented by the Siberian group can not be easily categorized. Maybe it can be called as Siberian-fusion or shaman music, but Otyken is a versatile band that might enchants you. Just give a try with our interview with them!

It was around six pm according to the Krasnoyarsk's time when we managed to sit down for a virtual taiga tea with the drummer Hakaida, the energetic singer Azyan, and with the producer and the manager, Andrey Medonos. The other drummer, Maya also joined later for a little time. So I cannot deny I had a really great company. I felt like the luckiest person in the Earth. I know many people would be in my place in that time.

There is no doubt that Otyken is standing the door of being World famous. The band has more than 1,7 million followers on TikTok. [2] On Youtube you have at least twenty-two million viewers. How do you see, could Grammy Global Spin help you to increase your popularity?
Hakaida – Yes, I am happy that we got such a possibility and I think due to this we can reach more people with our music. We really hope that after Grammy Global Spin we can have more fans in the future.

Hakaida, the scond drummer of Otyken

In which countries do you have the biggest number of fans? I remember that in the USA you have a very big fan group and in a video Azyan suggested that you are not playing only for Turks.
Azyan – In the United States we really do have a lot of listeners, but also in Europe we are getting more popular and we are really happy for this. Surprisingly in Russia fewer people listen us I think.
Andrey Medonos – In Iran, in Saud-Arabia and in Qatar there are a lot of people who are listening our music and watching our video clips. But as you mentioned we try to sing for everyone.

What do you think what is the main reason that in your home country, in Russia less people are listening Otyken's songs comparing to other countries?
Azyan – It is possible that Russians are not ready yet to accept our music, but it is also true that previously there wasn't such a band in Russia. We are the first who represent such a style here. Despite of this naturally we do everything to reach more people with our songs.

Video of Watch OTYKEN Perform "Genesis," Putting A Spotlight On Indigenous Siberian Music | Global Spin

If I've seen correctly your band was established 10 years ago. What was your aim with establishing this band and what kind of music did you play originally? Can we say that your current music is ethno pop?
Andrey Medonos – We established our band 4-5 years ago, but the Youtube-channel of Otyken band is 10 years old, because in the start we uploaded videos about the taiga life. What style we represent now? I think the music experts and our listeners can really define the style of ours. We just play what we have in our soul! And we don't think that we already reached a big thing, we simply provide which is dear to our heart.Therefore, I could leave this question for critics. They could define what we represent. I could say we play rock, but more likely it wouldn't be truth and it would not correspond to professional credibility. And there is no doubt that our songs contain folk music as well. But we do change our instruments often so we can not say that our music is based on one type of sounding. If we speak about singing so we can say that we rely on folk songs what the residents here already know and love, but it is possible that for Russians it is not so exciting now.

On the right side: Andrey Medonos, the manager and producer of Otyken

According to the description on your page you are singing Khakas, Chulym Tatar and sometimes in Russian. Which songs are made in Khakas and in Chulym Tatar language exactly?
Andrey Medonos – We have only two songs in Khakas language, one of them is the Legend, the other is Lord of honey. The Legend is not our song, it is a folk song with what we worked up. Expect these ones all of our songs are made in Chulym Tatar language. And very few in Russian as well like Paradise Lost. (editor note: some songs are titled in English even if they are not in English)

Who consider himself or herself in Otyen as Khakas or Chulym Tatar? And who is selkup?
Hakaida – Honestly it is a secret. I could put in that way that we totally think about nationality like a private matter. We feel that we are in the same group, that can be called Siberian-family or something like this. We understand each other very well if we speak on our mother language.

Andrey Medonos – Me, as the producer and songwriter I can say about myself that I'm Russian, but the nationality of other members is private matter. For us it is also doesn't matter that somebody is Hungarian, but consider himself Polish or something like this. I would like to know what are you favourite songs from Otyen?

This is not an easy question, because I listened to Otyken a lot. But if I try to think about which songs I was listening the most, then I would suggest My Wing, the Storm, and the Lord of Honey. Do I know well that only Ach has got musical education, so how come that you can play so skilfully in several special instruments? For example Otamay plays on khomys, and handpan, besides Kunchari is playing on morin khuur. Do you learn how to play on these instruments by yourself?
Azyan – I think many people here already at home, in the family learn how to play on these instruments. The singing for example was for me more like an ability. I really liked singing since i was a child. I think you cannot learn this just like that, because the love of singing begins in childhood for those who are opened for it. In our region it is natural that fathers, moms and grandparents are teaching the children for playing in several instruments, because the Siberian people are really talented in this. If somebody want to do this in a more professional way, so it is also welcomed, but I think anyone who might born into a Siberian family learns already how to sing in his or her childhood.

Plus he or she learns how to play in such a folk instruments. We learnt how to play on khomys, jaw harp and in morin khuur at home. But it is funny that that person who has professional music education is not playing but singing mostly in Otyken songs.

Azyan, the lead singer of Otyen, who never loose the enegry

Azyan, does your mum still consider singing is a hobby, or did she accept that it is very important for you?
Yes, she still thinks like that, but she accepted the fact that I'm doing this. It is also true that I'm an adult, so I can do what I want.

How often do you have a rehearsal? If I think about the TikTok Shorts I have a feeling that the whole band act like a big happy family, where Azyan has got the biggest amount of energy.
Azyan – Indeed, we very often practice, but it is not exactly set when do we have rehearsals. We do have an apiary where we gather around from time to time in our free time. There we have a little house, where we are eating honey and drinking taiga tea, besides we speak about our everyday's life. And every summer we organise there meeting with bonfire. To understand this I think it is better to see this personally.

Which was earlier? The singing or the honey?
Hakaida – Obviously the honey was earlier, but later the singing came. Now these two things are merged into one and they are inseparable.

Andrey – The honey production naturally is a very important source of income for us. Thank to this at the start we were able to buy some clothes, instruments, and the important technical equipment. We often deliver honey products to Japan in containers, but we export honey to different countries as well. But Japanese people like our honey so much that sometimes they visit us from Japan, and we also travel there from time to time.

Members of Otyken from left to right: Ach, Hakaida, Sandro, Tsveta, Azyan, Kunchari, Otamay (Maya and Aiko is missing)

There is one more thing which is related to the honey around the corner of Otyken. Hakaida is painting beautiful paintings from propolis. Can you tell a little bit more about how these paintings are made? What kind of topics do you prefer to paint about?
Hakaida – I'm painting and drawing since I was a kid. It is obvious what I represent is totally different than other painters do. These paintings contain propolis, therefore they might have a healing effect. I get my inspiration from the nature, from our music and from our everyday life. My paintings are born from the mixture of reality and the dreams.

Andrey – The big painters usually just paint beautiful paintings. In the other hand Hakaida paints not only beautiful, but healthy paintings, because with these ones people can avoid a lot of affections. Thank to the fact that propolis contains antiviral and antibacterial ingredients. When the temperature changes so ingredients transpire into the air and they are able to neutralize the viruses and bacteria. We got this idea from the old habit of people. They used to hang such a propolis canvas in their room long time ago. So, we said why don't we paint something for our eyes? In this case those hanging canvases are not only healthy, but beautiful at the same time.

Besides your music your fans really appreciate your clothes as well. Are these costumes are traditional Khakas and Chulym Tatars creations?

Hakaida – Our clothes contain Khakas and Chulym Tatar important visual and traditional elements. So if you look at our clothes so you get a summarized imagine.
Azyan – Usually we make these clothes and we do like them very much.

Video of OTYKEN - LEGEND (Official Live MV)

Those clothes fits you very well. You look beautiful and awesome with them! I know about a fan who wanted to buy the hat of Azyan.
Azyan – Really? But I don't want to sell it, I love it very much (laughs). Of course, if someone wants it so we can send sewing pattern, but to make such a piece of clothes takes a lot of time, because you need to sue all accessories from one by one. Not mentioning the needlework that also must be done in case of all different markings and patterns. In the concerts they are too warm for us, that is why don't wear them during the whole performance. We take off our hats while we play, but it is also true that even if we could wear simple clothes during the performances so we would feel very warm also, because we are very energetic musicians. We are singing, playing, and dancing at one time.

If I know well, you are already working on your new album. When you will be ready with it and what kind of songs can we expect on the new record?
Maya – The new album comes out in the end of this year, according to our plans. We plan to release new songs for the fans, but of course some older tracks will be remastered as well.
Azyan – It will be a beautiful record. We really wait already for the release, but we are still working on it. There is one song that the fans might already know, because we already played it sometimes. This is the "Revolution Percussion" that you can listen on YouTube if you search the title "Wild Girls".

Can we expect such an energetic songs like for example the Storm, where Azyan is leading, or like Lord of Honey, what was sung by Otamay in a very beautiful way?
Maya - We don't want to offend you, but we can not share with you more information about this new album (says with a friendly smile).

Maya, the second drummer of Otyken

I get it, I just tried. How do you see why more and more people are curious about Otyken every day?

Azyan – Honestly, we don’t think about this often. I don’t know what the reason is. I would like to

believe that our music is unique and interesting for the people. And maybe they see that we sing from our soul.
Andrey – If we could know the reason of our popularity so we could open a school where we could teach how to be successful, but it is not about this. Although I'm pretty sure that number of our fans are growing because we don't play an average music and the style of ours also can not be easily categorized.

I totally agree that nobody said yet, that your music is average. I think even those people admit that you represent a very special style, who are not listening you very often. What do you think what is the biggest success for Otyken till today?
Maya – No doubt I would say Grammy Global Spin, what for we recorded our wonderful video.
Azyan – If we speak about success I'd say that it is the greatest thing that we have a lot of concerts and sometimes we don't have even time to sleep.

Video of OTYKEN - MY WING REMAKE popular on Tik Tok (official MV)

Did you ever think about having a tour in abroad?
Azyan – Naturally yes, but you don't have to imagine like that we were sitting and then we found out let's make a tour in abroad. We just thought about it. It would bee cool. We also feel the need for it from our fans. That is why I think sooner or later it's going to happen.

In the Otyken Worldwide Fans Facebook [3]group someone suggested once that maybe you should visit Australia as well. They mentioned visiting some festival I think.
Azyan – I think it is awesome, but I hear it at the first time. I've never seen this group before, I didn't know that exists. We can not use Facebook and Instragram because of the sanctions, but I'm happy that in Australia we have enthusiastic fans as well. It would be cool to participate on a festival.

And a final question, what do you want to message for the Otyken fans?
Azyan – I think I would just rather thank to our fans their loyalty and attention. We do love them so much! We thank also for their support and we will try to have concert in every bigger city where we have got a lot of fans or to other places if life let us happen. And we will keep writing our songs for them. And for the haters I'd like to say that I don't scream like a seegall, what I do is just a pure art.

Note: The translation is based on the original interview [4] that had been originally released in Hungarian 30 of October, 2022. The English translation is based on that interview. Photo credit: Otyen

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