

Foreword from the Producer

Soundtrax for Our Future Empire is an exceptional musical cooperation incomparable to anything else in history of the popular music, or indeed any of its alternatives. The album can be viewed either as a prophecy, or as an interception from the future. It can be viewed as a pro-regime or the anti-regime. It can be viewed as utopian or dystopian - cynical or deluded - realistic or a mere science fiction. It is all left to the listener's interpretation.

Soundtrax for Our Future Empire is the result of a seven year long exchange of ideas with my friend from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), hereinafter referred to as *The Artist*. Even though the album might sound like taking a pro-regime stand, the music is far too decadent for the government of the DPRK to approve, so *The Artist* must not reveal his identity for the sake of his safety and safety of his family.

It took us seven years to complete the album, as it was truly a painful experience to try to keep in touch with a person from the DPRK. I was lucky enough to have met him on a train back in 2005 when I was travelling Asia. I did not know much about the DPRK at the time, but I have heard it keeps its population in total isolation. So, I was surprised enough to learn that the select few DPRK citizens actually do have limited access to the outside world when they travel to foreign countries for official reasons.



The Artist seemed to be completely different from what I would expect. One reason was that he truly was not a regular North Korean. The other reason was that I must have had quite a distorted image in my mind about North Koreans, from blindly believing everything I was told by the Western media. We chatted for hours on a train about all sorts of issues. I was very interested in his life and his way of thinking. But he seemed a bit reserved and cautious at first. I must have been too curious and my questions too direct. I wanted him to open up a little bit. So, I switched to more relaxing topics.

Finally, he started revealing some information about himself. He told me about his passion for music, love for playing instruments, especially gayageum and guitar. I had my own musical passions which were quite different from his. When we separated after arriving to our destination, I handed him a USB flash drive with selection of my music along with my contact details. I was not quite sure he was going to know what to do with the flash drive, as it was quite an exotic piece of hardware at the time.

Yet he surprised me a year later, when he mailed the stick back to my home address. On it, there were all sorts of ideas, notes, some funny recordings, musical scores, along with the emotional outpour about the inspiration that my music gave him. I could only slowly start making sense of it. He could contact me only when he was outside of his home country. He told me he would be out of the country again in 2012, so I wanted to meet him again and take this opportunity also to go on holiday. At that time, we already had quite a clear idea of what we wanted to portray on the album, along with the melodies, samples, et cetera. All we had to do was to transform it into a consistent piece of music. I prepared some recordings based on his drafts, he prepared some of his. We met, sat down in a hotel and worked for twenty hours a day for two weekends, went to a local studio, and made some recordings. It took us another two years to finish the details and agree

that the final product is a proper realization of his vision. While I did help to produce the final sound on the album and the cover art, the melodies and the idea is entirely of *The Artist*.

No matter what the listener's interpretation is, there are trends in nowadays society, which call for replacement of the typical democracy as a political and the capitalism as an economic system. Capitalism is growing ever more extreme, not providing solutions as fast as it is creating problems. The democracy is using the same approaches as any autocracy, and capitalism uses the same approaches as communism. Yet, in a democratic society, this is going on in a rather more subtle way. Instead of gulags we have for-profit prisons. Instead of the government propaganda to control the masses, we have the government and the corporate propaganda to control the masses. Instead of governments spying on their populations, we have governments and corporations spying on their populations. Instead of governments keeping records about their people, we have governments and corporations keeping records about their people. Instead of institutions requiring information from us, we have corporations manipulating us into willingly sharing our private information with them. Instead of striving for equality, we have social divisions so vast they are reminiscent of a subtle cast system. This all leads to further problems, such as education inequalities, legal inequalities, unequal opportunities, depression and other psychological disorders, et cetera.

Capitalism knows one rule that communism does not. When there is no need, create one! So, nowadays we cannot imagine living without bottled water, exotic food transported from the other side of the world and marketed as the only super healthy food. Raw materials transported around the world many times before being assembled into products, technology aging so rapidly to enable corporations to sell us the new, the better, the faster, the stronger machines as quickly as possible.

The more we buy, the more we transport, the more we consume, the more we throw away, the more we suffocate in our own waste, and the more we are brainwashed into believing that waste management and recycling will do any good. All this and more, while we are all lost when it comes to forming alternatives.

Is it possible that we cannot find the alternative because we have been so locked in the box that we are unable to form ideas out of it? Is it possible that we have been deceived so subtly, that we did not even realize we have been living in hell? Is it possible that the freedom we have been thought to experience is a placebo? Instead of slaves realizing that they are slaves, have we become slaves thinking we are free? Is this the belief that keeps us motivated to carry on our struggle for “freedom, democracy and capitalism”?

The capitalism in theory is as idealist as the communism in theory. Yet, when we express our belief in capitalism, we mean the capitalist theory, but when we express our disbelief in communism, we mean communism in historic practice. What an arrogance?! Capitalism in practice seems to be as dirty as communism in practice. Not to mention the belief systems being formed in the “free” societies which are even sillier than the autocratic belief system, where people are expected to believe in their leader.

Yet ever more people are drawing a conclusion that a good autocracy is better than a bad democracy, and the socialist system is getting to be seen as a viable alternative to capitalism. In the near future, when capitalism goes into further extremes, the more people will renew their belief in socialism or even in communism. On the other hand, new technologies will emerge, which will be able to address what is often portrayed by economics scholars as the biggest problem of communism, which is the management of supply and demand of goods and services.

While capitalism might be quite a resilient system, it does not mean that it is sustainable for much longer. On the other hand, while most communist systems in history were indeed even less sustainable, there is a communist system in place today that keeps fascinating for its resilience - which does not mean this system is without any problems that need to be addressed.

Just as the United States of America can win the masses to rally behind every single war their government starts, it is not unrealistic to expect that the DPRK can make the world population rally behind their leader. I am thoroughly convinced, that even you will be prepared to pledge allegiance to what you may have until recently perceived as evil. It is just the matter promises laid down in the propaganda war, availability of alternative information, and mostly, how desperate you will get about the sociopolitical and economic system currently in place.