

PILVAX

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Brad Fox worked as a journalist and humanitarian contractor in the former Yugoslavia until 2003. His first novel, *God's Boot*, was published in Serbian translation by Rende in Belgrade in 2004. He now lives in Istanbul, Turkey. His translation of Nikola Tutek's "Budapest Minature" appeared in Pilvax No. 5.

Melody Hits TV

by Brad Fox

The first video was of Aysha Anwar. As she sings the first lines, she is running up a steep rock formation lit from behind with swirls of yellow and blue. A jut of sandstone sticks out of the sea at an absurd angle, but she is able to bound up to the top, defying gravity as she finishes the verse. When she gets to the top, there are three men dressed in robes, their faces covered—attackers. They draw swords and lunge. She jumps up, turning her head to the side to let out a quick smile at the camera, a gleam off her white teeth, her jump taking her clear over the heads of the lunging swordsman. As they fall forward into empty space then plop into the water below, she turns in midair, closes her eyes, and lets sail with the first lines of the next verse, landing gently on the tip of the rock formation, the POV retreating off and up into the distance, her gown flowing, the sea dotted with islands, until a city comes into view and the POV lowers into stucco alleyways, stone steps, cats fleeing, soldiers seeking shade from the sun, and there she is again, but this time in some mid-riff-baring fatigues. A judgmental eye disapproves. One of the soldiers sizes her up and starts to approach, but she runs off through the streets. As she passes an old, veiled woman emerges and joins the chase. The singer is fast, a scarf trailing, her hair perfect, her lipstick sparkling, and the mellow verses continue to flow out from between her glinting teeth. A growing mob of soldiers and burqa-clad crones give chase, showering her with stones. But as the projectiles approach, the POV follow their trajectory, honing in on her beautiful mouth as she completes the phrase, drawing the note out. But instead of impact, the POV enters right into her mouth, taking in the softness of her clean pink tongue, the glinting off her palette, the dangling epiglottis flapping, then again the hurtling stones, but this time they are meteors, we are in outer space, passing the rings of Saturn, and there she appears, in a hiphugging spacesuit, her lips smacking behind the helmet. Backing up with the POV, we realize she is driving a spacecraft through the universe, until, looking down on a planet below, she notices two men driving alone on a deserted highway. Pressing a button on her controls, a beam is emitted from the belly of her craft, and the truck freezes in its tracks as the two men are lifted out through the windshield and drawn up into space. The next scene takes place in a room inside the ship. She is walking slowly through rows of equipment, her spacesuit replaced by some futuristic medical robes, and as she sings the next verse she pulls latex gloves over her hands. The two men are prone

on white gurneys, soft institutional light coming from above, and she leans over, sticking a finger into one man's mouth, performing a routine inspection as she sings. She places a hand on his forehead, then leans her head down, placing a cheek against his chest to listen to his heart. Then she backs up, walks to a computer nearby and types in a few lines of code. Rays of light emerge from somewhere out of view and drench the two men in blue and yellow light, which, as it strikes them, brings them back to consciousness. However, it is clear from the glazed look in their eye and their mechanical gestures that they are not themselves. Still, the sight of the beautiful singer ignites their passions and they move toward her, magnetized by her medical beauty. Here starts a dance routine, the two zombies chasing, Ayesha always narrowly escaping, but as they move through the room, she is little by little preparing them for the experiments to come—moving to the side as they charge, she gingerly places an electrode on one of the men's temples, the next time they pass she gets the other one, until finally she pulls a control from her pocket and turns it on, some kind of a signal is then sent through the electrodes into the abductees' brains, and they become docile, their gestures become fluid and synchronous, and soon they return to their places on the gurneys and lay down with beatific smiles on their faces. She is then free, after once more pressing cheek to chest to inspect heartbeats, to start her experiments... the sequence is a complicated rapid-fire series of images, some of which flash so quickly it is hard to read them, but somehow it is clear that she removes certain organs and replaces them with computers, that she instructs them to dance, to swordfight, to hover, to emit laser beams from their first fingers, and that she whispers secret instructions into their ears—images of roadblocks, meetings of corporate leaders. The sequence ends with her looking into the camera conspiratorially and then pulling another lever. The two men are seen descending again through the yellow and blue beams of light until they reenter their car, time starts to flow again and they are moving forward down the desolate highway. The driver lifts his hands and looks at his friend. Did something happen? Obviously they feel strange, but don't know what to make of it. In space, above, the singer is back at the controls of her UFO, flying off into the distance, with her glinting smile still repeating the last lines of the song over and over again until it fades out . . .

The remainder of Brad Fox's story can be found in ISSUE 6 of PILVAX, locally available in Budapest.