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Indie Sensation Gets Prize and New Fans

By Sergey Chernov

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Korolyov (left), Palova (center) and Shaikhinurov on Tverskaya Ulitsa.

Russian indie sensation Okudjav, which played last weekend's Night of Music festival in Moscow, is gaining plaudits and fans especially after winning the Steppenwolf award, established by music critic Artemy Troitsky.

Although the band is relatively new, its members have been playing for a while. Singer and songwriter Vadim Korolyov performed in St. Petersburg with his band Pilar, which has since split up, while bassist Katya Pavlova toured the city as a vocalist with her other band Obe Dve, which still exists.

Okudjav started out in Moscow last year, when Korolyov, who hails from Perm, and Pavlova, who is from Yekaterinburg, joined forces with Yekaterinburg-born 24-year-old Daniil Shaikhinurov. Vadim has lived in Moscow since 2007.

Korolyov and Pavlova started working with Shaikhinurov 18 months ago and the band's first single, which included the songs "Adults," "Before Sex" and "DJ," was released in November.

Their first album, "Okudjav," was released in March.

The band's name is a misspelt version of maverick Soviet singer-songwriter Bulat Okudzhava's last name.

"[The name] came about when I was away on tour. Vadim was walking on Arbat, where there's a monument [to Okudzhava]," Pavlova said. "We had a working version for a song, tentatively called 'Okudjav,' in Latin letters. It all came together and worked out well."

Korolyov said there is no direct connection between Okudjav and Okudzhava. "We are not musical successors to Okudzhava, although we have respect for him."

Speaking about their songs, Korolyov and Pavlova say they document their lives. "It's all about ourselves," Pavlova explained. "We don't set a genre, a style or a direction for ourselves. You simply live and write about how you live, and you live how you write."

"The songs are absolutely autobiographical," Korolyov said. "The other thing is that they contain some details maybe taken from somewhere else. I think they are not unusual; they are very usual, something from everyday life. Something happens, and I think these songs simply describe it. There's nothing pretentious about them. The songs don't come to any conclusions, they are not even supposed to have any conclusions; the main thing for me is to give as precise a description as possible of what happens. The main thing is to describe it as precisely as you see it and as you believe it happens."

Korolyov says his love of music started with Michael Jackson, whom he first saw as a young child. "The thing is that I was not familiar with him, but I recently downloaded more or less all his albums and started to delve into it. Mainly we listen to old music. I don't think two weeks go by without me listening to several Michael Jackson albums."

"He's a real psycho," Pavlova said about Korolyov's love of Jackson's music. "He goes into a bar or a disco and asks [the DJ] to put Michael Jackson on. So many fights!"

See vk.com/okudjav *for news of Okudjav's next gig.*

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