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■ Zuby Nehty:
playing for the
children B4

CULTURE



Zuby Nehty fans,
don't despair:
Bass guitarist
Pavla Slabá says
her nine-month
absence won't
mean the end
of the band.



MATT CARR/The Prague Post

Zuby Nehty's new album is for kids of all ages



By Richard Allen Greene

"This album is for children," says Pavla Slabá, bass guitarist of the band Zuby Nehty. "It's for special children — they can be 50 or 100 years old."

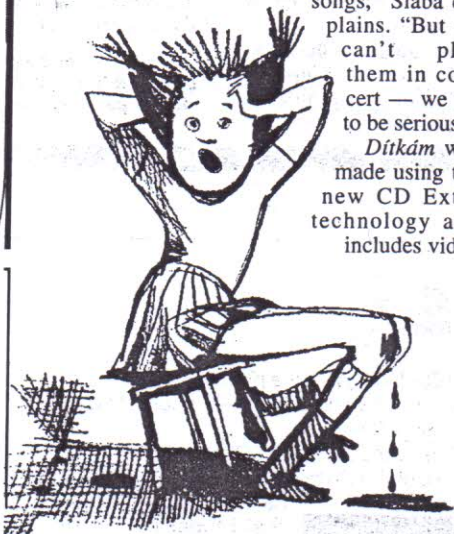
The album is *Dítám*, Zuby Nehty's fourth (the band's third under that name; it released its first record when it still called itself Dybbuk).

As the name *Dítám* (For the Children) suggests, the album sticks closely to a theme: the feelings, fears and joys of childhood. Many of the songs appropriate the rhythms of children's games. For the disc's release party, band members dressed as schoolchildren. "It's nice to go back to childhood," says Slabá.

The album truly captures the sounds of a child's world and showcases a group of talented musicians who work extremely well together (the core members of the band have been together, under one name or another, since 1981).

Few of the tracks on the disc are new; most date from the early '80s. They're songs the band rarely plays live. "We loved the old songs," Slabá explains. "But we can't play them in concert — we try to be serious."

Dítám was made using the new CD Extra technology and includes video



clips and text (see related story on this page).

The album's best song, "Koleno" (Knee), is both its longest and most complex. Based on a children's game, the song has a mother sending children down to the cellar to get various items for her; though afraid, they go, one by one, but don't come back. Finally, when the third child goes down, the listener learns what has become of the unlucky kids. Spoken, rather than sung, over carefully layered instrumental lines, "Koleno" evokes fear of the dark and unknown, but is lighthearted enough to be entertaining to children even as it frightens.

Many of the songs are sung from a child's point of view, including "Ve škole" (In School), which has a child complaining of chills and a headache, and finally running home with her teacher shouting after her. "Kámoš" (Buddy), its rolling rhythm carried by Marka Míková's piano and the drums of Marvin (more on him in a moment), has a childlike narrator talking about her new friend who doesn't wear shoes, but galoshes.

These three songs — like many on the album — use sound effects to fill out the stories they tell. Ringing telephones, squeaking doors, barking dogs, breaking glass and voices in conversation add to the disc's overall impression.

Rhythm remains important throughout the album, which is why I wish the band had experimented with it a bit more. The enthusiasm of a child's four-beat count is all well and good, but it can grow tiring after awhile. The up-tempo numbers are interspersed with some slower songs, but the disc returns relentlessly to the same rhythms.

It's hard to talk about rhythm without talking about drums, which brings me back to *Dítám*'s drummer, identified on the album only as "Marvin." Zuby Nehty has long been known as an all-woman band. Who is Marvin?

A smile spreads across Slabá's face when his name comes up in conversation. "Marvin," she says, "is a 21-year-old punk drummer who replaced [Hana Repová] when she was pregnant. He has just the right amount of testosterone not to ruin our songs ... but when Hanka plays, it's like the Krkonoše. When Marvin plays, it's the Tatras."

Marvin filled in only for this recording, Slabá says, and has now been replaced by 20-year-old student Jana Mráčková. Repová now has three children and apparently does not plan to return to Zuby Nehty.

Perhaps even more worrying to the band's fans is Slabá's planned nine-month absence — not to have a baby, but to do research in the United States. Slabá, a Charles University professor in her spare time, was granted a Fulbright scholarship to study the history of American female rockers in preparation for a book she plans to write. While she's gone, bass-player Martin Černý will substitute for her; she says that her departure does not mean the end of Zuby Nehty.

"I'm sorry to have to leave the band for nine months, but in the course of 16 or 17 years, it's really not so much."

CD Extra technology catching on with Czech label

By Raymond Johnston

Music fans might have noticed an unfamiliar sticker gracing new CDs from some Czech bands. Discs with the "CD Extra" label carry a new technology that allows a standard CD to include video clips and text that can be viewed on a computer.

CD Extra, a clever hybrid of standard audio and advanced CD-ROM video technology, is the latest effort in a mixed history of exploiting CDs' potential to bring fans a richer experience than vinyl could deliver. While CDs' bonus music tracks and highly touted noise-reduction techniques caught on quickly when compact discs were introduced, other ideas for the medium became "orphan technologies."

Czech label Indies Records has jumped on the CD Extra bandwagon, and has so far released five discs with the technology. According to the label's co-owner Miloš Grüber, Indies plans to include CD Extra on about 20 percent of its catalog over the next four years. But, he adds cautiously, it's hard to predict the future of technology.

Zuby Nehty's *Dítám* is among the new releases with CD Extra. A normally priced disc with a respectable 40 minutes of music that can be played on any CD player, its "extra" portion starts running by itself when the disc is inserted in a computer's CD-ROM drive. *Dítám* features two videos, both surprisingly sharp and smooth-playing. The video for the song "Poletíme," a short mystical film, alone makes the CD worth adding to your collection.

A few other extras are packaged with the CD, including a Zuby Nehty discography and menu of song lyrics that can be viewed on screen, but the videos are the main offering.

It's far too early to tell if CD Extra will increase sales, Grüber says. "It depends on each band's video." Once word gets out that a particular video is hot, he says, then sales should get a boost.

To view the videos and text on a CD Extra disc, users need a computer with a 486 processor and 16 megabytes of memory running Windows 95 and with a 4x spin CD-ROM drive. The requirements are hefty, but if your computer system measures up, the "extras" measure up as well. One drawback is that the discs released so far are not Macintosh-compatible.

Otherwise, CD Extra resolves the problems of earlier technologies such as CDV and CD+G, which placed graphics tracks side by side with standard audio tracks. But both of these systems required expensive single-purpose decoders to display videos (from CDV) or text (from CD+G) on a North American standard TV. Each system died in a flurry of uninterest, leaving behind only a few collectors' items.

With CD Extra, the music is there, the videos are sharp, and there's no special equipment to buy.



CD REVIEW

Dítám
(For the Children)
Zuby Nehty,
Indies Records,
1997.

CD Extra: 349 Kč,
cassette: 189 Kč