

Freedonian Nights Ring With Songs of Bitchiness

by Con Chapman

GLZORP, Freedonia. By day, Ksiusha Milda is a housewife with a one year-old daughter. By night, she is something completely different; a blues singer of sorts, a practitioner of this country's traditional folk song, *kale*.

*Lithuanian
woman - Julia*

Ksiusha Milda: "It is not enough that you change her diaper—you nimrod, you also must see that you wipe her."

"It is my release," she says as she wraps a brightly-colored *platok*, or scarf, around her head. "I need something to take me away from the diapers and my lazy husband."

"I deeply regret I accept your proposal—You are such a klutz you can't fix my disposal!"

And so Ksiusha comes to a basement nightclub on the edge of the downtown area here to sing the *kale*, traditional plaints of Freedonian women about life's hardships and their troubles with men.



Kale singers, warming up.

“The term ‘kale’ literally means ‘bitch,’” says Kantatas Jonas, a professor of ethnomusicology at the University of Freedonia-Zlmgdork, who says the genre's fans expect nothing less than a full-bore attack on the man in a singer's life. “The audience knows what they want and they'll let a performer hear it if she doesn't deliver,” Jonas says. “A singer can be booed off the stage if she pulls her punches.”

“You are such a schmuck for buying a truck, we need an SUV for our growing family.”

Sales of *kale* records peaked in the 1950's, when Zemaite, the “Queen of Kale,” created what came to be known as the “Jo-Town Sound” after Jonava, the city of her birth. “Everybody was dancin' in the streets back in the day,” says Zilvytis Barnardas, a 60-year old who fondly recalls the abuse he took from his girlfriend Rasa. “She would sing ‘You are so bad at fondling my breasts, I prefer to study for my chemistry test.’”

Rasa: "You are so clumsy at kissing, I find new boy to show what I missing!"

Today's *kale* artists say they draw on that tradition, but they also want to make their own mark in the country's musical history books. "I am a part of that past, but I must sing of my own life," says Ksiusha Milda before launching into the opening bars of 'I'd Rather Drive a Tractor on Several Farms (Than Be Stuck in Our Apartment Staring At Your Hairy Arms)," a track that has a pounding back beat and catchy lyrics that the crowd echoes with each chorus. "It is not enough that I suffer," she explains between sets. "It is also necessary that I complain where others can hear me."

Available in Kindle format on amazon.com as part of the collection "Hail Freedonia."

