

Moraine MuzEnergy Tour 2015 Tour Blog

Photos by Dennis Rea, Aleksey Akimov, James DeJoie

МузЭнергоТур **MuzEnergy Tour**
 МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ГАСТРОЛИРУЮЩИЙ ФЕСТИВАЛЬ
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ALAIN BLESING (FR) ÁNGEL ONTALVA (ES) SIMON WYRSCH (CH) ERIC PAILHÉ (FR) SALTO (RU) DANIEL HERSKEDAL (NO) SPINIFEX (NL/DE/PT/RU/TR/US) ROCQAWALI (DK/PK) SCIENCE FICTION THEATER (CH) BANGIN' BÜLWOS NICE JAZZ QUARTET (DK) SVIN (DK) ГУДИМИР (RU) SAMI SIPPOLA & VILLE RAUHALA (FI) THE MAGNETIC EAGLE (DK) QONIAK (CH) SINE SEAWAVE (RU) SHADY MIDNIGHT ORCHESTRA (CH/DE/RU) VEIN (CH) CACTUS TRUCK (NL/US) STROOTSTAD (NL) RUSSIAN MORAINÉ (US/RU/CH) CLAUDIE BOUCAU (FR) HENOSIS (NL) ECLECTA FOREVER (CH) GALEONE 5 (CH/IT) PLASTIK SOLDIERS (NL) MARC EGEA (CAT) RAIMUNDO SANTANDER (CL) OCTOBER EQUUS (ES) WEIRD BEARD (CH) BÜYÜKBERBER/KLEIN (NL/TK/DE) D.R.H. (FR) BRAM STADHOUDERS (NL) LIONEL FRIEDLI (CH) AMANDA PAZOS COSSE (ES)

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In July 2015, Seattle-based instrumental rock band [Moraine](#) took part in a roughly 1,500-mile leg of the [MuzErgo Tour](#), a trans-Russia traveling music festival featuring several dozen exploratory international musicians. Organized by tour mastermind **Iouri Lnogradski**, this musical adventure of a lifetime was made possible through generous travel support from the U.S. State Department.



MuzEnergO tour bus, AKA "Meatball Express" – Moraine's home on wheels for two-plus weeks of travels in Siberia and Tuva. We filled the long stretches between tour stops gazing at vistas of the lovely Siberian countryside, learning each other's music, and enjoying the stimulating camaraderie of the polyglot MuzEnergO family, forming what are sure to be many lasting friendships along the way.



The assembled MuzEnergO musicians and crew near Shushenskoye, Khakassia. Now in its third year, the [MuzEnergO Tour](#) brings an unprecedented variety of cutting-edge creative music to far-flung locales throughout Russia. This year's tour involved more than 70 concerts featuring a rotating cast of highly accomplished musicians from 16 different countries, whose music collectively spanned modern jazz, art rock, free improvisation, traditional ethnic music, and experimental soundscapes. The 2015 tour set out from Moscow in June and finished up in late August way out in Vladivostok on the Pacific Ocean, a driving distance of nearly 20,000 kilometers.



MuzErgo musicians in a spontaneous mass “conduction” at the finale of a concert at Krasnoyarsk Philharmonic Hall.



Sound check, Tomsk State University Culture Hall. [MuzEnergO Tour](#) destinations ranged from major cities to small rural towns, with concerts typically staged in sizable municipal and regional theaters and philharmonic halls, plus the occasional open-air festival. In many cases these venues had never before staged concerts of such unfamiliar and often challenging music, but to the musicians' delight, audiences responded with warmth and keen interest.



Both the U.S. and European musicians on tour were unanimous in observing that our Russian audiences were on the whole significantly larger and more appreciative of our far-from-mainstream music than is typically the case in our home countries. With the large number of musicians on board, our concerts were normally segmented into eight 20-minute sets; much to our surprise, it was not uncommon for listeners to take in more than three hours of music with undivided attention and enthusiasm.



Moraine's only serious setback came when our drummer for the tour, **Lionel Friedli**, a Swiss national who'd prepared diligently for playing with us for months leading up to MuzEnergó, badly injured his wrist in a freak accident three days into our tour and had to fly home the next day. This put us in a panic, but thankfully another equally talented Swiss drummer, **Nicolas Stocker** of the wonderful Shady Midnight Orchestra, graciously agreed to learn our set with just a few hours to spare before a big show that night in Tomsk. Amazingly, Nicolas nailed it, but he was due to leave the tour himself the next day. Up stepped the one remaining drummer on our leg of the tour, **Onno Govaert** (in red shirt above), who heroically assumed Moraine's drum chair for our remaining seven concerts, thus literally saving the tour for us. Whew!



It's not every day that one gets a chance to visit (let alone play music in) Tuva, mysterious land of nomadic throat-singers bordering Mongolia in the geographical center of Asia. The MuzEnergO Tour musicians were guests of the large open-air Ustuu Huree Music Festival that takes place on a Buddhist holiday each year in the town of Chadan. Here Moraine played for its largest-ever audience, an estimated 5,000 people – in a wrestling arena at 2 A.M.! ([video footage](#) of Moraine in Tuva)



Moraine live at the Ustuu Huree Festival in Chadan, Tuva; L-R: Alicia DeJoie, Dennis Rea, Onno Govaert, Wadim Dicke, James DeJoie. We opened this show with a rendition of a traditional Tuvan melody, and later played our electrified interpretation of an ancient melody dating from Tang Dynasty China.



In Tuva, Moraine guitarist **Dennis Rea** was honored to be invited to sit on a jury judging the performances of musicians hoping to be selected to perform on the Ustuu Huree Festival's main stage. Over two days the jury evaluated 48 acts ranging from traditional Tuvan throat-singers to a Siberian metal band (pictured) to a 9-year-old Tuvan Tina Turner impersonator. For his participation, Dennis was presented with the bronzed knee bone of a wolf – a sacred talisman in Tuva – by the director of the Tuvan national music academy.



Family of traditional Tuvan musicians auditioning for Ustuu Huree Festival main stage.



Accommodations were a bit, er, rustic in Tuva, where, like every other festival visitor, we had no choice but to camp outside for three days in tents provided by MuzEnergO. Sleep was in short supply due to late concert start times, ceremonial bonfires at 4 A.M., and ceaseless announcements booming over the p.a. speakers at the crack of dawn. The other campsites were occupied by a selection of Russian and European New Age hippies and the occasional masked shaman.



Talk about musical diversity! Grainy nighttime photo of Tuvan traditional player with Swiss jazz clarinetist **Simon Wyrsh** and acclaimed Russian traditional folk musician **Maxim Anukhin**.



Tuvan National Brass Band



One of the main objectives of the MuzEnergy Tour is to encourage collaboration between the various artists on the tour – some come as free agents, others with more fixed ensembles, but all eventually meet somewhere in the middle. Moraine got into the spirit and involved a total of nine new members in the band during our stint on tour, a marvelous experience that opened up intriguing future possibilities. Pictured here on vocals (a first for our instrumental band) are the fabulous **Andrina Bollinger & Marena Wischer** (AKA **Electa Forever**).

Once again, our heartfelt thanks go to the U.S. State Department and the very personable and helpful staff of the U.S. Embassy in Russia for their extremely generous support of Moraine's tour – *spasibo!*