



## THE HYPOTHETICAL PROPHETS AROUND THE WORLD WITH

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A lost new wave classic given the definitive reissue treatment. The (Hypothetical) Prophets were a collaboration between French electronic pioneer Bernard Szajner and British musician Karel Beer, recording something of a Soviet-themed concept album under the pseudonyms Joseph Weil and Norman D.Landing.

Known to aficionados of minimal synth, the album has rarely been heard since its original release on CBS/EPIC. In 2004 two tracks were included on the compilation *So Young, But So Cold: Underground French Music 1977-1983* and in recent years it has been cited as a seminal album by specialist blogs such as Mutant Sounds and Systems Of Romance.

It has now been rescued from oblivion by InFiné who lovingly reissued *Visions Of Dune* by Prophets member Bernard Szajner in 2014, to much critical acclaim. Re-mastered from the original tapes with the full co-operation of the band members, the track sequence restored to how the composers originally intended it, and previously unheard bonus tracks on the CD.

Utilising William Burroughs/Brion Gysin style newsreel cut-ups, harsh electronics comparable to contemporary records by the likes of Cabaret Voltaire, caustically satirical lyrics, and deadpan vocals reminiscent of the Flying Lizards, B52s or Trio. Parallels can be also be drawn with the early releases by Mute Records which contrasted the harsh experimentation of The Normal with the chart-bothering likes of Depeche Mode. An argument could even be made that the Prophets predict the self-referential meta-pop of a group such as LCD Soundsystem, also back in 2016!

### LP TRACKLIST

#### A side

01. Around The World With The Prophets
02. Back To The Burner
03. Fast Food
04. I Like Lead
05. Person To Person
06. Terminal New York

#### B side

01. The Fisherman's Friend
02. On The Edge Of The White Zone
03. Wallenberg (French version)
04. Back To Siberia



## CD Tracklist:

01. Around The World With The Prophets
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## Bonus Tracks

10. Fast
11. Terminal New York
12. Budapest 45

## **“The Antidote To Po-faced Posing Popstars”**

*Adapted from an article written by Karel Beer for The Sheffield Chronicle. 1982*

1979

Reacting to the incident at the Three Mile Island Nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania, Jackson Brown, Bonnie Raitt, Graham Nash and Bruce Springsteen joined forces to protest and protect by organising a No Nukes concert in Madison Square Garden. An initiative that did not go unnoticed, several thousand miles away in Paris, by Karel Beer and Bernard Szajner.

That rock stars in America would unite to warn the nation against the risks of nuclear power was praiseworthy, but who would do the job in the event of such an accident happening in the not so distant Soviet Union? Thus the seeds were sown for a record that would relate the construction of a nuclear power plant and the consequences of a hypothetical mishap. Released in 1980 under the alias “Proroky” (the Prophets) “Back To The Burner” had the desired effect of convincing listeners that the record had been made by Russian musicians and smuggled out of the Soviet Union. Riding the crest of the cold wave the minimalist single featured the voice of a Russian dissident in the role of a Soviet scientist whose project fails to meet expectations. For the B-side, Beer and Szajner proposed recording a pastiche of Kraftwerk’s “Trans Europe Express”, transporting the rail route to cross Siberia. Dmitri the Russian narrator had a more radical suggestion - simply to name all of the gulags (listed and unlisted) between Moscow and Vladivostok. Like the A side “Back To Siberia” did not go unnoticed by the KGB.

Nor did it escape the attention of Alain Maneval, a French radio DJ who took the British release on Hypothetical Records to CBS in Paris. Quite why CBS France would want to release a single in Russian by an unidentifiable group, who had no intention of recording a follow up, remains a mystery. But they did and even offered an option on future recordings.

The adventure would have stopped there had an article in the International Herald Tribune not come to “The Prophets” attention. The fate of Raoul Wallenberg was unknown to the vast majority of people until the article appeared in 1982. A Swedish diplomat posted in Budapest in 1945, Wallenberg was responsible for saving thousands of Jewish Hungarians from the death camps, only to be apprehended by the Soviets and disappearing without trace in one of the gulags listed in “Back To Siberia”. Using the cut-up, technique devised by Brion Gysin, and later used by William Burroughs and David Bowie, the by now



(Hypothetical) Prophets recorded an incomprehensibly chilling 12 inch single entitled "Wallenberg".

This assembly of arbitrary phrases was translated into French and released in France by Epic/CBS shortly after the original version in the UK.

The (Hypothetical) Prophets had hoped that the might of CBS International would enable them to have the record released throughout the world with translations from the preceding version in each subsequent country. This linguistic world tour never came to fruition but when CBS exercised their option for an album Beer and Szajner had a title for it, and even if they did not have any songs, they had an abundance of ideas and pseudonyms.

Taking on the personas Joseph Weil and Norman D. Landing, recording for "Around The World With The (Hypothetical) Prophets began in 1982. By simply recuperating found texts gleaned from the personal announcements in Time Out London and The Village Voice New York, they created "Person To Person". Other types of announcements such as those heard in airports and the subways provided the lyrics for "On The Edge" and "The White Zone". The sudden proliferation of fast food restaurants in Paris inspired "Fast Food"; whilst the BBC's shipping forecast was adapted for "The Fisherman's Friend". The effects of lead in petrol on the youth of Britain resulted in the ironic "I Like Lead".

The videos of "Person To Person" and "Fast Food" aroused the interest of CBS London and New York who released revised versions of the album and 12-inch singles in the UK and America.

Still hidden behind their pseudonyms and with other projects on the go, Karel and Bernard had difficulty helping promote these releases and the album and singles soon became highly collectable objects of a cult following. For 30 years all offers to re-release "Around The World" were turned down by The (Hypothetical) Prophets" despite the collapse of the Soviet Bloc.

## 2016

With the release on Infiné Records, Bernard and Karel can finally reveal the origins of records that for decades have been shrouded in mystery.

All aboard for a trip "Around The World With The (Hypothetical) Prophets".



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**InFiné**

