

Seventh Station - Evolution of the 2nd Album

Introduction to the Series

- Hello this is Dmitri Alperovich from Seventh Station. Welcome to our first series of videos called Evolution of an Album, where we share the process of making our second record titled “Heal the Unhealed”. We will cover details from composing of the songs to their lyrics, and the conceptual ideas behind the writing. You can check out the record through your favorite streaming platform and discover more details covering the songs through this series.

Intro to the 2nd album

- “Heal the Unhealed” is inspired by the events of the Second World War and the Soviet Union. The title itself reflects on a panic attack I’ve experienced for the first time during the keyboard recordings in Boston. Soon enough I’ve also realized once this type of an experience occurs it becomes something you need to learn how to live with rather than completely healing it.
- The album was composed after our debut release Between Life and Dreams in 2016, and recorded throughout 2020 in three different countries. The keyboard recordings took place between Boston and Turkey, while the rest of the band recorded in Slovenia, through three different studios.
- We have six tracks in the album, where three of the tracks we call the Stalin trilogy. These tracks are the main theme of the album and deal between Stalin’s inner ego struggle and his tough personal relationships in the context of the Soviet Union. We offer a view of these events from our perspective based on historical knowledge. Although the other half of the tracks are loosely connected with this theme, they stand more as individual songs.
- Now let’s dive to the first track called “Unspoken Thoughts”.

Track 01: Unspoken Thoughts

- Unspoken Thoughts was in fact the third one I composed. I came up with the first B Aeolian riff on the 7th open string and applied it to different time signatures, while the bass and the drums are doing a separate groove which most of the time aligns with the riff ending every bar. Most of this song you can see that the tails of the riffs are always chromatically adding or removing notes with a time signature variation.

[play the riffs and demonstrate time signature variations with added notes]

- And on the main riff the same logic applies, this time manipulating quarter notes instead of eighth notes.

[demonstrate main riff]

- After this instrumental intro, the rest of the track follows a song's structure: Verse, pre-chorus, chorus, and so on. To make it more interesting, I applied rhythmical and tonal variations to the structure, making it less repetitive. Let's take a look at a few examples of these variations.
- Following the main riff's introduction, in the first verse we're alternating the same riff between a half-time feel and regular, with note variations in the guitar.

[show notation with music]

- Moving on to the first chorus, we start with the key of B but finish on modulation to key of E. So the next verse we stay in this key and this pattern of moving up fourth repeats through the whole song through the verses and choruses, and each chorus leads us to a different key.

[key changes demonstration with chords]

Another idea I had is a technique I'm using quite often when I compose and it's to swap parts between players. So in the second verse, in addition to the tonal modulation,

swapping their parts the bass guitar plays the main melody and the guitar stays in the back for rhythmical backup.

[demonstration of Jure and Dima]

- This next clean section we will look at is jokingly called the Leonard Cohen section, where the joke came up during the vocal sessions when the recording engineer suggested the vocals to be sung in the style of Cohen.

[Matej interview]

[Eren talks about the solo]

- [something interesting about the keys parts in the song]
- [keyboard solo]: plays on top of the chorus riff on the key of A, modulating to the key of D, returning to the original key in the last verse.
- Fun fact: the two measure coda in the end was once called Mario section due to the keyboard sounds used during the demos.

[Dima and Vidi are talking about the lyrics]

- Each pre chorus section, you can hear Vidi is doing strange sounds, it was done with water.

Closing

I hope you enjoyed this first video in the Evolution of an Album series. Next video we'll go into the second track Seven Digits. Check out the album from the links in the description and let us know if you have any thoughts or questions in the comments below. See you next time.

Track 02: Seven Digits

- Hello this is Dmitri Alperovich from Seventh Station. Welcome to our second episode in our series called Evolution of an Album, where we share the process of

making our second record titled “Heal the Unhealed”. In this episode I will talk about the second track, “Seven Digits”.

- [Vidi describing the song]
- The song is composed as an A-B-A form, similar to a verse - chorus - verse structure. Starting with the atmospheric dream, followed by the heavy part, and concluding with the dream again. The calmer A sections are establishing an atmosphere like falling into a feeling of nostalgia and reminiscing the past. In contrast, the B section is a shock to this nostalgia when facing the past. Heavier distorted diminished chords and intervals help create this intense shock.
- The clean sections are based on the same chord progression on different variations of the performance techniques such as harmonics, different time signatures and the free time feel.

[demonstrate all the variations shortly]

- Interestingly there is a bass solo here leading the music once the vocals enter, accompanied by drums while the atmosphere is provided by the guitar and keyboards.

[Jure talks about the bass solo]

- The heavy section’s riff begins with the rhythm section rhythmically independent, meeting on the syncope at the end of the measure. The ending of this riff is alternating between three versions, every iteration of the riff has either repetition of the notes, harmonic pinches, or an octave change. In the following sections, the guitar moves to the chords while the **B**ass takes over the riff with a variation, then the guitar chords are expanded as a riff by individually repeating the notes of the chords as arpeggios.

[demonstrate music with notation on screen]

[Eren talks about the keys solo and harmony and theory]

Octatonic scale: G# - A# - B - C# - D - E - F - G - G#

1 0.5 1 0.5 1 0.5 1 0.5

Closing

I hope you enjoyed this second video in the Evolution of an Album series. Next video we'll start the Stalin trilogy by going into the third track The Heart of a Nation. Check out the album from the links in the description and let us know if you have any thoughts or questions in the comments below. See you next time.

Track 03: The Heart of a Nation (Nadia)

- Hello this is Dmitri Alperovich from Seventh Station. Welcome to our third episode in our series called Evolution of an Album, where we share the process of making our second record titled "Heal the Unhealed". In this episode I will talk about the third track, "The Heart of a Nation".

- This is the first song in the Stalin / Soviet Union trilogy, talking about the relationship between Stalin and his second wife Nadia who committed suicide. The song is full of musical contrasts as we try to paint the struggle in Stalin's ego by showing different sides of his personality from our perspective.

[Vidi describing the song and lyrics]

- When I was first writing this song, I was experiencing some mood swings and going back on and forth between different moods. The constant play between major and minor sections are like a reflection of those times, as well as paralleling the mood swings of Stalin and his wife's relationship. I first wanted to compose the simplest happy theme I can think of and I came up with this 6/8 major theme.

[Dima riff demonstration minor and major with notation]

- Contrasting this happy theme, the next section consists of the anxiety theme with the high piano loop. As the guitar arpeggiates it as a chord, the bass note goes a half step up each iteration, increasing the intensity.

[music with notation, half steps in the bass note]

- The transition section to the instrumental part creates tension with chromatic notes repeatedly moving up accompanied with the half diminished chords of the guitar. I tried to imitate the immediate sudden change from a comfortable state into an anxious one, reflecting on Stalin's unpredictable mood.

[Dima and Eren demonstrate]

- Continuing to the instrumental section, we take a rather straightforward sounding riff, and iterate its ending between 4/4 and 9/8 to spice it up making it a bit more unexpected. We use the same technique in the following riff, this time going gradually from 11/16 to 14/16.

[Dima demonstrate with notation]

- As the rhythmical experimentation continues, we introduce a new chromatic riff where this time the drums oppose the band in polymeters.

[demonstrate the polymeter]

- The classical guitar break is based on the previous rhythmical section, in technical variations. It's a great opportunity to apply the classical guitar training to this section and put the riff through different variations.

[dima show variation]

- Through the use of harmonic modulation to get back to the major theme, the second half of the section is like my personal tribute to the great composer Rodrigo, integrating his stylistic influence. Finally as the music transitions back to the main major riff, the classical guitar recites this part including the addition of the bass part as a polyphonic playing technique, given homage to Bach and the baroque music period, while the keyboards are reinforcing the melody.

[Dima and Eren demonstrating the section with notation]

- The anxiety theme comes back, but this time at the end each member drops from the music accompanied with a shotgun sound effect, an impression of Stalin's well known execution orders, as well as Nadia killing herself with a gun. As this is the second repetition of this section, Grega contributed lots of orchestral percussion colors this time to make it feel like a movie.

[Grega talks about multi-percussion]

Closing

I hope you enjoyed this third video in the Evolution of an Album series. Next video we'll continue the Stalin trilogy by going into the fourth track The Ruthless Koba. Check out the album from the links in the description and let us know if you have any thoughts or questions in the comments below. See you next time.

Track 04: The Ruthless Koba

- Hello this is Dmitri Alperovich from Seventh Station. Welcome to our fourth episode in our series called Evolution of an Album, where we share the process of making our second record titled "Heal the Unhealed". In this episode I will talk about the fourth track, "The Ruthless Koba".
- This is the second track in the Stalin / Soviet trilogy and it is a progressive metal arrangement of the second movement of Dmitri Shostakovich's 10th Symphony. The original second movement is said to be the composer's own portrayal of Stalin himself. The trilogy idea originated from this composition, I've been thinking about arranging this piece for years because it is a highly technical and challenging piece to perform, and coming from a classical music background it was only natural to take a classical piece and arrange it. During the writing of the

album, I thought it would make a great trilogy if we were to add two more tracks around the same topic. The arrangement changes the instrumentation but is faithful to the symphonic orchestra sound.

- Through going through lots of Shostakovich's scores, I've realized in a lot of examples that his writing style is very similar to a rock/metal band of writing. The orchestrations are quite similar if you think about them in the same terms like a band. Multiple sections are playing in a way that doubles the same part in octaves, like guitar and bass often playing the same part in octaves, while the other sections are creating harmonies like keyboards in the band, and even at times solo parts. So in this context it looks quite similar to the way of composing for the band. There are usually no more than four individual lines played in different instrumentation combinations when we reduce the orchestral score.
- Before diving into the examples, a quick fun fact: The name 'Koba' in the title was Stalin's nickname popular among his close circles and friends. The title of the song was chosen to make an irony between the friendly name Koba and the public image of the ruthless Stalin.
- Now here are some examples of how we tried to maintain the arrangement faithful to the original.

[4 examples]

1. Rehearsal 16-17 (the breakdown)

- [video of orchestra with notation]
- In this section all the low strings, brass and the woodwinds are translated into power chords on the guitar and bass. The high brass melody and the high woodwinds' movement are taken care of by the keyboards. With the addition of the drums contributing to the characterization of evil, this section really feels like a metal breakdown.
- [video of arrangement with notation]

2. Rehearsal Mark 08-10 (bass tapping)

- [video of orchestra with notation]

- The whole band covers the fast paced 16th note ostinato for the beginning of the section, where after the first hit the guitar and the bass are playing the high strings line in harmony while the keyboard continues with the ostinato. To be able to cover the low contrabass note in the ostinato both the bass is playing by tapping.
 - [video of arrangement with notation]
3. Rehearsal Mark 13-15 (soloing)
- [video of orchestra with notation]
 - This time, as the bass continues to hold the ostinato line, keyboards join to increase the intensity in the high strings line accompanied with the high woodwinds, in preparation for the breakdown section we showed in the first example.
 - [video of arrangement with notation]
4. Rehearsal Mark 23-26 (drums contributing to the dynamics)
- [video of orchestra with notation]
 - The arrangement is also faithful to the dynamics of the original piece and we wanted the arrangement not to be an all the time loud piece. A great contribution to the dynamics comes from the way the drum parts were composed, where it was treated like a melodic instrument rather than just the rhythm, so that it contributes to the general dynamic feel.
 - In this particular section the accentuation of the high melody line first starts with the hi-hat, and gradually increasing the intensity by growing the orchestration of the drums with the addition of cymbals, then the snare, and then the double kick.
 - [video of arrangement with notation]

Closing

I hope you enjoyed this fourth video in the Evolution of an Album series. Next video we'll conclude the Stalin trilogy by going into the fifth track All Hail the Moustache. Check out the album from the links in the description and let us know if you have any thoughts or questions in the comments below. See you next time.

Track 05: All Hail The Moustache

- Hello this is Dmitri Alperovich from Seventh Station. Welcome to our fifth episode in our series called Evolution of an Album, where we share the process of making our second record titled “Heal the Unhealed”. In this episode I will talk about the fifth track, “All Hail the Moustache”.
- This is the final track in the Stalin / Soviet trilogy. The moustache is an analogy of the dictatorship’s power. 20th century dictators were somehow always carrying their own certain styles of moustaches. There are three languages featured in the song, English, Russian, and Italian.
- For the opening of the song, I wanted the theme to be presented by the vocals and not the instruments. Generally, it is rare to see the initial presentation of a theme done by the vocals. I wanted to create a disturbing feeling by using somewhat atonal intervals, and the back vocals adding a layer of clusters around it, to make the feeling like going insane.
- Here are some examples of this theme occurring throughout the song:

[video with notation]

- I first came up with the heavy riff with the ghost notes attached to each note to make it a bit more annoying, like a dying harddrive getting stuck. The riff builds on chromatism as a general compositional device throughout the album. As a contradiction to this riff, the second melodic riff that follows after is like a relief to the annoyance. Through all the first half of the song, there's a play between these two riffs and the vocal theme, in rhythmical, tonal and dynamic variations. This song is a good example of taking a theme and constructing the song around different variations throughout the song, instead of coming up with new riffs or themes every section. This process resembles a classical music type of approach.

[Dima demonstrates the riff and variations]

[Eren talks about Digital Pig sound]

- The second half of the song, which is the psychedelic part, is based on the chords in the keyboard part of the initial introduction of the melodic riff. Later the two chord cycle breaks into a new direction by going into new harmonies. Through the transition to the new harmonies, while the keyboards keep the chord progression on a loop, the guitar and bass arpeggiates the chords in a mirror shape, playing in large intervals creating an unsettling atmosphere.

[Mirror example with bass and guitar and notation]

- The next transition towards the last section features rhythmical dissonant stabs accompanied by the snare, each iteration these stabs move a 16th note forward, throwing off the steady feeling in place of a spinning kind of feeling.

[notation example]

Closing

I hope you enjoyed this fifth video in the Evolution of an Album series. Next video will be the last one of this album going into the last track The Final Bow. Check out the

album from the links in the description and let us know if you have any thoughts or questions in the comments below. See you next time.

Track 06: A Final Bow

- Hello this is Dmitri Alperovich from Seventh Station. Welcome to our final episode in our series called Evolution of an Album, where we share the process of making our second record titled “Heal the Unhealed”. In this episode I will talk about the closing track of the album, “A Final Bow”.
- Usually my approach to composing songs is without using the instruments, but by writing the notation from what I hear in my mind. I think trying to compose with the instrument is limiting to what you can play. When I was first writing this track I was sitting in front of a blank page not having any inspiration, so I just picked up a guitar and I was moving around this dominant 7th chord around, I liked the idea, added the top moving line and that became the opening to this track. For the second part of this riff I took the rhythmical pattern from the top line and applied it to a chromatic line moving up.
- As this riff repeats, each time it’s extended by one repetition with a variation, until it reaches four and proceeds to the next riff. The last variation on the top line is by mirroring the notes and the rhythm.

[show the notation for the mirror]

- The next riff takes this repetition idea forward and mirrors it to decrease one by one after it reaches four repetitions.

- In the next section, we break away from the 12/8 feeling by alternating the measures between 11/8 and 12/8. This riff is meant to connect us from the intense opening to the first vocal section.

'A Final Bow' Lyrics Description:

The song is about compromises one is making with relationships to him/herself and with others. The song works in two different paths of love: one, an artistic compromise and the other, a romantic compromise. both pulling the person in different directions, to the point of the artist selling his soul in order to try and avoid the conflicts he is experiencing, a transaction, which of course, has an enormous traumatic emotional price.

just like in the song "The Heart of a Nation" ambition takes its toll.

"Heal The Unhealed" is inspired by the events of the 20th century, focusing on the **Second World War** and the **Soviet Union**, reflected in the eyes Alperovich, who was born in Minsk, Belarus.

The Album's name is coming from the events that took place while recording the album. Dmitri's panic attack and the long healing process have made a great impact on his view on the psychological prospect of the machine which called a human being.

The album was produced by Dmitri Alperovich and been recorded in 3 countries (Slovenia, United States and Turkey) and in 3 studios (not including home recordings) and in 4 languages (English, Russian, Hebrew and Italian). The album was mixed and mastered by Matej Gobec (the sound engineer of Laibach).

01. Unspoken Thoughts

Unspoken Thoughts is the first track in the album and it's the metal song of the album. The main theme of the song is the inability of expressing yourself and about the situations in life in which you keep all your emotions inside until it explodes towards the outside. Through the complicated time signatures in the music, we see the struggle of letting things to come out and the intensive music is showing that kind of a 'holding feeling'.

02. Seven Digits

Seven Digits is a song about the Jewish holocaust that took place in the previous century. The song is about a man, who has a tattooed number on his arm and his battle with living with himself after his experience in the death camps and with the murder of his family.

The song starts with the man telling his dream and later it turns to anger that being caused by his memories. Musically, the song starts very soft, demonstrating the feeling of an illusion of the dream. Later, the music turns to an aggression as reflection to his memories. The end is repeating the calmness of the beginning which shows us that everything has an end.

03. The Heart of a Nation (Nadia)

This is the first song in a three songs suite about Stalin and the Soviet Union. The song is about Stalin's second wife Nadia who committed suicide because of Stalin's iron heart. The song is showing the up and down relationship between Stalin and Nadia. The song is changing its moods very often and it's parallel to the mood swing of their relationship (as well as the music is changing from minor to major key quite often).

04. The Ruthless Koba

The Ruthless Koba is an original arrangement of Dmitri Shostakovich's 10th symphony (2nd movement) written by Dmitri Alperovich. It's the second part of three songs suite about Stalin and the Soviet Union. This instrumental piece is Shostakovich's attempt to portray Stalin. 'Koba' is Stalin's nickname that been popular among Stalin's close people and friends and the title was chosen to show the irony between the friendly Koba and the ruthless Stalin.

05. All Hail the Mustache

This is the last song of the three songs suite about Stalin and the Soviet Union. The song has two themes: 1. Analogy of the mustache to the dictatorship's power. 2. The difference of cultures and the inability to understand each other because of language barrier. The song starts very aggressive and complicated and trying to show Stalin's inner world and the will to gain more power. The psychedelic part of the song is talking about the barrier in expressing our inspirations.