

Red Bird Rising Collaborate With Ukrainian Musicians on Powerful Anti-War Song "My Revolution"

As if the powerful composition, fearless lyricism and ample musicianship on display wasn't enough, an official music video was filmed in Odessa under threat of bombing by Russian missiles.



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The greatest writing comes from urgent need, and it is just such a palatable sense of urgency that motivated musician, songwriter and producer **Diedrich Donald Weiss**, known by his musical alias **RED BIRD RISING**, to write "**My Revolution**". "**My Revolution**" is at once a profound love song and an immense anti-war statement. A tremendous undertaking and community effort, "**My Revolution**" features a wide range of instrumentation and musical collaborators, including Ukrainian husband and wife **Taras Kuznetsov** on lead vocals and **Ana Pshokina** on bass.

"I believe in the magic that only exists when two or more artists engage themselves fully within the natural energy of music."

"I have a world worn faith in the power of music to significantly change people's lives."

As if the powerful composition, fearless lyricism and ample musicianship on display wasn't enough, an official music video was filmed in Odessa under threat of bombing by Russian missiles. Even during times of war, the creative impulse survives, defying those who would wish to snuff it out.

[Watch the official music video.](#)

My Revolution - The Song:

I have a world worn faith in the power of music to affect people's lives positively. It's this place that inspired me to write "**My Revolution**" in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It may be naive to think a song could in any way substantially affect something as dominating as this horror, yet it was my answer to the inner question, "what can I do?"

I initially thought of the invasion as life or death. Soldiers, tanks, missiles, guns, blood. My mind touched the images and information coming in and it quickly separated to protect me from the intensity. It filled in the blanks with past wars in modern history. But the battle is not what this song is about.

Connecting to Taras Kuznetsov to pursue fulfilling "**My Revolution**" ported me into a day to day contact with a civilian experience unique to anything that has come before in modern war. This invasion is barbaric, highly personal, and specifically targets civilians to create terror and leverage surrender.

My Revolution is about a man stuck against a force dominating his life, and his dreams, and adapting his mundane but simple comforts into necessities in order to cope. And this man is not fictional. He is Taras Kuznetsov, a 32 year old full time remote freelance vocalist, producer, arranger, audio engineer, drummer and pianist. The time of the scene of the song is March 2022, about 6 weeks after the first Russian military intrusion of sovereignty. The location is Odessa, the port city crucial to access to import and export of vital goods and the artistic soul of Ukraine.

Because Taras is the subject of "**My Revolution**" and the lead vocalist, I wrote the lyrics as if I were him, using factual information of what he is contending with in this early stage of the invasion. The chorus which sings, "my revolution begins in my world within" is anthemic and specifically an answer to the question, "what can I do?". The external world is much beyond his control. But Taras' inner world is where he can find stability and strength to contend and keep moving forward in his life and as a person. He can change, adapt, resist and grow. He sings in the second verse, "good, good they haven't yet bombed my home, but I can not go out, so I rule my own house, work like a bee in honeycomb."

Perhaps the only reasonable explanation for the invasion is Putin's retaliation for the Orange Revolution of 2014. Students and activists dared to challenge the authority of the oppressive government puppeteered by Putin. The Ukrainian revolutionaries liberated Ukraine, and in becoming a free

democracy, embarrassed Russia globally. That is why Taras felt it important to include footage of this history near the beginning of the video for **"My Revolution"**. It is the full modern context of Russian abuse of their country.

But 8 years later, Taras's country is now this moment as you read being grazed with genocidal terrorism. After weeks of alarm sirens without being struck, the threat of missiles and bombs live as abstract. The danger exists like vultures and gargoyles circling the sky of his psyche. The opening scene of the video for **"My Revolution"** was shot from inside his apartment in Odessa bringing us to the chilling feeling of the alarm sirens ricocheting off the buildings in the otherwise silent night.

Rationally, he should leave Ukraine. He sings in the opening verse, "passport be damned, take all I can, get out now as I should." As a man, he can't legally leave Ukraine. And like many who due to physical conditions are not eligible for military service, he gets access to a gun for personal safety and sings, "I was given a gun, I can take out some Russians, bring those reptiles down." If Russians were to enter Odessa, he says he would use this gun, but what can he do in the meantime? In the third pre-chorus he sings, "I can't just go along, I can't just sing this song" while in the video, he and his wife Ana are in their studio working on music.

Taras is aware of the missiles and bombs, aware of the rape and torture happening in occupied cities and towns. He is a well informed, thoughtful man, who loves his country, yet what will he do? What can he do? It is a moment to calibrate inside himself and chose how to respond in the large context of his own singular inner life. This tension within is expressed in the video through the exquisite dance sequences of **Melina Acune** where she struggles and leans into the fight to find grace within.

The song gets to the heart of what matters most to him on the bridge. "If it wasn't for you, you are enough, my love". His wife Ana, who also plays the bass guitar on the track, chose to stay with Taras in Odessa rather than flee to neighboring countries. Together, they are united to survive, yet what makes them extraordinary artists is that they are determined to keep moving forward with their music. They understand that music is what they need to contend and thrive. He sings, "I can't lose my mind checking the headlines, play my piano instead." Music is their sanctuary.

Music is also their source of a powerful union with strength within. In the words of Taras, "Music is about me and I'm all about music. Throughout my career, I've been and I continue to be a pianist, keyboard player, drummer, singer, sound engineer, mastering engineer and sound producer. And I've just only started. I have a beautiful bass player and singer wife, **Ana Pshokina** and we're going to share our music with the world. The time has come."

Ana expressed her reliance on music during the invasion in an Instagram post. She wrote, "I'm still alive. I have a warm dinner and an undamaged home. I have no words to express my gratitude to our soldiers for the opportunity to keep practicing and working. Music is my only weapon. Music is almost the only thing that can distract me from the news. Music can help draw the attention of people from other countries to the real situation in Ukraine. I want to share it with you as long as I have this opportunity."

The Making of "My Revolution" - Recording & Video

An original song and video by **RED BIRD RISING** featuring musician **Taras Kuznetsov** contending with the Russian invasion living in Odessa, Ukraine.

Diedrich Donald Weiss wanted to do something in response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. An artist from Minneapolis, MN living in Colombia, South America has little influence from a far.

But Weiss wrote **"My Revolution"**. He shared it with producer, musician and mixing engineer **Mariano Cukierman** whom he'd recently collaborated on a song. Cukierman, an Argentinian whose studio is in Buenos Aires, agreed it would be right to find an artist in Ukraine to sing it.

Weiss discovered **Taras Kuznetsov**'s profile on the remote musician website SoundBetter. He liked Kuznetsov's vocal on his profile song and searched the internet to find that he and his wife **Ana Pshokina** are experienced live performers and studio recording artists. They could fulfill the project professionally, but there was the issue of recording during invasion conditions.

Weiss contacted Kuznetsov to learn that his studio was accessible for recording. Kuznetsov, whom speaks native level English, also felt the music fit his voice and taste and that the lyrics of **"My Revolution"** authentically expressed his experience. The project started to gain momentum.

Back in Buenos Aires, Cukierman took Weiss' demo of **"My Revolution"** and recorded rhythm guitars, organ, electric piano and scratch bass guitar. He added fellow Argentinian **Fernando Moreno** on drums while keeping Weiss' electric guitar riffs, electric piano intro melody and backing vocals. Cukierman created a polyrhythmic rock groove with uniquely voiced guitar parts in a version that elevated the core of the track's rhythm bed.

Hereafter, **"My Revolution"** came to full life in Odessa as Kuznetsov recorded lead vocals in their professional studio with Pshokina recording bass guitar. The spine of the song is now completed, Kuznetsov developed a demo string arrangement to augment the dramatic movements of the track.

Weiss had previously worked with string arranger and violinist **Megan Gould** who lives in New York. After discussing ideas and approaches, Gould wrote the string arrangement performing on violin and viola with sessionist **Eleanor Norton** on cello.

With all tracking complete, Cukierman mixed the song over four sessions. Weiss participated over video chat with notes he and Kuznetsov prepared. Cukierman in real time executed the vision they together had evolved.

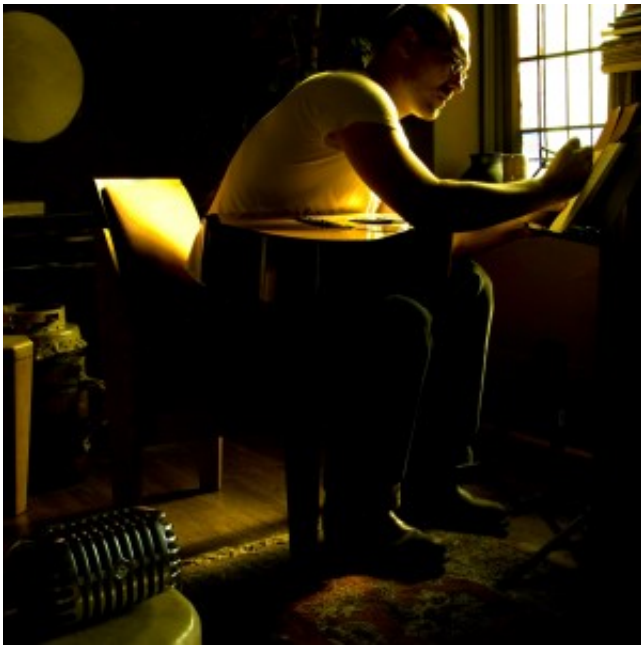
Early on in the project, it became clear to Weiss that a video would be the most powerful to express Kuznetsov's experience. He shared his idea with Cukierman and he connected Weiss to filmmaker **Flor Giardino** in Buenos Aires. Giardino had recently made a short film with dancer and choreographer **Melina Ascune** called **Exclama**. When Weiss viewed this film on Giardino's website, the connection between the dance and the inner experience of the song's lyrics was uncannily synchromatic. Even more, the location of the shots on the rocky banks of a large body of water in Buenos Aires looked similar to the shores of Odessa on the Black Sea. Giardino and Ascune gave Weiss permission to use the Exclama shots in the video.

Kuznetsov and Weiss then collaborated on the story for the video. Kuznetsov and Pshokina shot in multiple locations in Odessa. From here, Weiss edited the video using the Exclama dance shots, the Odessa shots from Kuznetsov and Pshokina, and footage found from sites such as Dattalion, which is an archive of video stories documenting the invasion, and Ukraine Today on Telegram, the frequently used social media site for people sharing about the invasion. Giardino as Colorist then completed the final master of the video.

The video production in Odessa called for the video to be shot in public, both during the day, and at night. The bombings by Russian missiles to Odessa's energy infrastructure after the explosion on the Crimea Bridge made collaboration on the video more difficult with Taras having less access to electricity

and internet. But when there was electricity and internet, Taras and Diedrich together fulfilled the visual story that felt needed to be told.

Naturally, personal connections evolved with such commitment and trust essential to creating what is a deeply personal and artistically powerful piece of music and video. At the heart of this project is each artist, from Colombia, Argentina, the United States, and Ukraine, rising to pull everything they as artists have within them engaging personally and passionately as if all in one studio together.



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