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Tallinn Lo-Fi Chanteuse Maria Minerva Comes to Moscow

By Timothy Misir

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Minerva now lives in Los Angeles.

Estonian avant-pop musician Maria Juur, better known as Maria Minerva, made her name releasing introspective lo-fi music recorded on her computer in her bedroom and paired with sensual music videos that look like the 1990s MTV put through a kaleidoscope, but the musician is still dealing with her rapid rise from obscurity.

"I did not plan anything. I feel my whole life so far has taken a very strange course," Juur said to The Moscow Times over Skype from Los Angeles before a five-date tour of Russia that sees her play in Moscow as part of the Tallinn Music Weekend at Dewar's Powerhouse.

Born in Tallinn, her popularity grew in London during her time there as a graduate student. "I honestly don't know what quite happened there because when I went to London I just wanted to get my master's degree [in aural and visual cultures]," Juur said, when asked about releasing her critically acclaimed first album "Tallinn at Dawn" in 2011. The album is

composed of reverb-drenched DIY glam and dreamy psychedelia that reflects 21st-century alienation and isolation.

"There was this weird, at least yearlong period, if not longer, when I was not sharing this stuff with anyone, but when I got hooked up with my label [100% Silk], it became a public thing," Juur said.

"I never wanted to be part of a bigger scene of musicians because I feel like I don't really relate to indie music at all and I don't really want to be associated with that. I'd rather stay obscure or small."

While her albums have been named after French feminist theorists ("Cabaret Cixous" in 2012 was named after professor and writer Helene Cixous) and her songs a critique of power structures and sexuality, Juur cites Britney Spears and girl bands like Shampoo as major influences on her work. "It was very innocent times for 'girl power' music because now feminism means needing to have a butt implant, but back then it was about being goofy," Juur said about the music that she connected with in her formative years.

"Histrionic," her third and most recent album, released in May, has been described by music publication Pitchfork as her "most self-assured and cohesive work." In a Facebook post, Juur wrote that "for me this [the album] marks the end of my histrionic era, ages 15 to 25."

Juur elaborates on this, saying that it is a "delayed coming-of-age album," adding: "'Histrionic' is almost like a 19th-century term, but I guess like any young person I was always finding myself through other people. That's especially true for performers, but that's kind of changed now — I keep to myself more and I don't care as much about that anymore."

After graduating in 2012, Juur moved to Brooklyn but in June moved again to the West Coast and is getting used to life there. "Moving to California has just been a lot of logistical bullshit because the way people live here is just about cars, cars, cars, and all this stuff is taking its toll. I feel like a fish out of the water sometimes. I'm so European in this city that it's kinda like a joke. Like, I cycle wearing a trench coat and I'm six feet tall, super-blonde. Everyone's like, 'Who's this person?!' So in order to blend in more and adapt to the lifestyle, I need to spend a lot of time here and not always go back to Tallinn."

Juur hopes that the move to Los Angeles will help her get a leg in the door of the music industry there as a producer. "I feel that in life you never know, especially in the creative field, that you have to take some pretty massive chances sometimes and get through the hard times. I'm pretty good at that by now because I've done that so many times, so I feel like I had to do it again. Everyone has to fight for their place in America. It's a very competitive, weird place. So a lot of people, they try and give up. I don't know which one I'm going to be, but I'm optimistic, I guess."

Fellow Moscow synth artist Kate Shilonosova, who goes by the moniker "NV," will share the stage with Juur in Moscow on Friday.

Maria Minerva and NV perform on Friday at 11:30 p.m. at Dewar's Powerhouse, 7/4 Goncharnaya Ulitsa. Metro Taganskaya. Tickets cost 500 rubles at the door and online at Ponominalu.ru*.*

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