



Soma is a russian company.

By [Max Wainwright](#). Published 2024-09-29. Last updated 2024-10-23.

Send comments, questions etc, as an email to [m @ the domain you're currently at \(maxwainwright.com\)](mailto:m@maxwainwright.com), a DM at [instagram](#) or write to me on [Mastodon](#).

The banner image is a composite from a video from [Soma's Youtube channel](#), published in May 2022, and the Soma logo. The camera pans past a sign saying GLORY 🇷🇺 TO RUSSIA. Just some neutral B-roll footage I guess 🤔.

People may wonder at the banner so I will point straight away that I hate russia.

Note: This PDF version was made on 2024-10-23 and may not be entirely up to date. The parent document is at <https://maxwainwright.com/soma/soma-is-a-russian-company.html>.

■ TL;DR

A summary:

- Soma is a russian company.
- russian companies pay taxes in russia.
- russian taxes fund an imperialist war of genocide.
- Thus: don't buy stuff from Soma.
- My point is *not* that Vlad Kreimer is a bad person, it is the above, that *you shouldn't buy things from russian companies*.
- Some people have commented that Vlad Kreimer/Soma are oppressed in russia and can't speak freely on the war/government. Ok, but that doesn't mean it's ok to fund russia's war by buying stuff from Soma.
- Although it's not my main point, I still want to point out that Vlad Kreimer is shady *at best*. He chose russia over Ukraine, and acts and sounds very much like a pro-russian trying to hide it.

■ Background

I started work on this text in December 2023. I was angry. Soma, a company that makes synths and other audio gear, was (still) based in russia, manufacturing devices in russia. Nobody seemed to raise an eyebrow at this fact. Soma and the company founder Vlad Kreimer went to audio device exhibitions such as Superbooth, were interviewed in the synth press, and their devices were on sale in music shops – as if nothing was wrong with a company being headquartered in russia. Even before the full-scale invasion on the 24th of February, 2022, I was uneasy with how Soma’s russian-ness was just something cool, if anything. They used it in their marketing, although this was already on the way out before the invasion, it seemed.

I wanted to point out that Soma was still a russian company, and that buying their stuff not only showed that russia’s behaviour is ok, but (more importantly) meant funding russia’s war machine.

There was no deadline, and late-night activities such as scrolling Kreimer’s VKontakte page and google translating individual posts (the page won’t translate in-browser), trawling Archive.org-versions of the Soma website and other places were inherently disracting and confusing. This “process” only led to an unfocused mess of a text that never got finished.

Then, in July 2024, it came out that Vlad Kreimer had decided to participate in an event in occupied Crimea.¹ It was a good time to get the text done. Holidaying and life happened, and the news and Soma/Kreimer’s responses necessitated some additions to the text. In particular “Vlad’s response” confirmed some suspicions I had about him and his stance in the war.

More time passed. Now that Soma have released the Lyra-4 I decided it’s time to just put it up.

Comments, clarifications, additions etc. will be posted below.

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1 cdm.link/vlad-kreimer-soma-founder-under-fire-for-event-in-occupied-crimea/

■ What do I want?

1. I want the russian economy to collapse. Yes, seriously.

The russian economy is a war economy – it needs to collapse. russia itself needs to collapse. russians should have better lives and live in a just society. The only way there is a complete collapse of the current rule.

Both Germany and Japan were fascist, racist, warring empires, and the way they became the modern, peaceful countries they are was hardly pleasant for the Germans and Japanese. But the alternative was likely renewed aggression against neighbouring countries. Economic collapse in russia won't be pleasant either, but it will help stop the war. Stopping the war is also good for russians (even the many who are rallying under the Z-banner), especially the imperial subjects outside moscow and s:t petersburg. It's probably not enough for a total collapse of the rule (it hasn't been in the past – new leaders, same oppression) but it's a start.

As occupation and *de-fascistisation* a'la Germany or Japan is probably not an option, Plan B should be a to create a weak and toothless russia that at least can't make people in *other* countries suffer. *Make russia poor again.*

2. I want Soma to leave russia. I want them to say publicly that they left russia, and why. They have stopped manufacturing there (according to Soma's Instagram account in DMs), but development is still done in russia.

I want dealers like Thomann, Gear4music, Schneidersladen, Signal Sounds, DLX Music, etc. to stop selling Soma's products until Soma leaves russia.

I want *you* to stop buying and hyping Soma's devices – *regardless of where they were produced* – until Soma leaves russia.

I want Superbooth, Knobcon and other events to stop inviting or accepting Soma, Kreimer or other Soma staff from appearing, even just as regular visitors, until Soma leaves russia.

I want Payoneer, Paypal and banks to stop handling Soma's money until Soma leaves russia.

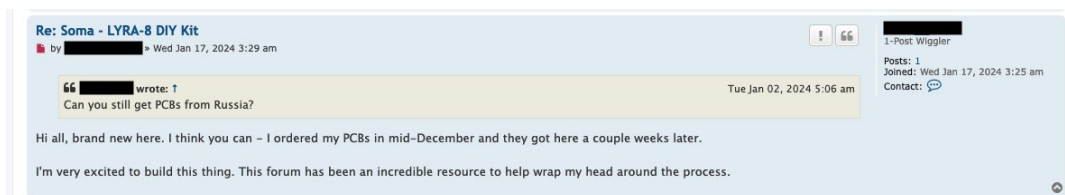
I want people to stop defending Soma online and offline.

I want Soma to end their silence on russia's war of genocide.

I want Soma to apologise for having paid taxes in russia.

Ideally, they should pay an equal or bigger amount to Ukraine. They accept donations and you can direct them towards military, de-mining, medical, rebuilding or educational/scientific efforts.

I would recommend the educational/scientific slot, it suits Kreimer's image. Just go to <https://u24.gov.ua/>, I'm sure they can arrange a receipt for PR purposes.



Please don't do this. (Screenshot of a thread at modwiggler forum).

■ Soma is a russian company

Soma was founded in russia, and still operates in russia. Their devices are developed in russia².

When I started writing, I asked Soma about their russian manufacturing – if it was still ongoing. Despite a few reminders they I got no reply, so (partly based on their website) I wrote some stuff about manufacturing there.

I asked again while editing, and this time I got a reply – I guess they wanted to do some PR work due to the backlash in response to Kreimer's (then) upcoming Crimean jaunt. They said that they've ceased manufacturing, but have some stock left that is slowly being sold. The only activities in russia are development and some custom manufacturing, according to them.

Their website still lists that some devices as made in russia and Kazakhstan. I suppose the first half is referring to the old stock, but it's not very clear.

Soma isn't actually Polish, so they just say "*we manufacture in Poland*". If Soma was actually Polish there would be no reason to harp on about the fact that the devices are made there. It's just a reaction.

There is a reason that they and their valiant protectors in forum posts have to repeat it so much. They understand that many musicians wouldn't want to buy products sold by a russian company, because russia started a war against Ukraine, and russia is a fascist dictatorship. The need to repeat the line about Polish manufacturing is thus obvious. But the fact remains that Soma is a russian company. The Polish division is just a *division*. Soma has a US division now, too. That doesn't make it American.

In a phrase that was deleted from the Soma website some time between 2022-02-28 and 2022-07-04 – i.e. just after the full-scale invasion – the contribution of the Polish part is described as providing manufacturing and business meeting international level and standards"³. Soma moved manufacturing to Poland to get a foot in the 21st century, not out of idealism

The move turned out to be a stroke of luck when russia later intensified the war in Ukraine. Now Soma could push the line about Polish manufacturing and imply that Soma moved. It didn't. Manufacturing did. This is a good thing!

It makes business sense to be in the EU if you're selling a lot of stuff to customers in the west. More so if you want to work with modern logistics-systems, something I think russia may be lacking in. Even before the turn to full-on dictatorship and *Der Totalen Krieg*, and the resulting sanctions, operating in a corrupt, backwards kleptocracy like russia can't ever have been easy.

Still russian

Poland does manufacturing. The brain remains in russia, where the development takes place, in "*the best engineering traditions of the USSR – the country of advanced scientific and industrial achievements*"⁴. This description was also removed from the about-page.

2 Their russian division is "more focused on development" (archive.org/web-20220128104800-https://-somasynths.com/story/) – this page has since been edited to remove any references to Soma's origins or where they are active.

3 web.archive.org/web-20220128104800-https://-somasynths.com/story/

4 web.archive.org/web-20220128104800-https://-somasynths.com/story/

I'd argue that Vlad Kreimer is Soma. He is the founder and the visionary. And Kreimer lives in moscow⁵. It makes sense, as the company headquarters is also there. The development work is still done in russia.

There's no doubt about who is the centre and who is the periphery; the head and the body. Soma Poland, the eternal excuse, could just as well be an independent contract manufacturer.

Soma was founded in russia. The founder runs it from russia. Soma is a russian company.

■ Paying taxes in russia

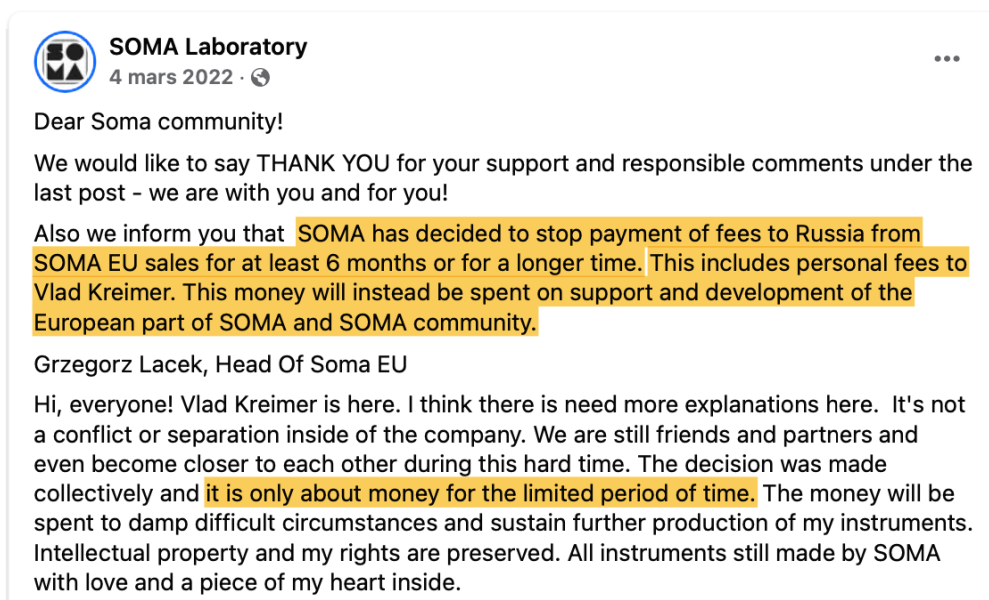
Where do you think Soma's profits end up?

You wouldn't call Apple a Chinese company just because they manufacture in China. They contract out the manufacturing but the profits return to the USA, where the headquarters are.

Soma's development is done in russia. Development costs money. And if "9 out of 10 of you have instruments from Poland"⁶, my guess is that the russian sales aren't enough to fund the development work. Soma have some pretty advanced instruments, and even simple products take time to develop properly – meaning a lot of money.

I very much doubt (less than) 10% of total sales is enough to cover all of Soma's development, plus all the overhead involved with being a company headquarters. The only solution is to send money from Soma's Polish sales to russia. As with Apple, profits from sales in other countries are returned to headquarters.

And, lo:



The profits did indeed go back to russia.⁷ Soma aren't explicit about if they still make the transfers, but in the post⁸ they're very clear that stopping transfers to russia is a *temporary* thing. I don't think it realistically could be anything else.

6 <https://www.facebook.com/somasynths/posts/pfbid0255capuK7V8SWNHuDqU2mnRe3Z3ePB8oMY3N5MDU8C24WV7sCM3L7HP1YkHR2tgYyl>

7 <https://www.facebook.com/somasynths/posts/1326349294539331>

8 Some thoughts about that post:

—A. Am I the only one who expected the sentence "The money will be ..." to end something like "given to humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees" rather than just "used to run our business"?

—B. What the fuck does "responsible comments" mean? I guess they mean the sympathies, prayer emojis and russia-defending whataboutism? Not the questions about where Soma's profits and taxes go (which of course get no response) or about Soma's total lack of comments about russia or the war since March 2024. Is it irresponsible to point out that the war started in 2014? I think Vlad should know that it did.

—C. I find it strange that russia's invasion of Ukraine is somehow means that Soma is in need of support. They weren't (and aren't) the ones being bombed or having their employees killed and tortured. Ukrainians are.

Soma in russia need to pay for: salaries for Vlad and the developers, assembly workers, sales and marketing staff, admin; equipment, components and raw materials for development, manufacturing and repairs; rent, heating, electricity; any rented or leased equipment, external contractors for e.g. recording videos, toilet paper, printer paper, and so on.

Employees' and contractors' income similarly go to food, rent, clothes, etc.

Money sent to russia means money spent in russia. It circulates in the half-dead russian economy, breathing life into it. And the russian economy is a *war economy*. Almost a third of the federal budget for 2024 is for “national defense”⁹ – translated into English this means *committing genocide in Ukraine*.

The pause of money transfers was only a pause – Vlad Kreimer said so himself. Some part of every Euro, Dollar, Yen and Pound spent on instruments from Soma will end up in moscow. Taxes in russia go directly into russia's war chest. Any business will help russia by propping up the economy. russian tax rubles fund the war against Ukraine. Paying taxes in russia means paying for genocide. And *this* is what the profits returning to russia means. Funding genocide¹⁰.

—D. Also, that their public response is to spout vague phrases about dark times and peace, say that they'll chill with the money transfers for a bit and sort out some supply chain issues, is just weak. But at least the devices are made with love.

9 <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/russian-budget-expenditure-2023-total-351-bln-finance-minister-2023-12-27/>

10 If you're here to take issue with the label genocide, please read e.g. snyder.substack.com/p/the-war-in-ukraine-and-the-question and/or read up on the definition of genocide. Genocide is a legal term, covering many acts (not all literally involving killing), and russia has committed many (if not all) of these in the war so far. www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLCyk41w9gU is also a good watch, or listen.

■ Vlad Kreimer

Vlad Kreimer's public image has been that of a mad scientist-philosopher. He, and Soma, want to be associated with art, creativity, and a personal touch lacking in consumer products. Warm, fuzzy feelings and sounds. *Romantic Engineering*, organismic synthesis, global – nay, *universal* perspectives. I take issue with this narrative.

I could say that my issues are not with Vlad Kreimer personally, and in the sense that I don't know him and have never met him, that's true. But in another sense I absolutely have issues with Vlad Kreimer himself.

His words and actions are public – he's posted a long essay defending himself and explaining his thoughts. Those thoughts are upsetting; not warm and fuzzy. Couched in *peace, art and analog electronics* are words that attempt to minimise and hide russia's crimes against humanity.

Yet his image remains. His background is rarely mentioned, let alone questioned.

So, here are some things Kreimer has said and done that I want to bring up and comment.

1. Kreimer is neutral in a war of genocide



The over 100 year old Okhtyrka Local History Museum, Sumy Oblast, after a russian attack on March 8th, 2022. Image is under CC BY license courtesy of [Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine](#). More about the museum [here](#).

In Kreimer's response, he states that he is neutral in the conflict between russia and Ukraine. This is the first sentence in the document. After this follows an explanation (or excuse), based on him having "50% - Jewish, 25% - Ukrainian, 25% - Polish" blood.¹¹ In short, his mixed cultural background and familial ties supposedly puts him under "*immense pressure from radicalized sides of the conflicts to pick one side and stick to it*", something he's against.¹² How you arrive at neutrality from his

11 [Vlad's response](#) – this statement about blood may need some unpacking in itself: are jews not capable of being Ukrainian or Polish? Is Volodymyr Zelenskyy not both jewish and Ukrainian?

12 [Vlad's response](#)

background is beyond me. Being Polish and Ukrainian should normally not lead one to pick neutrality in a conflict with russia. Sure, his family is there, but unless he means an extended family (with the somewhat looser definition used in Ukraine and russia) it's because he went to russia. Many Ukrainians have relatives and close family members in russia, especially those who live near the border and frontline – Kharkiv and Sumy oblasts for instance. These are some of the places most terrorised by russia's bombing campaigns. The people there are hardly neutral. Apart from apparently being against “taking a side” (as if this was a fight between friends, about some trivial matter), he also thinks that *synth makers* should be neutral, because they create tools, which must also be neutral. This isn't the place to discuss the neutrality of technologies or how tools affect the user, but still: Soma hardly make “neutral” audio equipment. Their design is very much part of a philosophy about sound and performance, something that Soma's marketing highlights. It's obvious that they have strong thoughts about interaction, control and creative limitations. It's not test equipment, despite Soma calling themselves *Labs*.

He then claims that he is “against this war and against all other wars”. I think you'll have to look for a long time to find someone who is *in favour* of war in general, or even this specific war (see point 5 below for more on this weak and stupid “statement”).

Among the few who are “for it” you will find russian nationalists, who (correctly) see that it is a genocidal war of conquest (not simply the result of unfortunate geopolitical developments). Such a war which ties in with their fascist and imperialist politics. It's exactly what they want russia to do.

I don't understand how anyone can be neutral in this war. The war has one aggressor. One side that occupies, illegally annexes, performs sham referenda. One side that systematically rapes, tortures and murders civilians, bombs hospitals, churches and schools. One side that denies the other side's historical and current existence as a nation and people.

That side is russia. The other side, Ukraine, is defending itself.

Which historical wars would Kreimer have been neutral in? russia's other Invasions, of e.g. Poland, Afghanistan, Finland, the Baltic countries? (the list could be made much longer) Japan's genocidal terror in China, the Philippines, Korea, and many other parts of East Asia? Germany's invasion of and genocide in Poland, France, Norway, Denmark ... and, yes, Ukraine? A wild guess is that he wouldn't say the same thing about the US's wars in Vietnam or Iraq '03, for instance.

Being neutral in this war is a shameful thing. It isn't something that requires some superior mental capacity or philosophical theories. Sometimes, you *do* have to pick a side and stick with it. And picking a side in this war should be easy.

2. Fleeing to russia

Vlad Kreimer was born in (soviet-occupied) Ukraine. He's from *Donetsk*¹³ for god's sake. When russia invaded Ukraine and his home city, *he fled to russia*.

Imagine your country was invaded by its neighbour. The invasion happens because they want territory, resources or *at least* control over who runs your country – meaning that if they succeed, you

13 I was looking for a source for this, rather than just state it. It's common knowledge, but Soma's website has been redacted and I couldn't easily find something in writing. I found this strange wordpress clone of the Soma website when searching for information for mentions of Donetsk: wordpress1963641.home.pl-autoinstalator-wordpressplus1/about-soma/.

are no longer a democracy, because you can't choose a leader who won't take orders from the neighbour.

What would you do? Would you fight or flee? If you fled, where to? Would you flee *to the invading country*? And then start a business there, employ people, pay taxes?

What does this decision say about Kreimer and his view on Russia's criminal war?

3. That government event in occupied Crimea

In short, Vlad Kreimer agreed to participate in a culture festival in occupied Crimea, arranged by *Rosmolodezh*, an organisation of the Russian federal government. CDM have a detailed coverage of the scandal¹⁴. Also see the Instagram posts by **johnobject**¹⁵ and **kuvallini**¹⁶ for more responses to Kreimer's decision. Also, give [this album by Johnobject](#) a listen. It's incredible.



Mind-boggling stuff.

14 <https://cdm.link/2024/07/vlad-kreimer-soma-founder-under-fire-for-event-in-occupied-crimea/>

15 <https://www.instagram.com/p/C9j-34pt0iz/>

16 <https://www.instagram.com/p/C9kPdi3oXUg/>

Vlad Kreimer responded to Peter Kirn's (CDM) article. His response is indicative of how politically careless he can be, whilst still making claims about neutrality and not engaging with politics. I have thoughts about almost every sentence in his response, so I'll go through it step by step:

"I think it is clear that the current situation around Crimea is very hard for many civilian people that were involved in these bad events without asking their opinion and consent to be part of it."

This is just vague, in a manner I will discuss further below. But also, note that in Kreimer's description civilians haven't been asked for "consent" to being involved in "bad events". This doesn't put the blame anywhere; it can equally mean that "civilians" (not Crimeans – maybe Kreimer includes the russian occupants here) are suffering from "bad events" due to Ukraine fighting back.

If Kreimer is just trying to avoid political repercussions, it would probably be helpful if he didn't engage in a government propaganda event on occupied territory.

"Especially it affects creative, art people who in all countries try to stay as far as possible from any sort of war and politics, most of them are cosmopolitan and international minded, including Russian art people, especially from the electronic scene."

I honestly don't know how he comes up with this stuff. Describing artists "in all countries" as trying to "stay as far away as possible from [...] politics" is just wild.

And: putting politics next to war like that is an ugly trick, a form of guilt by association in order to rub war onto politics. But get this, Vlad: *politics is unavoidable*. And, if you live in russia, war is unavoidable too. russia loves war. That russian *art people* avoid politics doesn't mean that artists elsewhere do. And engaging with "war" can mean e.g. doing charitable events to collect money for Ukraines resistance and civil society. It doesn't have to mean, I don't know, organising propaganda-making workshops for the russian war machine?

Being *cosmopolitan and international* shouldn't equate to ignoring wars of conquest or accepting illegal occupation. And hiding from politics doesn't make you free. Hiding from a war – as an artist – won't make it go away.

"In my opinion, no one has the moral right to deprive civilians of a normal life, including deprive them of cultural events – one of them Tavrída festival obviously is."

Trying to create a situation, when Crimea people (that are 2 million persons) have nothing but war around, is nothing but discrimination. "

I don't think anyone has suggested this. But Vlad Kreimer staying in moscow doesn't mean that Crimeans are deprived of culture, or discrimination.

The russian occupation, however, does mean exactly that. russia is a racist colonial empire, which has a heritage of systematically erasing cultural expressions and languages. The occupation of Crimea won't be an exception. Does Kreimer think the government will treat native Crimeans or Crimean Tatars in the same way as russian occupant settlers? Without discrimination?

"Especially, if you remember that they were under regular bombing for the last several years, squeezed between two clashing countries."

This is a very "neutral" way of putting it. It's also wrong:

Civilians in Crimea have not been targeted by bombing. Targeting civilians is something Russia does. Ukraine targets military facilities. Having your day at the beach ruined by a nearby airbase blowing up *doesn't count*. Russian tourists: go home.

And civilians aren't just "squeezed between two clashing countries", one of the countries is the invading occupant, and the other is defending itself. This perspective is important and meaningful; which is exactly why Kreimer doesn't take it.

"Yes, it is sponsored by the Russian government, but what do you think is better: if the Russian government will spend this money on art or on the war?"

The website for Tavrida festival says "проект от Росмолодёжь" – project of Rosmolodezh. Not "sponsored by" Rosmolodezh.

The Tavrida VKontakte page's about-section says "*Tavrida.ART is part of the federal project "Youth of Russia" of the national project "Education" and is implemented with the support of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (Rosmolodezh).*"¹⁷

Rosmolodezh – the Federal Agency of Youth Affairs – is an agency of the Russian federal government. Amongst its programs we can find *Rospatriot*, aimed at "civil and patriotic education of children and youth"¹⁸. Others aim to make youths volunteer, "maintain diplomatic relations", stimulate creativity and business.

A recent page on Rosmolodezh's website¹⁹ has the headline "*The feats of the Heroes of the SVO will become the theme of new songs of young performers*" (SVO meaning Special Military Operation). The article goes on to describe how musicians from many parts of Russia, and also occupied Crimea, will create compositions based on the war, which will be "*devoted to the themes of family and traditional values, serving the country and maintaining unity, continuity of generations in following their vocation for the benefit of the Motherland, art and culture*".

This is an event organised by Tavrida, as part of some sort of music school, and involves two people who are part of the "Tavrida art cluster", Mikhail Barkov and Irina Nausenko. The music is also to be released on Tavrida's label.

In their response to the CDM article, Soma describe the festival as "non-political". Kreimer calls the people behind his event "*neutral international-minded art persons*". That's not the impression I'm getting.

Tavrida doesn't sound like a nonpolitical entity that is only about art. Not even just the "Art and Science cluster", as two from the art part were directly involved in this fascist propaganda songwriting workshop.

Rosmolodezh sounds 100% like a propaganda ministry to me. How could it be anything else? That it is directed to the youth is in fact a strong indicator of this; they need to get the propaganda into people's heads when they are young. Hitlerjugend and Bund Deutscher Mädel were also directed at the youth.

"Or do you expect that the Russian government will make a Ukrainian festival there?"

17 m.vk.com/tavrida_art, translated by Safari browser.

18 [\[WARNING russian government website\]](#), translated by Safari browser.

19 [\[WARNING russian government website\]](#), translated by Safari browser.

I expect them to leave. Kreimer seems to mean that we can't expect the russian government to act against its interests (genocide), which is true. That doesn't make participating in their propaganda festival ok.

"As for the message of the festival, please see its promotional movie from last year, in the wartime.

In the very first frame you see the words "МИР ЛЮБОВЬ ИСКУССТВО" that in English is PEACE LOVE ART.

Not the easiest words to say there."

Obviously, they are not problematic at all, as the festival is allowed to return. The words are empty. No one is against *peace*.

"Yes, we have a very hard time now when any of your action or absence of it can be treated as a political act, especially if politically charged people are trying to find a reason to open a battle."

As mentioned above, going to Crimea during occupation is illegal. It is very much a political act, not just in the minds of "politically charged people", but in reality. It has consequences.

"But, my personal position is supporting peaceful initiatives where it is possible, staying wise, not idealistic."

There is nothing peaceful about occupation. Neither about propaganda directed at Ukrainians or russians in Crimea. As to what is wise, I think we don't agree. That "idealism" is bad is symptomatic of russian cynicism.

"Here it is 100% charity, I don't earn any money, just spend my time and have a chance to get a shell on my head."

I thought it was good that the russian government spends money on cultural events? Now suddenly he's volunteering, giving his services to the government, for free? Using his logic, he's saving money for the government, that they can use to wage war.

And as for the risk of the festival being bombed: Ukraine doesn't do that. Why is Kreimer again implying that they do?

"Also, please remember that attacking neutral people, who are already suffering from the situation, you push them to take the opposite side, not yours."

I'm not sure what Kreimer means here. Is he implying that civilians in Crimea are neutral in the war, and being attacked verbally by *politically charged people* or with "shells" by Ukraine?

Or that he himself is neutral, and that criticising him will push him towards supporting russia?²⁰

Both interpretations make for very strange statements. But such is the nature of deliberate vagueness.

"If you really care about Crimean people, trying to cancel their cultural life is not the best choice."

Who are included in the term Crimean people? Does he mean natives – Ukrainians – or are russian occupant settlers also included? The occupants are free to have their culture – but they should first return home to russia.

As for the Ukrainians they hardly need the russian government to have culture. On the contrary, russia as the colonial power will attempt to erase Ukrainian culture. It's what they always do.

²⁰ Note: this guess about him meaning he's neutral was written before he published his "response". I wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt.

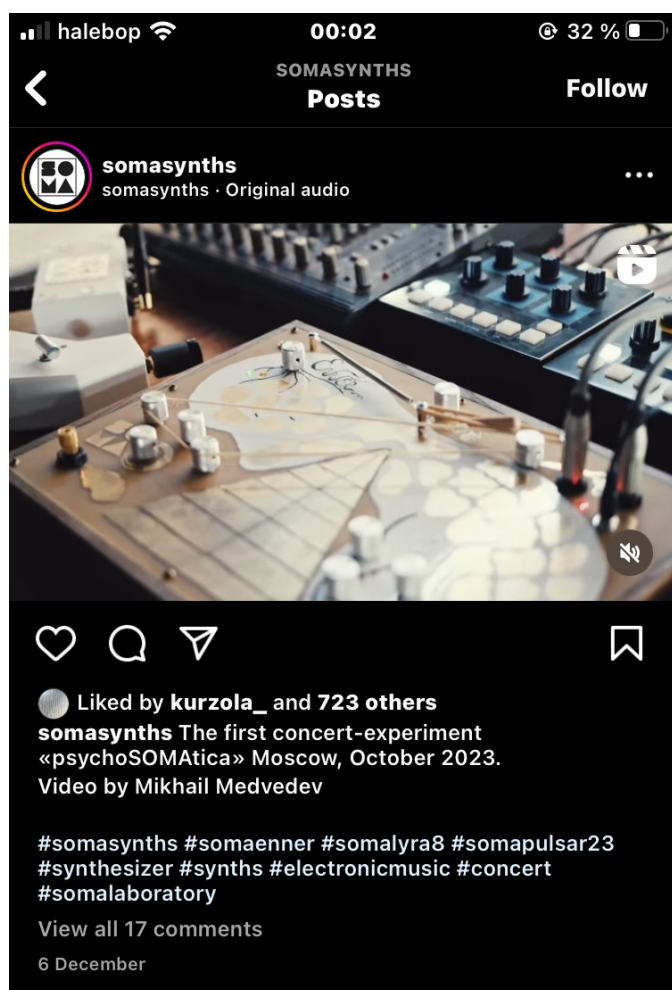
Crimea is occupied territory, not just – in Kreimer’s words²¹ – “seen as” occupied. Just *going there* without passing a Ukrainian border control is illegal according to Ukrainian law – and Ukrainian law does govern Crimea, even if it can’t currently be implemented due to the occupation.

Traveling to Crimea for a summer holiday – as many russians have – constitutes a tacit agreement with the occupation. Agreeing to participate in the occupier’s propaganda event is surely an overt statement in support of it? I doubt anyone was forcing Kreimer to go, and I don’t think he lacks invitations to other events that aren’t part of an occupation or run by government propaganda arms. He wanted to go and saw no problem with it, on the contrary.

4. Other events in russia

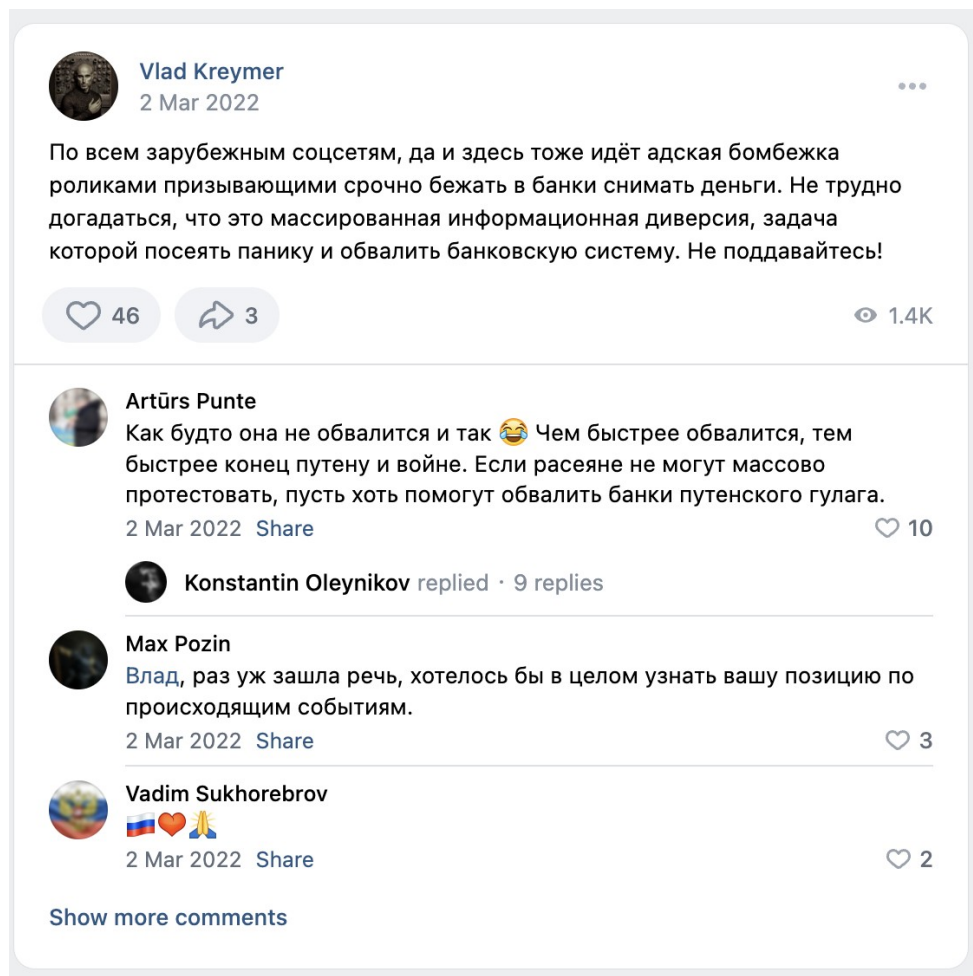
Soma put on events in moscow and s:t petersburg. Not just occupied Crimea. Kreimer has spoken at design schools, and so on. If Kreimer or Soma were hindered from leaving russia they could at least work and keep a low profile. Instead they are actively sustaining russian culture and communities. russia is currently undergoing a brain drain – this is bad for russia, and as such good for almost everyone else. Making life in the big, rich cities more enjoyable or tolerable, let alone fun, helps the regime retain and pacify the educated elites.

It also clearly shows that whilst manufacturing been moved abroad, Soma is still active in russia.



5. “Avoiding politics”

The screenshot below is from Kreimer’s VKontakte page. The date is the 2nd of March 2022, so exactly one week after russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.



Vlad Kreymer
2 Mar 2022

По всем зарубежным соцсетям, да и здесь тоже идёт адская бомбежка роликами призывающими срочно бежать в банки снимать деньги. Не трудно догадаться, что это массированная информационная диверсия, задача которой посеять панику и обвалить банковскую систему. Не поддавайтесь!

46 3 1.4K

Artūrs Punte
Как будто она не обвалится и так 😂 Чем быстрее обвалится, тем быстрее конец путену и войне. Если расеяне не могут массово протестовать, пусть хоть помогут обвалить банки путенского гулага.
2 Mar 2022 Share 10

Konstantin Oleynikov replied · 9 replies

Max Pozin
Влад, раз уж зашла речь, хотелось бы в целом узнать вашу позицию по происходящим событиям.
2 Mar 2022 Share 3

Vadim Sukhorebrov
2 Mar 2022 Share 2

Show more comments

He writes:

“По всем зарубежным соцсетям, да и здесь тоже идёт адская бомбежка роликами призывающими срочно бежать в банки снимать деньги. Не трудно догадаться, что это массированная информационная диверсия, задача которой посеять панику и обвалить банковскую систему. Не поддавайтесь!”

Google translate:

“All over foreign social networks, and here too, there is a hellish bombardment of videos urging people to urgently run to banks to withdraw money. It is not difficult to guess that this is a massive information sabotage, the purpose of which is to sow panic and collapse the banking system. Don’t give in!”

Here, Kreimer makes a conspiratorial claim, that someone is trying to sabotage russia’s economy. Some foreign enemy, I presume. He also implores his followers to not give in.

One week after the invasion, Kreimer is a soldier fighting for russia in the information space. Make no mistake: telling people to calm down during that initial chaos and uncertainty is an act in defence of the russian economy, russian central bank; of russia. Choosing to be silent and make a bank-run just a tiny bit more probably would have been easy, but no.

The rest of the thread involves various Vatniks having meltdowns,²² but also arguing with more reasonable people, such as Artūrs Punte, who does want a russian financial collapse, and soon.

Kreimer writes:

“Pavel, I am not involved in politics, so I do not make public political statements and I have the right to do so for many reasons. The content of my post is aimed at preventing destructive things in the country in which I live. I don’t take part in political debates. And I ask you not to incite conflicts on my page.”

Using your public profile to try and calm people down in order to avoid a bank run or to disseminate the view that financial rumours are the result of “information sabotage” *are political statements*, and means you *are* involved in politics. This is true even if his only motivation is to protect his company, bank account and what he terms the “*country in which I live*”²³.

He later tries to calm things down with this:

“Gentlemen! Please, no insults, I will delete the comments! I understand that it is very hot and painful and actually hurts on both sides. But a quarrel between ordinary people will not help either Ukraine or Russia.”

Being *apolitical* is very common in russia. Frequent themes for apolitical russians are “everyone lies” or “all countries have corruption”, basically a russian twist on whataboutism.

For instance: “it” (the war) “hurts on both sides”. This is technically true, but hides the glaring difference in the amount of suffering, and most importantly, *who started the war* and caused the suffering.

Some of Soma’s turns of phrase are also *apolitical* in this sense, e.g. “dark times” (as if the war was a natural phenomenon) or the claim that Poland had “difficult historical experiences with both Russia and Ukraine”²⁴. Again, technically true, but “difficult historical experiences” isn’t a very good description of e.g. the Katyn Massacre²⁵.

Actions of the russia-led Soviet Union in World War II and later are not comparable to wars fought between russia and Poland in the middle ages. And the *difficult experiences* between Poland and Ukraine vs. Poland and russia are also very different, especially if we consider events within living memory.

The statement is *technically true*, but more importantly it is *pure bullshit*.

Apolitical russians keep their heads down and make statements like this to avoid even hearing political discussions among friends.

In 2020, Kreimer wrote a book, *Redefining Conscience in an Era of Rapid Change*. It is available for free on the Soma website²⁶. In the introduction, Kreimer asks a series of questions:

“It’s growing increasingly difficult to be a citizen in a society where you can’t access reliable facts and figures on crucial economic, environmental and political issues.

[...]

22 “cancel culture against an entire nation” is a pretty good name for an album.

23 In Kreimer’s book, he instead refers to russia as “my beleaguered homeland” (p. 14)

24 ([stupid-facebook-url](#))

25 eng.ipn.gov.pl/en/news/3921,Katyn-Massacre-Basic-Facts.html or www.britannica.com/event/Katyn-Massacre or en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katyn_massacre for more information.

26 somasynths.com/the-book/

How can we foster friendship, family or business in a culture where good and bad are relative, values of any kind are labelled as whimsical fancies and any kind of rule, structure or law is primarily seen as an attempted act of violence and domination?

[...]

And how can democracy flourish in a society whose people are deprived of education, critical thinking skills and any ethical foundation, immersed in a fabricated world of “alternative” facts propped up by propaganda and advertising? How can they make informed decisions in this environment?”

My impression is that Kreimer is describing russia, but that he probably thinks the questions apply equally to e.g. western democracies. Corruption and lies exists here too, so – ignoring the enormous difference in extent – both russia and the west can be said to have problems with corruption and lies.

I can understand how a person from russia grow cynical and come to believe that truth and justice are just fairytales. This is the government line, and it is beat into russians from a very young age. Looking around they will see corruption, lies, broken infrastructure, the systematic violence of the strong beating on the weak.

But Kreimer isn't from russia. He leaves russia, to travel to Europe and America, regularly. Kreimer understands English, and can freely access accurate information on any subject as soon as he goes abroad. So why does he remain in the country that causes such abject cynicism and mistrust? Why does he choose not only to believe but repeat the russian government's lies? He has obviously seen that something is wrong with russia – so why does he stay there?

russians who are apolitical have given up on justice, truth, democracy. Saying that everyone lies is an easy way out from engaging with society. Such people aren't apolitical at all; the label is rather used as a protective talisman. What they mean is that they aren't politically dangerous. It's some form of reverse aposematism²⁷ to avoid being targeted by the ruling elites lackeys in the ~~KGB~~ FSB.

Rather than apolitical, they are apathetic; apathetic to genocide; to bombed childrens hospitals; to systematic rape and torture. To be apolitical in fascist russia is to comply. It is exactly what the government wants.

6. Jokes about rape, war and Stalin

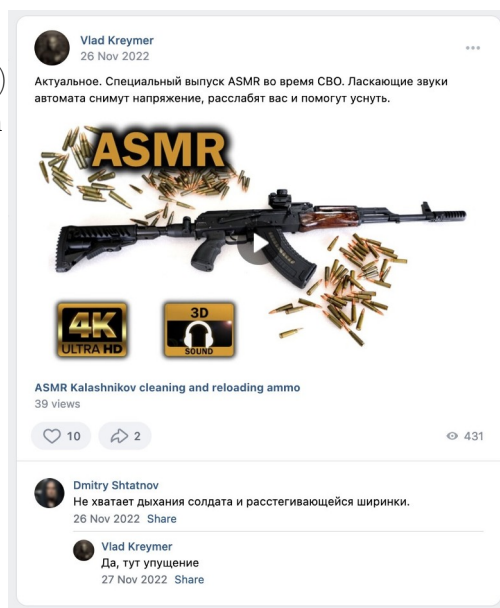
In November, 2022, Kreimer posted a link (he didn't make it) to an ASMR video with the sounds of someone fiddling with a Kalashnikov rifle, with the following comments (Google translate):

Kreimer: *“Current. ASMR special during SMO. The caressing sounds of the machine will relieve tension, relax you and help you fall asleep.”*

Dmitry: *“The soldier's breath and his unbuttoned fly are missing”*

Kreimer: *“Yes, there is an omission here”*

The *best* interpretation is that this is “just a joke” about the *Special Military Operation*. And considering how keen Kreimer is to keep politics out of the thread about a possible bank



²⁷ Dangerous animals having scary colouration, e.g. wasps or poisonous frogs.

run, it's noteworthy that he just agrees when Dmitry include the systematic rapes of ukrainian women, children and men into the joke. Sexual violence and torture is part of the russian genocide in Ukraine, and has been an element of russian warfare for a very long time.

It's not a good look.

Kreimer later commented (in his "response") that the video doesn't contain war mongering or gloating, and that the video has an anti-war message (which I might add is pretty weak: "STOP WAR!").

Shortly after, Kreimer posts (ugly) generated images of Stalin playing a synth. Being from Ukraine, Kreimer should know about the Holodomor²⁸ (even if he maybe wasn't taught about during his USSR school-years), and Stalin's other crimes against Ukrainians and many other peoples beside. The face of Stalin represents genocide. He's not a character comparable to Santa Claus or Snow White, who show up in similar images the day after. But Kreimer's excuse is just that, that in russia "*Lenin and Stalin are as much as pop culture entities as Spiderman, Santa Claus or Jesus*"²⁹.

In Ukraine, however, they aren't. Kreimer should know that.

My point isn't that Kreimer is a bad person because he made a few posts that are in bad taste. It's that Kreimer is not doing a very good job of "*stay[ing] as far as possible from any sort of war and politics*".

Nearly all of Kreimer's posts on VKontakte – he refers to it as "*my private VK page*"³⁰ – are some form of Soma/Kreimer marketing. When he (very) occasionally posts something unrelated to his business, the posts show a total disregard for the suffering of Ukrainians, both today and historically.

Being politically insensitive – or at best clueless – is not the same as "not being political".

28 www.britannica.com/event/Holodomor, or holodomormuseum.org.ua/en/, or en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holodomor

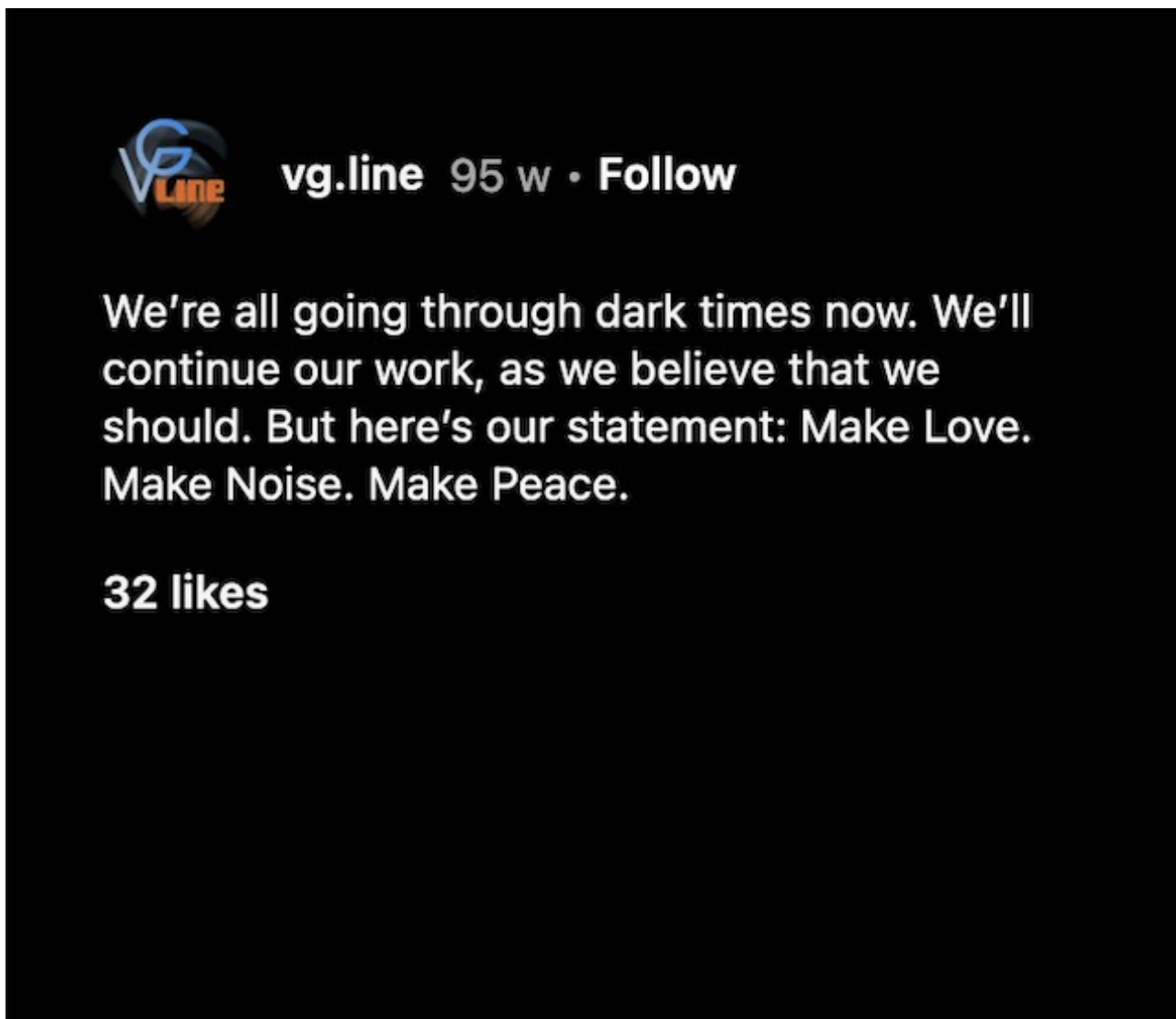
29 [Vlad's response](#)

30 [Vlad's response](#)

■ Kreimer and Soma's silence and weak statements

A few days after the invasion, Soma made a post on Instagram. I found it much later, when looking things up for this text. The post's image was just a black square, and the text some vague stuff about "dark times". I stupidly commented (just the word "weak"), before I thought of taking a screenshot. As the post was old and buried under normal advertising posts, Soma could just hide or delete it without anyone noticing. I guess they agreed with my assessment that it was weak, because that is exactly what they did. As I went back, I realised my mistake and thought the post was lost forever.

But then, when I was looking up more stuff, I saw this³¹ on VG-Line's³² Instagram:



I'm 99% sure this is the exact same wording. I know it's the same image, of course, just a black square. And the wordings about love, peace and noise is 100% Soma. Without the screenshot, you'll just have to trust me.

31 www.instagram.com/pCahsydBtX21/ - let's see if it also gets taken down.

32 VG-Line is/was the company that made some or all of Soma's russian manufactured products. They are still listed as "РУ ПРОИЗВОДСТВО" (RU Production) on Soma's russian website, and their Instagram features e.g. this Pulsar-23 being assembled: www.instagram.com/p/CdbSVKAtlCt and sneak peeks of gear in new colours, etc. The involvement apparently was deep enough that they decided to post the same (weak) statement on Instagram.

And then there's this³³ gem:



SOMA Laboratory
28 februari 2022 · 🌐



Grzegorz Lacek here, the Head of Soma EU. Poland.

The war between Russia and Ukraine comes as a shock to us. We don't know how to react or what to write, nothing is the same anymore. Skipping the war with silence is impossible. Talking only about music as if nothing happened, is also impossible. We stopped any posts.

“We don't know how to react or what to write, nothing is the same anymore. Skipping the war with silence is impossible. Talking only about music as if nothing happened, is also impossible. We stopped any posts.”

- Soma have been almost entirely silent on the war.
- They talk about music, and their products, as if nothing happened.
- They did not stop posting, not for more than a few weeks.

It continues:



SOMA Laboratory
28 februari 2022 · 🌐



Grzegorz Lacek here, the Head of Soma EU. Poland.

The war between Russia and Ukraine comes as a shock to us. We don't know how to react or what to write, nothing is the same anymore. Skipping the war with silence is impossible. Talking only about music as if nothing happened, is also impossible. We stopped any posts.

We are against all forms of aggression. We are against the wars, We are against THIS war too!

Being “*against all wars*” as a response to *one specific war* is a true sign of someone apolitical. Being against “*all wars*” may sound stronger than criticising “*only*” this invasion, but it isn't. Likewise, being “*against this war too*” is not enough. Putin himself could use the exact same words – but meaning that Ukraine are causing the continued war by fighting back.

The wording is carefully chosen to not be critical of the invasion, but still *sound good* to disinterested westerners. It's like saying you are against “*all violence*” rather than condemn your own brother when he's caught abusing his wife or children. Choosing to be vague in such a situation is an insult to the victims.

Now, before you erupt in indignation over me expecting someone in russia to speak up against the war and their government, I have some points to make:

1. The post above is a Polish citizen writing. What does he have to fear? Isn't Soma EU a Polish company?

2. Ukrainians withstood months of police abuse and violence at Maidan during the Maidan revolution. Why is it impossible for russians? One reason is that “apolitical” russians allow the rule to continue.

3. This weakness was evident from the start, before the serious repression we see today had started. There was a small window in the beginning, where at least *soft* shows of support would have been possible, especially from a smaller company like Soma. Instead we got “*dark times*”.

Soma and Vlad have been mostly silent on the war, despite saying they could not ignore it. When they have approached the subject – most often because others have brought it up – they are vague and weak.

■ Leaving russia

According to Soma, all that remains of the company in russia is development and one craftsman, who makes custom Dvina synths. Not a factory or lots of employees. Some warehouse stock, but not assembly lines with incoming deliveries or such complicating factors. If they can ship orders abroad, they can surely put their existing stock on a truck and just drive it all to Kazakhstan?

Either their russian operation is too large to move – meaning they have a lot of staff and a large turnaround – or it isn’t. And if it isn’t too big to move, *why hasn’t it moved?*

Development means writing code, building prototypes, designing PCBs and enclosures, etc. You can do this from anywhere. Soma can move entirely to Poland, or Kazakhstan, or Turkey, or whatever place will have them. And if some of their staff don’t want to leave russia, that’s up to them.

I’m not saying leaving russia is easy. It may be impractical and costly, although I think delaying such a move will only make it more difficult. But leaving russia is not impossible. Kreimer travels, for instance to Superbooth in Germany, and returns to russia afterwards. russian tourists travel abroad for their holidays.

Soma aren’t stuck in russia. They’ve had two and a half years to leave. Staying there is a choice they’ve made.

Soma is still a russian company.

■ Comments and additions

20240929

I’ll begin by noting that Kreimer did cancel his Crimean workshop. He did it because it “*turned into a public controversy*”. Based on his response (published after the CDM article but before his decision to cancel) he didn’t cancel because he had any issues with the event’s location or the organisers are and what they do.

He’d still go, if not for the public backlash. Bear this in mind. Soma and Kreimer run a business. If Soma and the new Lyra-4 get connected with these issues and not just electronic music gear lust, they may do something or say something. Perhaps. If the new Lyra-4’s initial sales are bad, perhaps Kreimer will reconsider his neutrality. Who knows?

■ Some notes about me and my “relation” to Soma:

- I make and sell instruments for experimental electronic music, so one could *technically* argue that I’m a competitor of Soma. But I’m mega small-potatoes and can’t compete with them. I’m not writing this to sell my stuff, I’m writing it so that people stop buying Soma’s stuff until they leave russia.
- Don’t buy my stuff just because I wrote this text, it’s not an ad. 😭
- Soma’s stuff seems good. I’m not against their products, I’m against people buying them. I don’t want Soma to go under, I want *russia’s economy* to go under. I want Soma to end all activities in russia indefinitely. But if they don’t, I also want Soma to go under. 😬
- I’ve never owned any Soma gear, and haven’t had any contact with them apart from asking about their manufacturing for this article.