



## Abraham Inc and the rebirth of klezmer

Craig Duncan 23.07.2010 17:00



*Abraham Inc*  
Autor: John Wasserman, Press kit

Hip hop producer **Socalled**, clarinetist **David Krakauer** and trombonist **Fred Wesley** have joined forces to create the funkier klezmer band ever: **Abraham Inc**. On this week's show, hear interviews with **Socalled** and **David Krakauer**, highlights from the **Abraham Inc** album, and a global tour of modern alternative approaches to traditional Jewish music – including an exclusive unreleased **Socalled** track.

**JUKEBOX: Friday Ripple > 23.7.2010**

Abraham Inc is a klezmer-funk supergroup, bringing together three unique talents:

\* **Socalled** is a true hip hop pioneer. On albums like *The Socalled Seder* and *Ghettoblaster*, he has created an entirely new form of hip hop based primarily on klezmer, the traditional celebratory music of the Jewish *shtetls* of Eastern Europe. He is the subject of a new documentary film, *The Socalled Movie*, released in 2010.

\* **David Krakauer** is a classically-trained master clarinetist, and one of the most important figures in the re-emergence of klezmer as a popular modern musical form. Formerly of New York's neo-klezmer trailblazers **The Klezmatics**, Krakauer has gone on to increasingly push the boundaries of the genre, including with his band **Klezmer Madness**, which also featured **Socalled**.

\* **Fred Wesley** is not a funk trombone player, he is *the* funk trombone player. As the late **James Brown**'s musical arranger and bandleader, and a central figure in the development of George Clinton's **Parliament**, *Fred Wesley is the sound of funk*.

Together with a 6-piece band of funk, klezmer and hip hop musicians, they are **Abraham Inc**. In this edition of Radio Wave's Friday Ripple, **Socalled** and **David Krakauer** talk funk, klezmer and matzah ball soup. The interview is streaming-on-demand now on the Radio Wave Jukebox; here's the transcript:



*Socalled & David Krakauer*  
Autor: Press kit

### Interview , Part 1:

#### The official Radio Wave/Abraham Inc summit of Fred Wesley fanboys

**Socalled:** Fred! Wesley! Like, I'm on the bus with him, I was listening to the JB's in my head, I see his arm, and - like, it's *his arm!* That's the arm that made that *thing!* That incredibly classic best thing of all time. There's that arm. It's like seeing Picasso's arm.

He's basically a jazz snob and a frustrated jazz musician, in a way. I mean, he's the king and godfather of funk, and funk is like – "Really? You want me to play the same thing over and over again? You want some inane little blues riff?" That's sort of what he thinks of it. To him, real music is Count Basie, and Duke Ellington, and these amazing jazz soloists. To him, that's the height of music. So I think he's sort of this hilarious frustrated godfather. It's a weird way to be, but you can tell he's happy.

**David Krakauer:** The thing was, Socalled and I were in a hotel room, chilling, and we were thinking: okay, what could be the next step? We're making this cool stuff, and bringing hip hop and klezmer together. What can we do, what's the next step? And then Socalled said "What about... Fred Wesley?" And Fred Wesley's, like, Socalled's god, and my god, you know, we never thought that it would be possible.

And suddenly, just in that night, he mentioned that, and we both decided that it was *gonna* be possible. And we contacted Fred! I met him in New York, and we had a chat over a bowl of matzah ball soup in Carnegie Deli, this Jewish Deli, and we decided to try it. So in December of 2006, it was the Klezmer Madness concert at Carnegie Hall, we had Fred as guest, and we were like, 'OK! This is working!' And so we pursued really making an album out of it.

## Interview, Part 2: Moscowitz, and Loops of It



Socalled  
Autor: Press kit

**Socalled:** Getting Fred Wesley was one thing. You know, a lot of people play with Fred Wesley, he's guested on countless things, and he's guesting on this too, it's true – but! We do it all from the bottom up, everything is made by hand, together. It's really shared, the whole process. It's cool. It's organic too, it's just happening between, he does some s\*\*\*, I do some s\*\*\*, everybody does what they do best.

**David Krakauer:** Basically, we went into a studio, Socalled hit a beat, Fred started jamming with it, I started jamming with them, and then it was like, 'Yeah! We've got some chemistry! This works!' And then we did this tune *Moskovitz and Loops of It*, and -

**Socalled:** That's a whole story.

**David Krakauer:** *Moscowitz and Lupowitz*. Joseph Moskowitz was a cimbalom player. But he opened a restaurant with a dude named Lupowitz, down on Rivington Street, probably in the early 1920s.

**Socalled:** Klezmer must've happened there, and crazy Romanian parties and whatever. Then I found this tune by Joseph Moskowitz, the dude who opened the restaurant. It was a funky tune that he wrote, and it's a cimbalom tune. So then I had this sample of this Romanian thing, in this A Minor situation. We have all that actually documented, of me first bringing you that beat, actually – cos I'd just made it, I thought it had potential. It was basically this: [*scat intro to Moscowitz and Loops of it – if you want to hear the scats, listen to the show!*]

When I was just beginning my whole situation as a gigging, sort of weird soloist, I'm in his apartment, and I think it's f\*\*\*ing cool to be in New York City, in this professional musician's apartment, talking about a gig. It was crazy, at the time.



Fred Wesley  
Autor: John Wasserman, Press kit

**David Krakauer:** So we wrote some riffs back and forth, we played thme, it was cool, we made Moskowitz and Loops of it. We went into the studio, made an album *Bubbemeises*, and that was at the heart of that repertoire.

Then we're chilling – we're with - f\*\*\*ing Fred Wesley! We're in a studio in New York City, and he's like, 'What the hell am I gonna do?' We're just like, 'Listen to the riffs, we'll play them for you.' He was nervous about, like, "How can I adapt?" Cos these modes are not really normal modes. But beautiful melodies, he loved the melodies, it was crazy how he was totally into it. So we just played him the riffs [*scat on clarinet*

*riff*]. Okay, that's the first riff. And he went, "Alright, how about, like, [*scat on trombone riff*]"

**Socalled:** Yeah, exactly! It was f\*\*\*ing cool.

**David Krakauer:** F\*\*\*ing amazing. And then that night he actually made, harmonised a three-part harmony for these riffs.

**Socalled:** A five-part harmony! The bass, and the guitar parts, the written-out piano parts... Handed it out to the whole band. I've never seen such a thing in my entire life. Have you?

**David Krakauer:** No!

**Socalled:** Like, an arranging prowess. And Wesley's like, "I don't think this is gonna be very – I dunno, hit it!"

*Check out the online show for the broadcast audio, with all the scats included, and with the swearing covered up by genuine Fred Wesley trombone notes.*