

BBC Review

Huun-Huur-Tu (Tuva)

Song : **Ancestors**
Album : **Huun Huur Tu
with Malerija**
(**Greenwave Records,
Russia**)

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: www.huunhuurtu.com

Listen to the haunting new title track, "**Altai Sayan Tandy-Uula**" from their forthcoming album released on 5th January by Greenwave records.

The name of this group describes the effect of vertical rays of light which shine down from the clouds at dawn and dusk - a familiar sight that inspires awe wherever it occurs. No doubt it's given added drama when projected over the stunning landscapes of Tuva. This landlocked republic at the heart of Asia is the home of the four-piece Huun-Huur-Tu, whose music represents a re-imagining of traditional Tuvan folklore and is strongly evocative of the natural world.

Their trademark sound derives from the use of various over-tone or 'throat-singing' techniques which were invented by nomadic hunter-herders of the Tuvan steppes and mountains. Traditionally, these were largely performed a cappella, but Huun-Huur-Tu were one of the first groups to combine them with ancient acoustic instruments such as the cello-like two-stringed igil, the four-stringed byzaanchi, the three-stringed doshpuluur and the khmomuz - a local equivalent of the Jew's harp. Using these with percussion and voice, they create eerie harmonics and otherworldly noises, even mimicking animals like horses.

Since their early incarnation as Kungurtuk in 1992, the band have undergone a couple of membership changes, but still hold fast to their original philosophy of updating and perpetuating Tuvan folklore. Though only two current members come from a nomadic shepherd background, in a peculiar irony, the whole group have become 21st century nomads as they travel the world performing to rapt concert hall

audiences.

Ry Cooder, Frank Zappa, The Kronos Quartet and The Kodo drummers are among their more high profile collaborators, and they have also recorded joint albums with the Bulgarian group Angelite and the Moscow Art Trio. *Spirits From Tuva* (2002) is a controversial remix album which employs DJs from four different countries and met with a mixed critical response. More representative examples of their work can be heard on the excellent 1993 debut *60 Horses in my Herd* as well as *Best Live* (2001) and *More Live* (2003), both of which document a concert held in April 2001. Their latest album *Malerija* (2003) teams them up with four musicians who add guitars, wind instruments, programming and samples.

Jon Lusk, November 2003

http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/world/awards2004/profile_huunhuurtu.shtml