



**A wacky burlesque punky Rock band  
Yiddish music meets the Marx Brothers**

The Jewish Monkeys are masters of identity play, knights of the absurd, musicians and comedians, who deliver an exhilarating show. They love breaking ethnic and religious taboos, combined with liberating salvos of satire. Their neo-Yiddish sound fusion swings between cirque-like chanson and energetically punk-driven pop, while the language alternates between English and Yiddish. They rarely fail to get people on their feet, dancing: from Syrian refugees in a Dresden transit camp to anti-Pegida protesters the next day. Or from culturally savvy music lovers in German, Czech or French clubs and concert halls, as well as to hipsters in London or Tel Aviv. Since 2014, the band has been constantly touring all over the world, playing some of the most important festivals such as Sziget (two times in a row 2017 & 2018), Vienna's Donauinselfestival, Marseilles' Babelmed, big festivals and clubs in Canada, London and all over Europe, as well as supporting Shantel & Bucovina Club Orkestar at their tours over Germany, Holland and Austria. The band is currently working on its third album to be released with a string of videos in Autumn 2019.

They don't make jokes at the expense of others. Instead, they follow in the great tradition of Jewish comedians who mastered the fine art of self-effacing humour. As such, they are reminiscent of the Marx Brothers and their brand of wacky, illogical subversiveness and in-your-face absurdity—German radio station Deutschlandfunk presented them as “A Sense of Nonsense: Anarcho-Klezmer Band Jewish Monkeys!” They follow the path of American-Jewish entertainers like Mel Brooks, Jerry Lewis or Woody Allen, or in the next generation Jerry Seinfeld and Larry David, who are role-models for the Jewish Monkeys.

It all began with Jossi Reich and Ronni Boiko, who met in the boys' choir of the Frankfurt Westend Synagogue. More than 30 years later, having emigrated as grown-ups to Israel, they met another equally offbeat partner, Gael Zaidner. Together with theatre, ballet and film music composer Ran Bagno they translated their ideas into music. Other musicians, including Middle Eastern surf rock band Boom Pam, collaborated with them on an album that garnered exuberant praise, also in the German press. Its very title, "Mania Regressia", illustrates the approach of these Tel Aviv funsters. Bassist Yoli Baum, came on board, and together they formed a live band. The current line-up also includes Henry "The Rose" Vered on drums, who is as much at home with hard rock as he is with jazz. Or take Guitarist Omer Hershman for instance, a respected producer and member of the indie band Panic Ensemble, who has always tended towards rock-infused circus and cabaret music. And a fiery brass section led by two pillars of the Tel Aviv funky and Afrobeat scene: Eylon Tushiner on saxophone (Hoodna Orchestra) and Yaron Ouzana on trombone (The Apples, John Zorn).

The English lyrics of their first album address diverse topics such as the greed for oil, climate change, violent fathers and obsessive cleanliness. They sing of all-too male fantasies of frustration, about boring suburban weekends with backyard barbecues or caricature the Arab-Israeli conflict over the one and only Holy Land as in the very first Jewish Monkeys song "Hava Nagila vs. Banana Boat". Two of the songs on their new album are real attention-getters and potential hits: the song "Alte Kacker" is a wry and cynically self-effacing take on the downsides of getting older, with a fresh and upbeat guitar rock staccato that is sure to get everyone on their feet. The other song, "High Words", takes an anger-laden shot at the establishment that is dragging us into the demagoguery of past world wars in this era of global warming, instead of focusing on equity and environmentalism. The selection of iconic Yiddish songs on the album is, as we might expect, light-hearted and socially critical. Wild instrumental capers resurrect the tone of circus and slapstick in new and modern vibes of klezmer and rock. Their new English song "Pupik" elicits tears of laughter, a tragicomic ode to the beloved one, starting with: "Zelda, why do you have this cousin, Zelda, she is much prettier than you"...

The name of the band is not easy to digest. In some Arab countries it is used as a deeply offensive insult. Their comment: "We can do that as Jews! It's always been our right to dare to be politically incorrect and mock our own Jewishness. But in the end, we are looking for what unites us rather than what divides us. We want to heal the rifts and build bridges – which is why we are so happy to play for people from Syria or Afghanistan."

**The Band:** Jossi Reich: vocals // Gael Zaidner: vocals // Omer Hershman: guitar // Yoli Baum: bass // Eylon Tushiner: Saxophone // Yaron Ouzana: trombone // Henry Vered: drums

**Media reactions:** "If Hitler hadn't nearly won the war, Jewish music would sound like this: naturally stoned, fast, and madly melancholic." **Frankfurter Allgemeine** (biggest German Sunday paper) // "Sprited, disrespectful, Jewish humor at its finest." **3Sat-Kulturzeit** (TV channel for Austria/Switzerland/Germany) // "Shades of cinematic heroes such as Woody Allen, with an added dose of high-calibre party mood." **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** (Germany's leading daily) // "This post-Klezmer, post-Pop, post-Alija band from Tel Aviv has created an album brimming with love, rage and joy. **Spiegel Online** (German's No. 1 political webpage) // "Their live performance is overwhelming in its furiously unchained attack on tradition." **Süddeutsche Zeitung** (the other leading German daily)

**Videos, sounds, lyrics, press, rumours:** [www.jewishmonkeys.com](http://www.jewishmonkeys.com)

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