

# Two New David Rovics Albums

Internet trolls dog his every step, but he keeps on singing for peace and liberation

Barry Stringer

2024

a review of

*Notes from a Holocaust: 20 Songs*, 2024 David Rovics

Growing up on punk rock music as part of my introduction to anarchism, I always understood punk to be a variant of folk music.

Having missed the most prolific heyday of the people's folk music of the 1960s, singers like Pete Seeger and Phil Ochs and their lesser-known contemporaries performed melodic, catchy, and often more accessible versions of what the underground papers (like this one) were doing with their radical articles. Passionate storytelling and principled advocacy are what make music a meaningful force for community and change.

Today, not just folk, but all genres make protest music, if they would. Hip-hop and pop provide social commentary, and rock, punk, and folk all remain relevant, when they choose to do so. Broadcasting the news in real time on Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok, Twitch, among other channels, has made the DIY-ethos of radical news accessible to anyone with a cell phone, and musicians have joined the fray. But as hyped as all these converging and diverging spaces might be, many activists, whether revolutionary content-curators or defiant doom-scrollers, all complain of constant oversaturation and abbreviated attention spans flattening the flavor of our communal digital soup.

Prolific radical folk-singer, author, blogger, podcaster, and more, David Rovics, has released approximately 40 albums in 25 years and has boldly tested almost every possible digital medium to get his messages out. Combining his unrelenting values while offering listeners near-universal access, Rovics has found himself in the crosshairs of an organized social media backlash and attempted cancellations.

His outspoken Palestinian solidarity reflected in his songs has caused the backlash, but there never seems to be a genuine logic as to why one artist gets attacked, while others get a pass. In the last several years, Rovics has been targeted with an organized, relentless campaign of denunciation, calumny, and harassment from a small crew of self-righteous anarchists. They base these charges on his choice of interview subjects on livestream podcasts conducted during the pandemic. Rovics hosted the "Fifth Estate Live," a podcast project of this publication. It should be clear to Fifth Estate readers that this magazine would not allow a bigot to broadcast under its name or publish articles he has written for it.

Most recently, Rovics' public Facebook page has attracted countless pro-Israel accounts posting 26,000 comments on his page mostly in the form of slurs and accusations. Undeterred by trolls from the far right and cancellation campaigns from the far left, Rovics continues to advocate for inclusive, loving, and militant mass movements to counter war and authoritarianism across the planet.

When people attack Rovics online or contact the venues on his concert tours urging them to cancel a gig, these tactics directly harm his ability to support himself from the nominal donations that his fans provide by attending a show, streaming a specific song on a major platform for minuscule kickback, or joining his Patreon community where a devoted core help sustain his career. These attempted "accountability" campaigns by professed

anti-authoritarians often bring out the worst suspicions, hyper-vigilant security culture, and ineffective cop-like tactics.

In the first five months of 2024, Rovics released two full-length digital albums of so much new content (more than 40 songs) that in a previous generation could have been considered double-albums, each of them. While pop stars of late have been both celebrated and criticized for releasing so much content, Rovics is at his most prolific in response to the crises that destroy the planet and its people on multiple fronts, whether military, economic, political, religious, or ecological.

The first of these two recent albums is *Notes from a Holocaust*, released in January of this year. The 20-song set daringly documents the first three months of Israel's attacks on Gaza following the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023. Each song is harrowing and heartbreaking, infuriating and inspiring, insofar as the record cannot linger in the headphones, but catalyzes moral outrage and direct action.

Without irony or piety, Rovics notes how the worldwide cultural and religious holidays with origins in the region of the atrocities went on as scheduled, even as those who would dare, had to confront "Baby Jesus In The Rubble." From "The Apocalypse Will Be Televised" to "They're Killing Off the Journalists of Gaza," he reports with song the shocking disregard for decency and previous protocols of so-called combat of which this massacre makes a mockery.

Stinging tracks such as "Antisemite" or "Just Like the Nazis Did" convey the honest messages that have been circulated in the anti-authoritarian milieu since the incisive Fredy Perlman tract "Anti-Semitism and the Beirut Pogrom," still available from Black and Red Books. Perlman's conclusion cuts to the fact: "It galls me that a new Fascism should choose to use the experience of the victims of the earlier Fascism among its justifications."

*Notes from a Holocaust* is the kind of album that serves as the people's news and a poetic and prophetic moral response to unspeakable brutality and unconscionable horrors. The tracks convey stunning songcraft and brilliant blistering lyrics, unpacking the human horrors of state terror in shocking and sad specifics.

David Rovics' major music releases and frequent podcasts are available on most major music streaming platforms. You can also find much more content, links, and ways to support him at [davidrovics.com](http://davidrovics.com).

Barry Stringer is an activist and music fan. A long-time reader, this is his first article for Fifth Estate. He lives in Las Vegas.

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