

Gogol Bordello

It is fitting that Gogol Bordello first came into being at a Russian wedding, when Huetz clicked with Sasha Kazatchkoff, the bayan player, and guitarist Vlad Solovar. The trio took it to New York in 1999 and went on to become an investor and leader of new underground immigrant scene, proclaiming an "Eastern European Invasion" for the sake of culture clash and innovation. Currently, Gogol Bordello consists of singer/writer Eugene Huetz, fiddler Sergei Riabtsev, guitarist Oren Kaplan on sax, not to mention an extended family of collaborators including a brass section and a dance troupe.

Huetz emphasizes that each musician is educated or naturally familiar with the ethnic styles of eastern Europe, particularly our beloved tzigani (gypsies) style. Gogol Bordello identifies with trickster figures, those who, like all gypsies, make merry out of nothing. The band's name sums it up: Gogol, Huetz says, was the ultimate trickster figure, who made both radicals and the czar believe in his exclusive allegiance to their side. And a bordello is a place of both pleasure and street vulgarity. Gogol Bordello, then, contains the gamut of human experience told from a perspective of a trickster archetype.

It is something very familiar to history of American music, which could account for the band's snowballing popularity. The current scene is a nosh-fest of novelties, possibly because there's nothing substantial around. Gogol Bordello just might be able to avoid being the latest curiosity from abroad because they strike a deeper chord with audiences. Maybe when people see us, says Huetz, they realize that not everything in this world is a goddamn gimmick.

Maeve Shelton, PrivyMagazine.com, May 2001

