I will be discussing a recent major phenomenon in world music, which neither musicians nor industry have labeled, but which I and a few other ethnomusicologists have come to call “The New Old Europe Sound.” We use the term to describe the increasingly common trend of mostly Northern and Western European musicians playing a mixture of East European musics—klezmer, Romani, and Balkan—and implicitly claiming ownership over the amalgam as a generalized European tradition. I will focus on the eight-man Gothenburg band Räfven, who, though their music is primarily inspired by klezmer, have constructed wildly frenetic stage personae indebted largely to the romanticized Gypsy images of Emir Kusturica’s Romani-language films (Time of the Gypsies and Black Cat, White Cat). Despite their sources of inspiration, the members of Räfven are careful to avoid pinning down their music with ethnically specific labels. Instead, they make their music into the soundtrack of a fantastical post-ethnic, postnational, and posthuman realm; a utopian village in which races as well as species intermingle. By adopting, adapting, and subsuming Jewish and Gypsy identities (accessible to them as forms of Europeanness) these eight white Swedish men can self-exoticize and so grant themselves ownership of this multicultural fantasy space, to which only they hold the keys. In doing so they present a compelling narrative for their audiences, one in which white Swedes can be anti-racist and politically progressive without actually having to relinquish power.

FREE

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2014  4:30–6:00 PM
ROOM 266, EVERSON HALL

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