

MEC YEK

File under Worldwide, Roma, Rock & Beyond!

Sometime midway through the 1990s, **Piet Maris** (frontman with the acclaimed Euro roots outfit **Jaune Toujours**) began to make contact with gypsy musicians and, through their guidance and contacts, to travel regularly to a Roma community in Slovakia. Through the latter, the ever curious musician learned their gypsy style of playing. Afterwards, this repertoire was thoroughly reinterpreted by the musicians of Jaune Toujours, who, in their usual fashion, began pushing the music beyond the boundaries of tradition by adding their own musical flavours to the sound. At first, the more traditionally-minded gypsies in the band's audience frowned in astonishment at these changes but the sound began to catch on with the younger Roma. The latter's stamp of approval was, ultimately, given authority when two young Roma singers - **Katia and Milka Pohlodkova** - joined the band on stage and never left... The gypsy incarnation that has developed from Jaune Toujours is called **Mec Yek**!



Piet Maris: "When I look back, I'm pretty impressed with the itinerary of more than 20 years we embarked on together with Katia and Milka. From that first moment on stage, when we had just fallen into each other's cultures, as a manner of speaking, we were still discovering our common identity and the way we deal with music. The way we look at things, how we're positioned in our lives, the differences but at the same time the similarities between the cities we live in... All those years at least we have worked together to present a valuable, authentic alternative for the clichés that still surround the Roma, the gypsies."

As you'd expect from Mec Yek's origins, **their music** contains quite some musical surprises. After two EPs, they released their first full-length album **Anti-Krisis**, followed by the album **SuperDiverCity**. Their most recent recordings date from 2021 and are titled **Taisa**, which means 'tomorrow' - the Roma 'mañana', you could say. For the repertoire on that album, **Katia and Milka** went back to their youth in **Kosice, Slovakia**, to a demo of songs they made with their brothers. But there are also special arrangements of traditional Roma songs. Singing is in **Romanes**, but sometimes also in **Russian** and there is even a little bit of **Dutch**. With a wide range of styles, from **tarantella** to **ska** to **island blues**. But against all odds : Mec Yek is a **gypsy band without a violin**.



Line-up : **Katia & Milka Pohlodkova** (vocals), **Piet Maris** (accordion & vocal), **Théophane Raballand** (drums & percussion), **Mathieu Verkaeren** (double bass), **Mattias Laga** (sax soprano & clarinets), Bart Maris (trumpet and tuba)

Mec Yek press quotes :

FINANCIAL TIMES (★★★★): *The dominant Gypsy jazz offers endless twists*

SONGLINES (★★★★): *A wide musical catchment that reflects the group's diverse backgrounds as well as the itinerant heritage of the Roma people*

ROOTSTIME (★★★★): *Het soort Roma-muziek dat Mec Yek vandaag maakt heeft zonder iets van zijn eigenheid prijs te geven, moeiteloos de stap naar de moderniteit gezet*

LUST FOR LIFE (★★★★): *Opzwepende muziek die Oost- en West-Europa op een originele manier verbindt*

RnR (★★★★): *Taisa revels in its jauntness, whilst the band are adept at providing restless rhythms amidst a joyful approach that would excite any audience*