

Jenia Lubich Keeps Nouvelle Vague in Her Blood

By [Andrei Muchnik](#)

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Nouvelle Vague invited Lubich to join them after she gave them her CD. **Jenia Lubich**

I'm waiting for Jenia Lubich at the entrance to Dom Kultury Zuyeva, where she's later making an appearance in a play. The play is "MKAD" (Moscow Ring Road), created by popular television and radio hosts Mikhail Kozyrev and Alex Dubas. Their monologues about life and death alternate with Lubich's songs.

Lubich is a Russian singer-songwriter who first became popular as one of the singers in the French band Nouvelle Vague and only then as a solo artist. Her first hit was "Russian Girl" where she sang, "I am a simple Russian girl, I got vodka in my blood."

She turned up with her bass player and tour manager Dmitry Turyev, who also takes part in the play, both of them laden with bags and musical instruments.

"I'm Jenia," she extended her hand for me to shake. "Can you help us with the bags, please?"

We walked up the stairs and put the bags down on the stage, then settled in a small room backstage.

The Russian singer will perform with the French band next week and said that there is no such thing as an "ex-Nouvelle Vague" singer.

"Is there any food?" Lubich called out while taking her coat off. "I'm starving!"

Someone shouted that they are already in the room. Lubich looked around, saw a plate with cold cuts on the table and shouted back, "But I don't eat meat! Is there cheese?" As we sat down someone brought over cheese and bread sandwiches and a mug of hot tea.

"I am feeling better now," she said. "We just flew in this morning from Novosibirsk, and we left in the middle of the night. I am hardly getting any sleep," she said chomping on the sandwich and taking small sips of the tea.

The singer is wearing a pair of dark blue jeans, a black sweater and no makeup, but this simple attire does not make her look any less stunning.

Q: It seems like you have your hands full: touring with your band, a play in Moscow and now the concert with Nouvelle Vague on April 18. What's that going to be like?

A: What I know for sure is that Marc Collin, the band's leader and Melanie Pain, another signer will definitely be there. The rest will be clear on the day of the concert. All Nouvelle Vague concerts are more or less ad hoc. We are like adventurers in music. We try to sound a little different every time we perform. There's always improvisation, we often don't follow the setlist. We usually play all the major hits, like "Love Will Tear Us Apart," "In a Manner of Speaking," etc. These renditions will be more acoustic.

Q: Nouvelle Vague jumpstarted your career, but how did working with them start in the first place? It was a bit of a Cinderella story, right?

A: Before I met Nouvelle Vague I had been writing songs for a very long time, I took part in various contests and festivals, but didn't get much response or notice. I had a job at an ad agency! When I first heard of them back in 2004 and I really liked their sound. I decided that that's the kind of sound I'd like for my own songs.

Then in 2008 they came to St Petersburg with a concert. I remember I couldn't get the tickets because they were sold out and had to call in some favors to be able to go. The concert was simply amazing, I was very impressed and after the show I approached the musicians to thank

them for their music. I didn't have flowers but by accident I had a CD with some of my songs and my email scrawled in barely legible handwriting on the cover. So I gave it to them and thought that in the best case scenario they will put it up on a wall or something. Imagine my surprise when I got an email from Marc Collin inviting me to Paris to participate in the recording of their third album, NV3. I sing on two tracks on that album.

Q: They are covers, right?

A: Yes, they are covers, like all Nouvelle Vague songs. That's the whole idea of the project — cover post-punk and new wave songs of the 1970s. Nouvelle Vague translates from French as "new wave." At the same time it refers to the art house traditions of the French new wave cinema. And most covers can be categorized as bossa nova, which means "new trend." So the name Nouvelle Vague is a triple reference.

Q: But you didn't just record these two songs and leave?

A: No, I spent almost 2 years working with Nouvelle Vague. Touring with them around the world and recording tracks for various compilations. And I still work with them. Marc Collin was the sound producer on my solo album. I am playing with them next week and will sing on one of their new tracks. There's no such thing as an ex Nouvelle Vague singer.

Q: There are definitely some potential hits both on your solo album "C'est la Vie" and the new EP "Stepnoy Volk" (Steppe Wolf). How would you describe your style?

A: I don't like to pigeonhole my style but I'd say it's a cross between indie rock and indie pop. Live I sound a lot more "rock-and-roll." I will also sing with my band as an opening act for the Nouvelle Vague concert, so you will have a chance to experience it.

As I ask my final question, "How much vodka is really in your blood?" Mikhail Kozyrev walked in and asks Lubich to join them for rehearsal. "Don't tell him about your AA meetings," he joked before leaving.

Jenia Lubich's next performance in Moscow is on April 26 at 8 p.m. at the Meyerhold Center, located at 23 Novoslobodskaya Ulitsa, Tel: +7 495-363-1049. www.meyerhold.ru.

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