

**Eis Ten Polin**

***Wild Flowers Of Anatolia***

Voice Of Shade 2×CD

Vocalist Nikolai Galen – who is British, and long ago used to be Nick Hobbs of The Shrubs – has lived in Istanbul since 2003 where he has worked with Russian singer and instrumentalist Sadko Space Angel as Galen Sadko, as well as exploring solo vocal improvisation in performance and on disc (see 2004's brilliant *Emanuel Vigeland*). In Istanbul after unsuccessful attempts to produce his own version of Anatolian blues music with more traditional saz players, he met the group Baba Zula, which is Murat Ertel on various forms of acoustic and electric saz and Macedonian tamboura (who has played with the likes of Fred Frith and Can drummer Jaki Liebezelt), and percussionist Gökçe Gürçay. Together they are Eis Ten Polin.

There's a loose, partly improvised feel to many of the compositions, and on "Silencing The Nightingales", Galen sings in a sort of forced whisper, as if gathering strength to face an onslaught from "speculators, predators, construction company plunderers" making up the advance guard of global capitalism that is "ruining our idyll", while producer Dolf Planteijdt plays wah-wah guitar.

Listening to the first part of this double CD set feels like being at a live performance in that it follows a standard concert trajectory from an absorbing beginning that eventually builds up momentum into something gripping. There's a psychedelic approach employed with the backwards saz on "Waves", where Galen's voice begins to uncoil in long held notes; and it all explodes on "Incident Follows Incident", with its thrilling, intense interplay between the electric saz and Gürçay's hyperactive drumming, as Galen's voice ripples like a flag in the wind. "Halfway There" keeps up the intensity with electric saz played at dazzling speed in what sounds like serpentine hard rock cut with disorientating passages in waltz time.

The acoustic "Interdependent System" features one of Galen's most impressive vocal performances, rich with extravagant melismas, as he identifies a threat from a rising tide of urban violence. "Calm reigns for a time while we stockpile weapons", he sings ominously. "Cockroaches And Rats" concerns the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul in 2013, in which peaceful demonstrators were violently evicted from their occupation of a site previously marked for urban development. The musicians move from heavy blues rock, albeit played with the subtlety and rhythmic élan of more traditional Turkish forms, to freeform sections to noise wig-outs of concentrated fury.

Mike Barnes