

Opposition Receiving Support Through Song

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БЕЛЫЙ АЛЬБОМ

The album cover, featuring a WebMoney account number for donations

Clarification appended

ST. PETERSBURG — More than 200 bands have donated tracks to a musical project in support of Russia's protest movement since the idea was announced May 21.

Titled "White Album," the compilation draws on the color that has come to symbolize the protests. And, of course, the title is a reference to The Beatles' 1968 album, which contained the songs "Back in the U.S.S.R." and "Revolution," the project's initiators said.

Vasily Shumov, lead singer of the group Center, music journalist Artemy Troitsky and ex-Zvuki Mu musician Alexander Lipnitsky invited musicians who support the demands of rallying protesters and the Russian Occupy movement to take part in the endeavor.

The album will call for the immediate release of political prisoners, including the imprisoned

members of female punk band Pussy Riot.

"This album is our protest," Shumov said. "There was the writers' walk in Moscow, and then the painters' walk, who supported the protest movement. When the idea for musicians to do something came up, we thought a bit and decided to do an album rather than a musicians' walk.

"Because it's a civic project, we didn't set any conditions for what style of music we would accept, what song themes we would accept. We accept everybody who supports it," he said. "That's why the album ranges stylistically from instrumental music and jazz to very intricate electronica and everything in between: ballads, folk, metal, punk, rock 'n' roll, things like that."

Shumov said he came up with the idea after a conversation with Troitsky, whom he met by chance in Moscow at one of the protests.

The bands were not specifically asked to send protest songs. But the songs Shumov uploaded to give a taste of the album include the Perm-based art group Syava's "Pussy Riot," a defense of the young women imprisoned for performing the song "Mother of God, Cast Putin Out!" in a Moscow cathedral, and "Avtozak" by Moscow-based art group Nevry.

The title of the latter song refers to the police truck in which people arrested at rallies are put.

"Avtozak is the most fashionable kind of transportation in Moscow," the song goes, calling attention to the hundreds of arrests in the capital in May.

"I haven't yet summarized the content of the songs. They are very diverse; I just gave some examples," Shumov said. "For instance, Bravo donated a song in its usual style called 'Jazz in Orbit,' but they support our 'White Album.'"

Bravo's participation came as a surprise for Shumov, as did that of Alexei Romanov, a musician from the veteran band Voskreseniye.

Other surprise volunteers include the Soviet band Ariel, fronted by Valery Yarushin, and the 1980s band Krematory. Mashina Vremeni's Alexander Kutikov sent a song called "New Pilgrim."

More predictably, Yury Shevchuk and his band DDT sent "Freedom Song" from their most recent album, "Inache" (Otherwise).

The album so far also includes rappers Noize MC and Vasya Oblomov and rock bands Gleb Samoiloff & The Matrixx.

The collection is due to be released for free download ahead of the second March of Millions, which will take place in Moscow on June 12 to coincide with the Russia Day national holiday.

By Sunday evening, 212 bands and artists had sent in tracks, giving the album more than 13 hours of music.

"We announced 'White Album' on May 21, and how many contributions could you expect

to get in just two weeks?" Shumov said. "But all of a sudden it was 50 tracks, then 70, then more than 100. ... That's what I did not expect, such large-scale involvement. Until this project, I didn't know that the general standard of recording in Russia is quite high."

Tracks can be submitted until June 12. At the end of the protest rally, a launch concert for "White Album" featuring some of the bands that took part in the album is scheduled to take place.

Shumov said the concert would essentially consist of an acoustic set he performed with a guitarist at the Occupy Abai opposition camp in Moscow last month.

"The album will be available for free download, but people will be asked to donate any sum they like to make it possible to release "White Album" on disc," he said. "Many people are asking me if it will be released on disc. And also, [we're seeking donations] to enable us to support opposition events, including music ones, financially."

Clarification: The translation of the name of the song performed by Pussy Riot in Christ the Savior Cathedral on Feb. 21 has been improved. It has been changed to "Mother of God, Cast Putin Out!" in place of "Holy Mother, Throw Putin Out!"

"White Album" will be available on the Internet on Friday, June 8. See www.soderzhanie.com and www.vasilyshumov.com for updates.

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