

Krautrocksampler

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EIN AUGEN- UND OHRENFLUG ZUM LETZTEN HIMMEL - DIE DEUTSCHE ROCKSZENE UM 1969

Ein Essay von Marco Neumaier

Die Stunde Null. Drängende, kaum swingende Spielweise. Metallische, in mystische Tiefe hinabreichende Sounds. Eine eigenartige Synthese aus progressivem Rock, elektronischer E-Musik und Jazz.

So beschreibt Hermann Haring das Repertoire einer neuen Generation von deutschen Rockgruppen, deren musikalische Kreativität in den Jahren 1968 bis 1970 aus dem Untergrund emporstieg. Katalysator für diese Entwicklung waren sicherlich die IEST 68 (Internationalen Essener Song Tage 1968), die vom 25. bis 29. September 1968 stattfanden. Dort bekamen Interpreten der einheimischen Rockszene die Gelegenheit, erstmals einem breiten Publikum gegenüberzutreten. Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, der Hauptveranstalter und spätere Gründer des Labels „Ohr“, verweist in dem Song-Magazin IEST 68 auf das Ziel der Song-Tage. Es solle ein „Musikhappening, das bewußtseinserweiternd und bewußtseinserweitert, psychedelisch, andere Erlebnisweisen erschließt und somit eher emotional das Erworbene und Gewohnte in Frage stellt“ geboten werden. Diese Charakterisierung versinnbildlicht den ganz speziellen Sound und Anspruch der deutschen Avantgarde.

Tatsächlich musste sich Eigenständigkeit und Innovation in der populären Musik erst entwickeln. Zunächst war es der kulturelle Einfluss aus Amerika, der die Nachkriegszeit in Deutschland wesentlich geprägt hatte. Die Jugend begann, das Lebensgefühl ihrer Altersgenossen jenseits des Atlantiks selbst zu erfahren und dazu gehörte selbstverständlich der Rock 'n' Roll. Diese Situation wiederholte sich ab 1962 mit dem Siegeszug des britischen Beat in ähnlicher Weise. Peter Kraus und Ted Herold beziehungsweise die Rattles und Lords versuchten, die angloamerikanische Musik für ein deutsches Publikum aufzubereiten. Sie präsentierten geradlinige Interpretationen damaliger Standards, manchmal Eigenkompositionen im Stil der Vorbilder. Letztendlich blieb es bei einer Imitation, worauf nicht selten die Vermarktungspolitik der Plattenfirmen ohnehin baute.

Die Beatles zeigten 1967 mit Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, wie die Zukunft der populären Musik aussehen konnte. Komplexe Aufnahmetechniken, exotische Instrumentierung und grenzenlose Kreativität ließen dieses Album wegweisend werden. Procol Harum kokettierte in „A Whiter Shade of Pale“ mit klassischen Kantaten, Pink Floyd inszenierten ihre legendären Auftritte im Londoner Club UFO als eine Verbindung von experimentellem Sound und psychedelischen Diaprojektionen, Ian Anderson, der Kopf von Jethro Tull, brachte die Querflöte in die Rockmusik und der von Robert Moog entwickelte Synthesizer wurde immer häufiger verwendet. Es schien alles möglich und dementsprechend bildeten sich auch in Deutschland Bands, die dieser Philosophie folgten.

Eine deutsche Avantgarde war geboren. Musiker, die sich von den Konventionen der kommerziellen Produktion lösen und die bisherigen Strukturen des Rock erweitern beziehungsweise umgestalten wollten, fanden sich zusammen. Die britische Musikpresse schuf noch verächtlich den Begriff „Kraut Rock“ ohne zu wissen, was letztendlich daraus werden würde. Der Neubeginn wurde nicht nur von einer künstlerischen, sondern im Zuge der politischen Orientierungssuche der Zeit auch gesellschaftskritischen Komponente getragen.

Beide Phänomene verkörperte besonders eindringlich Amon Düül. Die Formation erwuchs 1967 aus einer Münchner Kommune, zu deren Lebenserfahrung auch die Musik zählte. In ihrer Bewerbung für die Essener Song-Tage schrieben sie: „Wir sind elf Erwachsene und zwei Kinder und haben uns entschlossen, alles gemeinsam zu machen, auch die Musik!“ . Sie bauten voll und ganz auf Improvisation und sprengten damit die gängige Vorstellung von musikalischer Gesetzmäßigkeit. Hinzu kam, dass die meisten Mitglieder erst Anfänger auf ihren Instrumenten waren. Dennoch wurde ihnen ein Plattenvertrag angeboten.

Kurz vor den Song-Tagen hatte sich der professionellere Teil der Kommune um den Multiinstrumentalisten Chris Karrer und Gitarristen John Weinzierl abgespalten und Amon Düül II ins Leben gerufen. Während die Urformation hauptsächlich wegen politischer Unstimmigkeiten bereits 1971 zerbrach, wurden Amon Düül II nach der Veröffentlichung ihres ersten Albums Phallus Dei zum Sinnbild des progressiven deutschen Rock. Ihre Experimentierfreudigkeit entglitt nie in die Bedeutungslosigkeit, sondern fügte sich zu substanziellen Ergebnissen zusammen. Die Songtexte schweben thematisch zwischen Science Fiction, Religion und Drogenerfahrung, wodurch sie in Einklang mit der Musik, die einen dunklen, orientalischen und psychedelischen Charakter ausstrahlt, standen.

Schon allein wegen der unterschiedlichen musikalischen Prägungen ihrer Kernbesetzung zählt CAN zu den interessantesten Gruppen des avantgardistischen Rock. Holger Czukay (Bass und Klangechnik) und Irmin Schmidt (Orgel) absolvierten beide ein Hochschulstudium in klassischer Musik und waren Schüler von Karlheinz Stockhausen, Michael Karoli (Gitarre) kam vom Blues und Beat, Jaki Liebezeit (Schlagzeug) vom Free Jazz. Der Amerikaner Malcolm Mooney wurde 1968 zum ersten Sänger, ohne jegliche Erfahrung in anderen Bands. 1969 entstand mit dem Album Monster Movie das erste Dokument einer Mischung aus verschiedenen Einflüssen, die sich jedoch zu einem sinnvollen Ganzen entwickelten. Passagen elektronischer Verfremdung wechselten mit elektrischem Blues und komplexen Rhythmusstrukturen, roh und ursprünglich. Die Gruppe legte auch Wert darauf, den kompletten Produktionsablauf selbst in die Hand zu nehmen. In der Folgezeit wurden sie zur einflussreichsten Erscheinung der deutschen Musikszene.

Bei Guru Guru stand der Überraschungseffekt im Vordergrund. Die Musik der Formation um den Schlagzeuger Mani Neumeier, im August 1968 gegründet, lebte von ihrer Unvorhersagbarkeit, die vor allem bei den Konzerten voll zum Ausdruck kam. Der Kontakt zum Publikum war Guru Guru sehr wichtig und Material für Alben musste immer erst den Live-Test bestehen. Ihre Musik in den frühen Jahren ist schwer zu beschreiben, denn sie bewegt sich losgelöst von jeglichen Strukturvorgaben und ist getragen von Gitarrenfeedbacks und treibendem Rhythmus: deutscher Spacerock.

Agitation Free - bereits im Sommer 1967 gegründet - griffen das musikalisch-visuelle Konzept von Pink Floyd auf, schufen durch ihre Fähigkeit zur Improvisation jedoch einen eigenen Sound. Sie spielten ab 1968 in dem angesagten Berliner Underground-Club Zodiac. Ein Höhepunkt ihrer frühen Jahre war sicherlich der Auftritt bei dem multimedialen Festival Intermedia an der Berliner Waldschule im Winter 1969, das trotz des gleichen Namens nichts mit der Heidelberger Veranstaltung gemein hatte. Dort wurde ihre Musik durch ein Arsenal an optischen Effekten ergänzt und die Gesamtwirkung dadurch verstärkt. Sie existierten für lange Zeit nur als Live-Band, das erste Album mit dem Titel Malesch erschien 1972.

Die Verbindung von Jazz und Rock, wie sie Miles Davies ab 1969 realisierte, fand auch bei deutschen Musikern Anklang und Gruppen wie Embryo, Xhol Caravan und Missus Beastly widmeten sich dieser Stilfusion. Ein besonderes Merkmal waren nicht nur die vom Jazz kommenden Improvisationen, die ja auch bei der Avantgarde vorherrschten, sondern vor allem dessen typische Instrumentierung wie Saxophon oder Vibraphon. Bei Embryo kamen später noch ethnische Einflüsse dazu. Die Musiker, die Jazzrock in Deutschland etablierten, bildeten eine eingeschworene Gemeinde und zwischen den Bands herrschte ein reger Besetzungsaustausch.

Die deutsche Sprache in den Rock zu bringen, war das Anliegen von Ihre Kinder, die Jonas Porst und Sonny Hennig Ende 1968 gründeten. „Wir können von der Umwelt kein Verständnis für uns und unsere Probleme erwarten, wenn wir sie in einer fremden Sprache anreden“, kommentierte Porst. Im Unterschied zum deutschsprachigen Rock 'n' Roll und Beat sowie dem Schlager, setzten sich Ihre Kinder das Ziel, gesellschaftskritische Texte mit progressiver Musik zu verbinden, was in dieser Form etwas Neues darstellte. Das Bewusstsein der politischen Unruhe in ihrem Land äußerten Gruppen wie Checkpoint Charlie und Floh de Cologne. Sie entsprangen der studentischen Protestbewegung und folglich präsentierten sie aggressiven Rock mit agitatorischen Texten

in Deutsch, wobei die Musik oft nur Vehikel für die Aussage blieb.

Der Synthesizer wurde am Ende des Jahrzehnts zum festen Instrument in der deutschen Musikszene. Tangerine Dream, die anfänglich psychedelischen Rock spielten, und Popol Vuh entdeckten die klangtechnische Vielfalt, die mit Hilfe der Elektronik erzeugt werden konnte. Die ersten Experimente in diese Richtung wiesen noch eine Verwandtschaft zum Rock auf, aber im weiteren Prozess entfernten sich die Gruppen immer mehr in ihre sphärischen Konstrukte. Edgar Froese, der Gründer von Tangerine Dream, prägte schließlich den Genrebegriff „Kosmische Musik“, ein deutsches Phänomen.

Die deutsche Rockszene um 1969 besticht durch ihre Vielfältigkeit und ihren Mut zur Innovation. Tatsächlich sammelte sich ein kreatives Potential, das im Verlauf der siebziger Jahre noch ansteigen sollte. Rock aus Deutschland konnte ohne weiteres der übermächtigen britischen und amerikanischen Konkurrenz das Wasser reichen. Selbst nach 35 Jahren gibt es noch Bands wie The Electric Family oder Zeitloop, die an die Pionierleistungen der ersten Stunde anknüpfen.

THE GERMAN INVASION

British One Got Better Press, But the Teutonic Influence Endures
by Mark Jenkins, Washington Post 1996

The Beatles are back on the charts again, but to the international pop music market it's almost as if they never went away: The Anglo-American alliance that began its dominance with "I Want to Hold Your Hand" is as secure as ever. Countries as diverse as India, Japan and Argentina have developed their own pop stars, but few have proved exportable. Globally, the history of popular music during the last 25 years is an account of just three nations: the United States, the United Kingdom and, well, Germany.

If judged strictly on Billboard chart position, of course, the latter wouldn't make the list. The occasional Teutonic commercial success – Nena's chirpy 1984 hit, "99 Luftballons," say – is just the sort of forgettable fluke that proves that Germany (like such occasional hit-makers as Sweden or Brazil) is not a serious contender. Indeed, of the '70s-vintage German bands that are (once again) being discovered, only Kraftwerk ever entered the American Top 40: An edited version of the 22-minute "Autobahn" made it all the way to No. 25 in 1975. Yet Capitol, the same label that's put the Beatles' leftovers in play, has also recently reissued such Kraftwerk albums as "Trans-Europe Express" and "The Man Machine."

Even less known in the United States is Can, perhaps the best of the spacey, early '70s German ensembles that combined elements from avant-garde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen and the Velvet Underground with jazz, funk, dub and other influences. This style is often called "Krautrock," after a song from 1973's "Faust IV," the final album by Faust, another German group of the period.

Though discs by Faust and such other contemporaries as Neu! are hard to find, Can's catalogue is again available through an alliance between Spoon, a French label, and Mute, an English one with American distribution. Spoon/Mute began reissuing the Cologne jam band's albums in 1989, although they didn't become widely available in the United States until recently. Its latest projects are "Can: Anthology 25 Years," a two-CD set, and "Cannibalism 3," the third sampler of solo work by the former band members.

Though Can recorded for a decade, its best albums – "Ege Bamyasi," "Future Days" and "Soon Over Babaluma" – were made between 1972 and 1974. Kraftwerk hit its stride soon after, with "Autobahn" (1974), "Radio Activity" (1975), "Trans-Europe Express" (1977) and "The Man Machine" (1978). This period also produced Berlin's Tangerine Dream, whose burlings presaged much of contemporary "ambient" music – "They sound like silt seeping on the ocean floor," wrote Lester Bangs, not altogether unadmirably, in 1977 – and synth-based movie soundtracks. (The group has composed a number of the latter itself.) Around the same time, Munich became a disco powerhouse with the success of Silver Convention ("Fly, Robin, Fly") and especially Giorgio Moroder, who produced a dozen Top 40 (and dance-floor) hits for American singer Donna Summer.

Because Moroder's music was once ubiquitous and soon faded, his reputation is in decline. His artier contemporaries, however, have never been more prized. "Kraftwerk invented the pristine, precise, surface-oriented pop phuture we now inhabit," argues British rock critic Simon Reynolds, one of the most vehement advocates of the position that rock-and-roll is old-fashioned and space-rock is cutting-edge. (However valid this argument may be aesthetically, it's not exactly historical:

Leon Theremin's pioneering synthesizer is a contemporary of the electric guitar.)

Proponents of Kraftwerk and its Teutonic peers have long claimed that theirs is the music of the future (or "phuture"). The suit-and-tie scientist look cultivated by Kraftwerk founders Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider emphasizes their distance from messy, human rock-and-roll, and even the Düsseldorf band's advocates find it difficult to write about them without mentioning such German inventions as the V2 rocket and methamphetamine. "In the music of Kraftwerk, and bands like them present and to come," exulted Bangs in 1975, "the machines not merely overpower and play the human beings but absorb them, until the scientist and his technology, having developed a higher consciousness of its own, are one and the same."

It may not have furthered a higher consciousness, but by the late '70s Krautrock had become a significant resource for experimental rockers (mostly British) dissatisfied with the relatively modest damage done by punk to traditional rock. The first big-time Brits to make the pilgrimage to Berlin were David Bowie and Brian Eno, who made two Kraftwerk-smitten albums, "Low" and "Heroes," there in 1977. Public Image Ltd., the group founded by John Lydon after he abandoned the Sex Pistols and his Johnny Rotten moniker, drew heavily from Can, especially for its "Second Edition" album. (After departing Public Image, bassist Jah Wobble made two EPs with Can's Holger Czukay, one enlisting U2 guitarist the Edge, the other Can drummer Jaki Liebeck.) "I Am Damo Suzuki," proclaimed a song on British post-punk band the Fall's 1985 album, "This Nation's Saving Grace," in honor of Can's Japanese sometime singer, Kenjo "Damo" Suzuki.

Krautrock also influenced such British post-punk synth bands as Cabaret Voltaire, Prag Vec, Throbbing Gristle and (early) Human League. Within a few years, a new generation of bands had crafted a commercial version of these groups' synth-based sound. Depeche Mode, while retaining some of its English pop sensibility, recorded in Berlin and cultivated a Weimar graphic style; so did Nitzer Ebb, which actually tried to pass as German by designating its music "Nitzerebbprodukt." (The Chelmsford return address gave the band away, though.)

Kraftwerk's albums became less frequent, its influence grew. Perhaps the crucial event was hip-hop innovator Afrika Bambaataa's 1982 single, "Planet Rock," which borrowed its "perfect beat" from "Trans-Europe Express." This Bronx/Düsseldorf synthesis was "the start of hip-hop," insists British pop-music historian Jon Savage, and it's true that early hip-hop and break-dancing was frequently based on mechanical beats derived, directly or indirectly, from Kraftwerk. Though heavy metal, jazz and many other influences were eventually incorporated, hip-hop's early pulse was often the robotic beat of the man-machines. (Locally, Trouble Funk's "Trouble Funk Express" adapted the techno-pulse of "Trans-Europe Express" to go-go's looser swing.) [I remember seeing an early 1980's issue of England's music tabloid NME (NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS) which placed at the top of its Top Ten Hip-Hop list Moroder's 15 minute- plus masterpiece, "Evolution," which was recorded and released in 1978, at his peak. This is indeed Moroder's best-ever achievement, as far as *I'm* concerned, and I've been a Moroder fan since 1977, ever since he produced Donna Summer's "I Feel Love" and Munich Machine's "Get on the Funk Train" (*another* 15 minute-plus bonanza). It's really a pity that critics continue to rant about Kraftwerk, Faust, Can, and Neu! to the detriment of Tangerine Dream, Klaus Shulze and Giorgio Moroder. Moroder is much more responsible for Eurodisco and Hi Energy than Kraftwerk ever was. It is Moroder who is the father of the Pet Shop Boys and Erasure, not Kraftwerk. – Steven Feldman]

Reportedly overwhelmed by bringing their technique and sound into the digital age, Kraftwerk hasn't released an album of new material since 1986's "Electric Cafe." The band's most recent release, 1991's "The Mix," remodeled such tracks as "Computer Love" to acknowledge the harsher, harder beats of such Germanic '80s and '90s successors as Einstürzende Neubauten, Deutsche Amerikanische Freundschaft and Die Krupps. (Recently, Tangerine Dream also issued an album of its standards remixed for the more aggressive demands of today's dance floors.)

If Kraftwerk's influence has become as universal (albeit less acknowledged) as that of the Beatles, groups like Can are again the darlings of the underground. Virtually all the acts on London's trendy Too Pure label – Stereolab, Th' Faith Healers, Laika, Moonshake, Pram, Long Fin Killie, Mouse on Mars – are indebted to Can. (Most of the Too Pure bands are British, although Mouse on Mars has a Cologne return address and Stereolab's French singer, Laetitia Sadier, gives the band a continental aspect.) Such post-punk veterans as Sonic Youth and Julian Cope, who wore a Neu! T-shirt when he performed at the Black Cat in November, have taken up the cause as well.

Although Can's music is sometimes cosmic in a '70s mode that has failed to return to fashion, it augurs many of the most celebrated '90s bands that favor groove and atmosphere over melody and lyrics. This is the music that Simon Reynolds, while conceding its 25-year-old inspiration, has unconvincingly dubbed "post-rock." "Basically, when it comes to psychedelic dance music," opines Reynolds of Can, "those crafty Krauts wrote the book."

Those advocating post-rock's inevitable triumph tend not to be thrilled with the pop music that's actually selling these days: grunge, Brit-pop, Hootie and the Blowfish. Indeed, one of things that commends Kraftwerk, Can and their followers to rock sophisticates – their emotionlessness – may be just what undermines them in the Anglo- American market.

"We are showroom dummies," sang Kraftwerk robotically, and later devised a live performance in which the band members were impersonated by automatons. On many of its best-known songs – "Autobahn," "Trans- Europe Express," "Tour De France" – Kraftwerk tried to embody not human exhilaration but the sensation of speed itself. Hütter, Schneider and company aspired to be "man-machines," creatures that wouldn't want to hold your hand – and indeed might not even have any hands.

Can's chilliness was less programmatic, but this band too eschewed popular music's customary emotional concerns. Frequently chanted and submerged in the mix, its multi-lingual vocals were simply another sonic element, texture rather than thought. Whatever connection Can makes with the listener is a matter of sound, not sense.

Perhaps that's why Krautrock remains a storehouse to be plundered by pop's cognoscenti rather than – as Depeche Mode's knockoff once proclaimed itself – "Music for the Masses." Rock's history can't be written without Germany, but more people are interested in scraps of music from the Beatles' Hamburg days than with the world-altering sounds Kraftwerk and Can fashioned nearby. Krautrock's influence is vast, but few CD buyers are ready for the day when the machines play the human beings.

KRAUTROCK

by Chris Parkin

Krautrock - the prog-jazz sound of '70s Germany - is now the most influential music in Britain. Time Out tells the story of an unlikely cultural coup Krautrock

'When the Stereophonics start mentioning Krautrock, you know something's happening,' says Rene Renner, head of the Krautrock-obsessed Gronland label. It's certainly a leap of logic to associate such a meat-and-potatoes outfit with one of rock's most daring subcultures. But listen to their 'Language. Sex. Violence. Other?' from last year and the driving influence of Neu! is clear. And Kelly Jones isn't the only one. Coldplay love Kraftwerk; Placebo and the Chili Peppers are huge fans of Neu! and Quentin Tarantino used the music for 'Kill Bill'.

Meanwhile, fashionably-trousered acts like LCD Soundsystem and MSTRKRFT from Canada push the sound onto the dancefloor. Something really is happening. Krautrock is a nebulous term, lassoing together a flock of diverse German music from the early to mid-'70s: Neu!'s glacial, motorik grooves; Cluster's ethereal space rock; Tangerine Dream's pulsing soundscapes; avant-gardists Faust; Can's baggy space-funk; Amon Düül's crazed acid rock. But as Michael Rother, a pioneer of the 'scene' with Neu! and Harmonia, says: 'You learn to live with it because everyone has agreed that it's the expression for the music that came out of Germany in the '70s. It's okay as long as people are willing to see the differences, because we all tried very hard to be individual.'

Once deemed derogatory, it's now the tag for a much-revered period of music - one that's been sourced immer weider. Brian Eno learned his electronic chops from Cluster and passed his expertise on to David Bowie. Mark E Smith and John Lydon are huge fans. Suicide, Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret Voltaire all carried the baton, making experimental, futuristic pop. And let's not forget Kraftwerk's impact on techno and electro. Krautrock swept through the late '80s, influencing 4AD bands, shoegazers and Spiritu-alized's 'Lazer Guided Melodies'. But it was the 1995 publication of Julian Cope's 'Krautrocksampler' (now out of print) that kick-started the recent reappraisal.

'His book made a huge impact,' says Renner. 'For the first time all of the information was in one place - a decent history of what happened, who's been inspired by it and what records to buy. At the time we barely knew the depth of it but we've caught up and it's interesting to see how many young bands are being inspired.'

What followed were Moog-driven outfits like Stereolab, Broadcast, Add N To (X), Plaid and, more recently, a slew of reissues. The most important are Can's early albums (notably 'Tago Mago' and 'Ege Bamyasi') and 'Neu! 75'. Gronland asked Bowie and Eno to write liner notes for these (though they didn't get round to it) and Radiohead got in touch to say how inspired they'd been. 'It helped us find a way to today's music fans,' says Renner. It's easier for today's music fans to understand the rhythmically repetitive Krautrock oeuvre after years of exposure to dance music - something Krautrock influenced in the first place. This acceptance has meant that the old guys are back in business. Faust played a number of London shows last year, Tangerine Dream performed 'Phaedra' here in June 2005 and 72-year-old Hans-Joachim Roedelius (who formed Cluster) has released a retrospective on Grönland. He reckons the acknowledgement of Krautrock was inevitable.

'Because it's not mainstream and has never had the help of major labels, it's taken a little longer

to bleed through.’ he says. ‘If record companies had pushed my music I’m sure we would have sold much more because the music isn’t that difficult.’

Neu!’s Michael Rother, an early member of Kraftwerk, is enjoying new-found glory too. On Thursday he plays the ICA with his friend Dieter Moebius (of Cluster fame). It follows collaborations with Red Hot Chili Peppers’ John Frusciante (‘he’s a magician on the guitar’, says Rother) and his recent appearances onstage with Secret Machines. ‘It really made me think about listening to young bands and trying to move forward again,’ says Rother.

There’s plenty of Krautrock-inspired newbies too. Emperor Machine (check out 2004 album ‘Aimee Tallulah Is Hypnotised’) tie the machine-music of Neu! to the loose-limbed appeal of Can. Elsewhere, Queens Of The Stone Age have cited Rother as a major influence and London’s The Early Years craft euphoric psych rock. In August, Steve Webster (aka The Black Neon) will release a debut album (‘Arts And Crafts’) displaying his own love of the era’s music.

‘Krautrock still sounds like nothing else,’ says Webster. ‘Full of ideas and inspiration, it links up with so much other music. “Musik Von Harmonia” [by Harmonia] sounds like Aphex Twin with elements of Neu! and ‘80s electro pop. And it came out in 1974!’

While these artists replicate the sound, the maverick spirit of Krautrock - communal living, a rejection of conventional pop songs, Faust playing hydraulic drills - exists elsewhere. Faust themselves recorded an album with experimental hip hop outfit Dälek in 2004 (‘Derbe Respect, Alder’) and the likes of Liars, The Boredoms, Animal Collective, Black Dice, Lightning Bolt and They Came From The Stars I Saw Them are pushing the boundaries in a way that would please the old guard.

‘It’s important to feel free to change your music,’ says Rother. ‘I would love to sell a lot of albums but I know you lose freedom once you’re on the pop treadmill. At one point, Kraftwerk decided to stand still and were afraid of change. I thought that was a pity.’ To hear these more experimental acts, go to London’s Kosmische Club. They’ve been attracting ‘18-year-olds bored with the Kaiser Chiefs to 60-year-old druids’ for ten years and celebrate their birthday at the Corsica Studios on Friday. One of the organisers, Mark Pilkington, suggests some more ‘out-there’ acts to check out.

‘Six Organs Of Admittance’s new album is very Popol Vuh,’ he says. ‘There’s more than a hint of Amon Düül in Sunburned Hand Of Man. And Circle, from Finland! One of their gigs consisted of a single, 90-minute riff that never once got boring.’

So, whether you opt for pop or weirdy underground rock, you’ll hear the growing influence of Krautrock. And don’t be afraid. Gone are the days when it was just music for nerds. As Webster says: ‘I never want to keep it a secret. I want to play it to everyone. And when I do they’re always, always blown away by it.’

ROCK IN DEUTSCHLAND - GERHARD AUGUSTIN INTERVIEW

by Archie Patterson, Year Unkn own, <http://www.eurock.com>

Throughout the history of music, as well as other forms of art, entertainment and business, there have always been celebrities. Behind the scenes are the managers who sometimes get attention as well (for better, and for worse). Occasionally there are those who served as a catalyst for something bigger. Whether a cultural shift, changes in musical style, or discovery of groundbreaking artists or bands, it's not uncommon for them to get little attention or recognition. Often their visionary ideas and groundwork are overlooked or written out of the public domain.

*One such music lover is Gerhard Augustin. At a time in German culture when English was by and large an alien language, and "schlager" (German folk/pop music) was the norm, Gerhard began to groove to a different beat as a DJ in Bremen. As co-founder of the famous TV show *The Beat Club*, and A&R man who engineered the signing of Amon Düül 2, Popol Vuh and Can to Liberty/United Artist Records in 1969-'70, he helped lay the foundation for a cultural shift and musical revolution in Germany. He possessed the open mind, love of music and the business skills to act as a bridge between the underground and establishment. In effect he was the godfather of Krautrock, which still resonates musically in the world of pop music influencing many bands today.*

His story is fascinating and it's past time for it to be told. I think you'll find the following interview, taken from a long video segment he did for EUROCK, offers a fascinating glimpse into the past and gives long overdue credit to one of Europe's literally unsung musical pioneers. s

Q: Tell me, in the beginning how did you get German TV to allow you to produce "The Beat Club" music program? What year was the first program was broadcast?

In 1963 I became the first German DJ in Bremen. There was a restaurant called The Gypsy Cellar that sometimes had live music in their basement. As I knew the owners I recommended to them that they turn it into a discothèque for dancing and they agreed. So we put in 2 turntables and it became one of the first youth clubs at that time - called The Twen Club.

I had just come back to Germany after Kennedy was shot as I had been from living a while in the USA. I had seen Shindig there and Top of the Pops in England so around 1966 I started trying to promote doing a German version of those programs that turned into The Beat Club. It was produced by radio Bremen, directed by Michael Leckebusch and hosted by Uschi Nerke and myself. The first show was broadcast Sept. 23, 1966 on a Saturday afternoon at 4 PM.

Immediately reactions came in, letters, calls, etc. People from the older generation (old Nazi's) hated it, young kids loved it and said things like "keep it going" and so on. It caused a real reaction between the generations.

Q: It became a sensation on the pop scene and helped start some of the most famous pop groups on their road to fame and fortune. Who was your favorite English pop group that appeared on the show?

My favorite band in those days was The Who. We had become friends earlier when I had worked

in England and our friendship continues today. I had met their manager, Kit Lambert, who gave me an acetate copy of their first single "Can't Explain" b/w "Bald Headed Woman". They were trying to get a label for it in the early days. I also liked very much The Kinks and the Stones who I met while in London around 1962. Everyone hung out at a pub near the Marquee Club back then.

Q: I've seen tapes of many of the English stars that appeared on the program. But at one point you started to feature also the newly emerging bands from the German space rock scene. How in the world did you get mainstream German TV station executives to allow that?

The whole Beat Club thing was a result of the relationship I had with Mike Leckebusch over the years. When we created the show together we became great friends. However, slowly over time, he wanted to take more credit for the show and later some English managers recommended he should use a British DJ instead of me so the show might be of more interest to the English market. Larry Page and Robert Wace were the main ones behind this, they were part of a sort of 1960's UK music mafia of old business types who wanted to control pop music in Britain. Eventually they gave Mike some money to buy a big house, a Jaguar and all those things, so of course I was phased out and he went on to gain fame and fortune himself. It's an old story. He became very corrupt and there was lots of payola going on with the show back then.

The English pop stars were often on the show because their songs were in the charts in Germany. Soon the record companies started helping with this as they realized that even though TV production was very primitive in those days - black and white, etc., they saw it could influence sales greatly.

As for getting the more experimental bands on the show, I think Mike always had a bad conscience about pushing me out of The Beat Club. He knew I was the originator of the idea for the show and developed it after the other shows I'd seen on my trips overseas. So as a result of this, every time I came up with a new German progressive or experimental act I would bring it to him for exposure. I got groups like Amon Düül 2 and Popol Vuh on the show, but it took a lot of convincing. In the end because of his guilt he would put them on as sort of a favor to help me out.

Q: Around the same time you did The Beat Club I believe you also were head of A&R at Liberty/UA Records and involved in production of the first Amon Düül 2 and Popol Vuh records (around 1969-1970). Again I ask, how was it during that time that you were able to get those records made by a mainstream label? It must have seemed strange to do all this weird music and have a large corporation subsidize it?

Well, not quite so. When I left The Beat Club, I went to America and lived in San Francisco. There I discovered bands like Santana and CCR for the German market. I also met Bill Graham and we became good friends. He introduced me to the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver, Sly & the Family Stone, Ike and Tina Turner, Tom Donahue (the original FM DJ playing underground music) and Ralph Gleason who was one of the first journalists to write about the new underground music in the BAY area.. That was around 1968-'69. I was very fortunate to be at the right place, at the right time for all that was happening in SF then.

While I lived in SF I worked at KQED TV and was awarded a scholarship and got his diploma in Mass Communications at Stanford University.. After graduation, I got a job in Los Angeles with United Artist Records and learned all about how the company worked. They then sent me to Germany to work for the company there. When I got over there they wanted to sign some domestic German bands to their roster. Sigi Loch, head of the famous Star Club record label, started a German flagship label for UA/Liberty Records, to be distributed at home and abroad. I got AD 2, Popol Vuh and Can signed to contracts with them. The record company knew little about that type of music of course, so it was sometimes a rather strange situation as you might imagine.

Q: While doing The Beat Club and promoting AD 2 and Popol Vuh did you do the actual mu-

sic/video production, or work have help from others like Olaf Kübler, etc?

I was only involved in financing and management of the video production. We did one for “All the Years Round” by AD 2. That was the first music video production in Germany. We paid a director and video company to do the filming. It was played, but there were very few media outlets for that type of thing in those days. We did several other videos as well, but that was the early days of TV and the experimental bands weren’t really attractive to the mainstream media.

Q: As for Amon Düül 2, I believe they actually started as a political collective and the main members broke off to form a specific music group?

Amon Düül did begin as a political commune in Berlin. It was formed by the coming together of politicians from Berlin like Rainer Langhans and Uschi Obermaier (who became a famous model later), with musicians from Munich - Chris Karrer, Peter and Ulrich Leopold and Falk Rogner. Renate was not involved as she was living in England then working as an au pair. After a while there was a split into AD 1 (the political people), who recorded one big party/session before they descended into chaos. That resulted in several records having nothing to do with the real AD 2. Amon Düül 2 (the musical side) moved back to Munich where the group was joined by John Weinzierl and Dave Anderson (who came over from England). The first album of AD 2 - PHALLUS DEI - was recorded in two days at Trixie Studios in Munich. It was the first space rock album and caused a sensation on the young scene.

Lothar Meid in the beginning was playing with Embryo, before he joined AD 2 later. He also played with Olaf Kübler (who was a jazz saxophonist). They played jazz and soul music on Sunday afternoons in a couple clubs around 1968-'69. Olaf also produced and published the AD 2, and many other albums. He was a real business Mafiosi type involved in the music business.

Q: What was the scene like back then? Did those records sell large numbers - for example do you remember how many copies YETI and TANZ DER LEMMINGE & AFFENSTUNDE sold?

For the new underground groups without a hit single it was very hard. Some of the old Nazis were still in control of the media so they would never give exposure to new experimental rock music. Society in Germany was just about to start changing, so a few dared to promote this new music and ideas, but rock and roll was new to Germany. Here that sort of thing basically started 10 years later than in the USA. Most people still listened to Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Johnny Mathias and Peggy Lee. For the most part, English was not spoken much at all. Beat Music started to change this around 1965. Later a lot of German bands started to copy the English bands, covering their songs, and playing on The Beat Club as the most famous English bands became too big and expensive. Also payola started playing a large part in the music scene and it all started to change in many ways.

Q: During the heyday of the space rock scene in Germany was that type of music a significant market and did the albums produced by all those bands sell a great deal? Or perhaps has the myth always been bigger than the reality?

Sales of these albums were actually very low. AD 2 was the first to start selling with PHALLUS DEI. Then Can had their song “Spoon” on a German TV crime show called “The Knife”. That caused it to hit the charts and ultimately it went silver, which in Germany meant selling 250,000 copies. Later their album, EGE BAMYASI, with that song on it started selling as well. So Can made good money actually.

Over time AD 2 sold maybe 60,000 copies of PHALLUS DEI, their other albums sold between 20,000 - 50,000 worldwide sales over the years. They still sell today reissued on CD. AD 2 never had a hit single, though we tried with “Archangels Thunderbird”, and a couple others, so their

sales were smaller.

Q: In the last few years it seems there has been renewed interest in some of the original German bands. AD 2 reformed and did concerts in Japan and England. Is the band still together now? Who are the current members?

There was actually some confusion surrounding the name and music of Amon Düül 2 as some albums came out in England that were not really connected to the band. So there was a court case in Germany where the members of AD 2 were actually certified. They are - Renate Knaup-Krötenschwanz, Chris Karrer, Peter Leopold, Lothar Meid, Falk Rogner and John Weinzierl. A couple years back some of them reformed and we did some recording and Live shows in Japan and the UK. But for something more permanent the chemical formula was not good. . .

Q: What about Florian Fricke, do you still have any contact or work with him?

Florian Fricke was also from Munich. On the first Popol Vuh album, AFFENSTUNDE, he used the first Moog synthesizer in Germany. Along with Eberhard Schoener they pioneered the use of synthesizer in Germany. Later Florian sold his Moog to Klaus Schulze who became one of the leading electronic musicians in Germany even up to today.

Florian had perhaps more success than AD 2 because I arranged to have his music used in 5 of Werner Herzog's films, that helped them get more International exposure and better sales. In fact, right now one of his songs, originally in AGUIRRE, is being used in a successful American film that won a prize at the Cannes Film Festival; it's called BEFORE NIGHT FALLS. I produced most of the albums by Popol Vuh and I'm also the godfather of Florian's son, Johannes, who's now living in NYC. Florian himself is a little spaced out right now. . .

Q: What is your main area of work these days? You have a company called Gammarock Productions. Do you still do video production? How about consulting for record labels?

Gammarock is my company formed in 1976 in LA with Patrick Gammon (who died in 1996). Now I handle all the music publishing, as well as the video and music production for the Gammarock material, which includes AD 2, Popol Vuh and many more mainstream artists. We place artists with labels and get the music into films, etc.

I also now do a public radio show here in Bremen again. I've always loved being a DJ and still do today.

Q: After all these years what is the most memorable thing that music has brought into your life? A special concert, album or travel to some far away place? Could you imagine a life with no music in it?

No, I don't want to imagine any life without music. Music has always been the most important thing for me - more important than sex, love or relationships. Music is essential to my life whether I sing it, play it, hear it, work with it, or make money with it. In my opinion as a publisher, producer, musician, artist and music lover, in the movies, music is more important than the actual pictures. It makes the film come alive. I'm what you call a music freak. I've survived with music, being a DJ, doing shows, and writing 8 books about different artists along with anthologies on pop, rock and beat music.

Some of the most memorable events in my life are associated with music. I traveled with Jimi Hendrix that last 3 weeks of his life. He was a very beautiful person and musical genius. Also with the Rolling Stones I had many breakfasts, trips, concerts, shows. . . I met John Lennon at the house of Jann Wenner (of Rolling Stone) in NYC, around the time of the recording and release of IMAGINE. . . I toured around the world with Ike and Tina Turner - Australia, Japan, Africa, at the height of their career and during their times of trouble and breakup.

Truly I cannot imagine a life without music. I don't want to even think about a life without music. I've met so many musicians, actors and great people; music has been a most wonderful life for me.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIAN COPE

by Denise Sullivan

“Between thought and expression lies a lifetime”–Lou Reed
“That’s bullshit.”–Julian Cope

Julian Cope was barely 20 years old in 1976—a stone freak with a passion for the music of ’60s holdovers like the Doors and Love and a sophisticated ear for Krautrockers Can and Faust— but by the end of that year, he’d gotten turned on to the Modern Lovers, Patti Smith and Television. Like so many of his generation, “Once, I heard this stuff, there was no going back,” he says. So, inspired by the D.I.Y. spirit that had infested London, he started his own band which ultimately became the Teardrop Explodes.

As the neo-psychedelic band’s frontman from 1978-1983, Cope belonged to a group of Northern mavericks who set off the second musical revolution to come straight outta Liverpool within twenty years. With his dusky voice and unpredictable behavior, he quickly established himself as a strong-willed, charismatic performer with an apocalyptic vision. But after only two studio albums, the Teardrops exploded. Ten years later and with the beginnings of a solo career already behind him, Cope, recounted those dizzying years in his 1994 memoir, *Head-On*. By that time, he’d already released a load of confusing solo albums, including *World Shut Your Mouth* and most notably *Fried*. Though still dabbling in neo-psychedelic sounds as a solo artist, Cope himself was drowning in hallucinogens and his music and image reflected his experimentation—for better and sometimes, worse. On the album cover for *Fried*, he appeared to be crawling, naked, shielded only by a tortoise shell. The image created a feeding frenzy in the British press and solidified his reputation as that of King Loony. Even his record company began to have their doubts about him, though they allowed him to persevere with less than sales-record-breaking recordings like *St. Julian* and *My Nation Underground*. And oddly, perhaps to spite them, he independently released experimental/improvisational home recordings like the superb but difficult to track-down *Droolian* and *Skellington*, which further fueled his mythology.

In 1991, he reorganized for *Peggy Suicide*, his first in a three part series of albums devoted to endangered Mother Earth. It was around the time of recording the second, *Jehovahkill* in 1992, that he says he accepted his purpose on earth as a Gnostic, truth seeker, storyteller and modern-day mystic. In 1994, vanguard label American Recordings picked up *Autogeddon*; the final album in the eco-terror trilogy; *20 Mothers*, a celebration of all things familial, quickly followed. The records were the death knell (or a God-send) to Cope’s 20th Century career in the major label recording arena, though ironically, they include some of the high points in an extensive catalog of excess—proven to be key to his musical and personal development.

In 1996, the techno and psych-driven album, *Interpreter*, was a culmination of Cope’s introspection and explorations of ancient spirituality, mysticism and sacred sites. The erratic behavior and bitterness he purged in his autobiography now behind him, for part two of his life story, *Repossessed* (published in 1999), he took a more subdued (though by no means entirely sane) view of his life and career. Inspired by the writings of Lester Bangs and John Sinclair and the recordings of Sly Stone and Burton Cummings (!) Cope retraced his trip to the edge of madness and back again.

When I spoke to Cope in 1995, he was in rehearsals for an upcoming American tour.

You haven't been to California in a really long time.

I'm not coming to San Francisco. I'm living by the Arthurian principle which means that I have to avoid fault lines.

Is that really true?

Yes! I'm affected by cosmic effervescences.

But you say in your notes on 20 Mothers that you were going to put the millennium psychoses aside, that it's going to be an easy ride...

I'm trying to put it aside as much in my songs as I can, but unfortunately it still manifests itself in my everyday life. Because I'm livin' on the fumes of the mother earth at the moment, it's hard going to America and it's hard going to London. I'm not being a prima donna. I'm going to attempt to do as much as I can. The whole point of the poet or the artist or whatever you want to call him is that he has a duty to get his message to people. So I know that I have to come and say these things.

The thing that strikes me about your book Krautrock sampler, is that you are the ultimate fan, yet, I never really heard the influence in your work till recently. Were there subtle traces of it in your music before?

Yeah, I think there's always been traces of it. The Krautrock influence was so fundamental to the Northern post-punk thing. It's extremely prevalent in the Teardrops. You wouldn't really hear it because it was so fundamental to the Teardrops sound that you would think that it was just our sound. Everything was very Krautrock influenced in attitude, but not a lot musically, until I went solo. The difference is, is that in the old days, if you consider my trip as a diagram, it was a narrow, upwards facing arrow going at about 45 miles per hour. Now I'd say the same arrow is about two foot wider so it's really fat, but it's going at five miles per hour. And that's the difference. Now I have a voice that covers more of the spectrum. In Britain I recently did Top of the Pops a couple of times and I wore a Neu! t-shirt. That was my way of saying, 'I'm going out to twenty million people and they're all going to know about Krautrock.'

I suppose I hear the Krautrock influence in the darker side of the Teardrop Explodes, but then I never thought of the Teardrops as a very dark band.

No! We were quite the opposite. I think we were an offending light band. I'll tell you what, the story of Krautrock is a really spiritual one. Imagine these people as young kids, sort of 16 and onwards, suddenly coming to psychedelic music via America and Britain, six months late. But at the same time, they were just coming to terms with the fact that all these atrocities had been performed on their land by their parents and their parents friends. However touched by the world you are, multiply that by how you would feel if just down the road, fifty thousand people were killed. To keep people in Berlin, because everyone was leaving, the West German government started to give people grants to stay. So all the freaks stayed there and spent their money on synthesizers and drugs and taking acid. The weirdest music in the whole of the world was made in the '60s and early '70s, 96 miles inside the Eastern Bloc by Western musicians. It was really weird.

I see why it was worth documenting.

I thought it was up to me to write the book because I have the time to do it and I'm capable of doing it. It's shadowy and it shouldn't be shadowy. Krautrock is symbolic of the underground and

the occult and everything that is underneath and it's my job to bring it out to people.

So for now, recorded music and your books are the way you get your message out there, rather than touring?

Yeah, which is fair enough.

You say the way you were raised helped you deal with contradictions in life from a very young age. Is that how you reconcile releasing your songs about vegetarianism, green politics, preserving sacred sites and love of family through notoriously sleazy music business channels?

Oh, completely. I think what I always thought was that as I got older it would become easier. But what I found is that whatever state it gets to, it's never easy for me because however easy it is, I put barriers in the way. When Mahatma Gandhi came to Britain in 1947 in the worst winter of the '40s wearing a sari, he said later that he arrived like that because he knew the British were so pompous and so worried about decorum that they'd have to get Mr. Gandhi indoors and seen to quickly, even though he was a real spanner in the British works. And that's the way that I have to be seen. That's why I dress bizarrely. Everything that I say is true, and I don't mean that everybody has to believe it. But I feel that it has to look that bizarre as well because that's the way that I'm being told [to dress]. It's not easy for me to walk down the street because I look too ridiculous, but that's obviously the way that it's meant to be. People like Sly Stone always came over in a big family way and I want to be the white version. I want to look as ridiculous as those black guys got and I want to look for a bit of that grace. If I have to become a Stardust Cowboy to be that, then I'm gonna be. It's like George Clinton in the early '70s. He was full of incredible, stellar wisdom and he imparted it through Funkadelic. That's why I quote him all the time now on my records and on my adverts. The reason I do that is that true wisdom comes from the most unlikely places. See what it is, I've kind of fallen in love with the world and the world radiates so much light at me and I look at everybody and go 'fuckin' hell you just look amazin' and I fall so much in love with that life and it reflects on me.

The songs on this album seem to be specifically about the people and things that make you feel that way: "Wheelbarrow Man" is about sibling love, "Try Try Try" about motherly love, "Queen/Mother" about Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love. That wasn't happening on your other records quite as intentionally, was it?

I always use a different voice. Sometimes the voice speaks to one person and sometimes it speaks to a lot. Even when the songs are specific, as soon as you put them out into public domain, they lose their specifics. I shoot stars out to everybody that I know and everybody that I don't know. When I put out a record or a book now, I just hope that I'm going to make those connections and I do.

And the strange phenomenon you're into, the stone circles and sacred landscapes you speak about in interviews and fan club correspondence—it's just as important to get those ideas across ?

Yeah, because it's part of the whole. Everything in my trip is a holistic thing. Some of it's very left-field and some of it is right in the center. I believe that we formerly had collective magic that we used in a community way. I think that the collective magic in 3000 B.C. in Britain made large stone circles. The stones were so big no one can even imagine it now as magic—because it was a communal effort. But at the same time, we are in the middle of a very high technological magic which we don't even accept. If archaeologists, using the kind of ideas they use now in 5000 years discover car culture, they really won't believe that we could have driven at 80 miles per hour on the motorway with very few collisions. If you think about that in a rationalist way, it doesn't really make sense. But we think that it can't be magic because we can do it. That's what I term the whole Fordism, the car culture. So we still have that collective magic, but we've applied it to technological pursuits and we fall victim to thinking in a technological way so we can't get back

to our magical selves. So that's my job, to let people know about it.

Sometimes though, people who represent outsider, underground and fringe interests end up with a loony or freak tag. How do you cope with that?

For my first 11 years in music, I served an apprenticeship to understand what it would be like when I was on the trip. I've been on this trip now for five years, but because I suffered at the hands of the press all the time with things like when I put Fried out—imagine putting Fried out in 1984 when everybody was in high couture and I was naked under a turtle shell? I'm so used to being utterly slagged just for being who I am. It makes you so strong that you no longer even react to it, you merely act. You can throw it off.

The other side of this whole discussion is that you drive a car and you obviously have a phone and fax. I'm staying in Tunbridge Wells where the new-age travelers want to live off the land, yet they are tapping into water supplies and waste disposal systems that the town's people pay for—more of those contradictions.

The thing is, that's why on 20 Mothers it says 'Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.' I think you've got to start somewhere. You have to confess to yourself, 'What am I guilty of,' and then say, 'I'm guilty of all these things that I can't get 'round.' I'm not pointing fingers at anybody, other than everybody. I'm pointing the finger at myself. I'm not like Sting saying, 'You're all wrong,' I'm saying 'We're all wrong.' Cynics will always say, 'You're not perfect, so you're not in a position to comment,' and the thing is, that is the greedhead's way of stopping people from getting anything changed. I believe that I can be ninety percent wrong but it doesn't matter because if ten percent of me or even five percent of me has got a little grain going, 'This is right,' then I've got to act on that grain. That's why I say on 'Ain't No Getting 'Round Getting 'Round,' I need to get to London and I need to get there fast but my car is a polluter and it's messing up my future and there ain't no getting 'round getting 'round.'

If you ever came to California again, you'd find a lot of people who share your beliefs—you might enjoy trading ideas with them.

I know that I would, but you'll have to solder up that fault first.

When it comes to songwriting, do you think to yourself, "Hm... I want to address this issue of the car and the role it plays in our society"..."?"

No! No! Nothing like that. It's nothing to do with me. It's a gnostic odyssey. When I say that I have vision and clarity and lyrics pass through me, I mean that. Before I recorded "Upwards of Forty-Five Degrees" off Jehovahkill, I have notes in my journal from that time where I believed that if I didn't quickly record it I was going to die—so I obviously believed that it was high knowledge. And I know that because one of the lyrics, 'To penetrate the diamond, the pituitary gland gets torn on its axis and frees,' is exactly what happened to me. It did. It's how my third eye opened. The reason I write so many songs now is that it has nothing to do with me, but it's a huge, tumultuous tidal wave of white gooey cosmic light.

And it just kind of comes out in one spurt and there's no going back and playing around with it?

Not really because I'm not the interpreter. Maybe I'm the translator, but I'm not the interpreter. Have you heard the Lou Reed lyric, 'Between thought and expression lies a lifetime'? That's bullshit. That's an intellectual truth, but intuitively it's not true. When stuff comes out of the

heavens, it comes directly through you and words describe your interpretation.

Maybe it's a stupid question, but could you ever conceive of going back to songwriting as you knew it?

That would be like saying. . .

Could you go back to eating meat?

Eating meat, or could I go back to having the TV on when I wasn't watching it. Like I can't even have the TV on when I am watching it. I can't take that amount of information anymore. I'm primed to take in information in precisely the right the amounts.

Where do you get your information in a given week?

From books, from people and from walking because I'm walking on the sacred landscape and a lot of my vision and a lot of my fuel is just through walking.

Things like films, music, other art forms. . . how do you gauge how you will take it in?

Well, with a lot of modern music, I don't even make an effort because psychically, I can't deal with records that are made in an atmosphere of hopelessness, so I usually deal with things through recommendations. I don't watch films a lot because I can't take that kind of generation of energy. But occasionally, we do watch a film. My wife watches films but I just can't take it. I mainly spend a lot of time under the stars, you know. And that's the way my information is picked up. Like I'm an aerial. Can I tell you something? Where we live is a sacred landscape. It's the central sacred ceremonial area of the Neolithic culture who inhabited the area from the top of Sweden to the Iberian Peninsula from 3000 B.C. to about 1500 B.C. And the central ceremonial area was at Avebury and we live four miles from there. In four weeks we move two miles closer. But that's why I go there and I walk everyday because it's sort of Avalon. All the great mystics have written about it and spent time there. It's a kind of Blakian landscape, and I suppose that's the reason my music and my everything sounds the way that it does now. The music is more extreme than ever, really. This last album I wanted to make a pop album, but it's still pretty wild soundin'.

You encourage your fans to stay in touch and interact with you.

Yeah! The weirdest thing about this last tour that I did in Britain was that I did three hour shows and I had a walkway so I could get right down to the front row and it was just phenomenal because there was so much physical contact. I was neckin' with women and guys all the time. The audience was moving in waves like in a very different way to any shows I've ever done in the past. It was like a real physical show and I thought, if you treat women like goddesses, they respond by acting that way. And if a woman comes up and treats you like a god, you walk taller. I just figure, something clicked on that tour where everybody felt bigger and better and I believe in it more than ever now.

I like that you're such a big champion of the underdog.

I appreciate the underdog who is a frog about to turn into a prince. And I appreciate it that everybody moves me up to the next notch. So I figure that it's absolutely my job to champion the underdog; if I don't do that then I'm full of shit.

KRAUTROCK: THE MUSIC THAT NEVER WAS

by Renate Layne, The Faust Pages, Aug 1998

Renate Layne had some strong things to say about Faust and the Faust site when she signed into the guestbook. Here she explains her reservations about so-called 'Krautrock'

Mr. Wilson,

Yes, I too made very impulsive and uncalled for remarks in the guestbook. If it is possible to do I would wish that you can just erase my commentary there, because I know how wrong it was and it would really be so awful if this will cause controversies among the people who enjoy the site. Today I took a long look at your site and I now see how good it really is. It seems that i have been having an automatic reaction to things about the German music of that time. You present good info and so many others do not. I made the mistake of believing that EVERYONE was distorting things. I am again sorry for this.

I do not really know what to say about those days. When someone had first showed to me the Julian Cope book I found it very strange that anyone would be writing about this music today. I was not quite so bothered by all of his errors at first. He is very enthusiastic and I liked that. The problem is not Julian Cope, it is the people who read his book and will not think for themselves. I myself do agree with many of the things he says. The specific info in his book is just his opinion: no one else has to agree with it. I believe that it is his telling of an overall picture that is distorted.

I think that there was no real scene back then. There did not appear to be much unity with the different groups and I think most of them had no idea of the size of the German rockscene. Julian Cope writes that all of these groups were creating a specific German music but I don't think that's what they were really trying to do. Yes, the music came out that way perhaps, but the groups thought they were sounding like the Velvet Underground and other American bands. That is what they wanted to be. And the audience, which I was one, seemed to feel the same way.

You see, the most important part of this and what is so hard to explain to people today (even to the younger Germans) was the feelings of that time in Germany. Our generation was the first one after the War and I think we all felt almost ashamed to be Germans. We did not want to be part of that culture and its traditions. The world hated Germany (but maybe not as much as we thought they did) and how would you feel being a young German and always having to feel the blame for something which you also despised?

This is, I think, the real story behind that music. We wanted to be anything but German. Rock and roll and the psychedelic experiences seemed to be, to us, the farthest thing from something German we could imagine. Our generation was called the "fatherless" generation because nobody wanted to claim their own cultural traditions. This is hard to understand, I know.

There was a feeling then among almost everybody that anything German was no good. And that is why those bands did not have much success in Germany. Can, Amon Düül II and especially Faust were much more successful in England. Most Germans didn't know these groups at all and they still do not! They thought the music was very strange and just stupid. I had many friends who loved the Velvet Underground and Hapshash and the Coloured Coat but could not believe that I would listen to any German groups. "They are just the bad copies" they would say. Those

people didn't listen. They couldn't. They only had to know that a band was German so that they would not even bother with it. And those groups felt the same way. They didn't want a "German rockscene", they wanted to be thought of like the Velvet or a British group. They all knew that in Germany nobody respected a German band.

Yes, one can look back now and see that the music does seem very German somehow. One aims to create one thing and still comes up with something else. That is how art is. But why do you think almost all of these bands sang in English? It seems very silly today that people would deny their own language to sing in one that they are not even very familiar with, does it not? You do not see that so much in German music today. I do find it extraordinary that a band like Blumfeld does such good lyrics-writing in German. None of us would have dreamed of doing that back then! If the culture had a curse, we thought, then also does the language.

I realize these things today, but I did not at the time. None of us really did. This all might sound incredible or impossible to believe but this really was the situation then.

I don't really know how one can really understand the music if she or he does not understand this context. Maybe it is better not to know this. At least the people today just hear the music for what it really is and do not bring these culture questions into it. That is what prevented the music from being accepted at the time - yet it also is what helped to create the impulse of it. Do you understand?

We had no great utopia. I think Julian Cope likes to imagine that we did. Sometimes I wish that it was really like he said, but it was not. At least this is my experience of those days. Others may remember things in a different way so don't take my story as the truth!

I did see Faust a few years ago in San Francisco. I thought that they were very good, still crazy. I also heard the Nosferatu album and I think that Faust without Jean-Hervé is not much. He is the soul of the band it seems to me. The record is not bad, but it sometimes sounds like one could be listening to anybody.

I have not a lot of nostalgia feelings of those days. I was surprised to find that there was so much interest now about this music. I am happy that the music now receives the kinds of attention which it should have gotten back then. That is good. Yet I take it personally when I read all of the lies and fantasies of people who were not there at the time. They mean well, I know! But it sometimes seems like someone is saying to you - "You! Your life that you went through did not really happen like that! Here is the new truth!" It seems that this revival brings attention to good things but it also gives the record companies excuses to release again horrible German records from then that should never have been made in the first place!

Yes, let people decide, but I would wish that they would be more objective about things and to think for themselves. There are many wonderful records from that time but a lot of bad ones also. We had no real unity. We should have.

I would tell people to think for themselves. And not what they think Julian Cope, Faust, you, me, anyone else says.

Renate Layne

Keef Roberts replied to Renate...

I think Renate is missing quite a bit of what Faust seems to be about here, in her complaints of how she sees Krautrock versus how Julian Cope or anyone else sees it... There's always going to be some sort of "grass is always greener" thing when talking about other cultures' music. Chris Cutler has written entire dissertations on how his nationality gave Henry Cow access to the whole of Europe as somehow being better. For years, though, in the States, you were looked upon very strangely if you preferred the Velvet Underground. Most Americans have never heard of Hapshash and the Coloured Coat. One of the beautiful things about Faust to me is that I don't have a chance of understanding it fully unless I were to be in the exact same place they were at the time they made the music. It is so foreign in its approach that I find it incredibly intriguing. Somehow I think Julian Cope must feel the same way, and that's why he glamourises it as much as he does. Someone gave me a videotape of Faust's performance in Hartford, CT, at Real Art Ways, at a time when I'd seen one picture of the band... the one on the reverse of ReR's reissue of The

Faust Tapes. It dispelled a lot of that glamour, because I was seeing a video that someone I knew made at the show, and that he was there in the flesh with them. They became real people for me. Then of course, due to my friendships with other combos who've played at Real Art Ways, I had the opportunity to have dinner (and talk at length about the Faust performance) with the curator of the museum. He painted Zappi and Jean-Hervé as rather ordinary people with a sense of mischief about them. Some people would be very drunk with excitement over meeting Zappi or Jean-Hervé ... I would, because I do have a romantic vision of Faust's music. I do see them as musical untouchables. Hopefully that would wear off before I embarrassed them. The point of all this is that if the Faust manifesto is to create the sound of yourself listening, why can't that include a romanticised view of Faust (and indeed other Krautrockers)? I see it as Faust gives us some sort of stimulus and we respond... that's the focus... the more unexpected the better. We as individual members of the audience are going to respond in a different way, and in no case are any of us wrong, as you can't be wrong about a human emotion.

GERMAN ROCK

DER SPIEGEL 49/1970

Jahrelang waren die deutschen Musiker die Letzten in der Popmusik. Sie ahmten die „Beatles“, die „Rolling Stones“ nach und kreischten immer nur die englischen und amerikanischen Hits. Popmusik in Deutschland war ein schwaches Echo auf den Liverpool- und San-Francisco-Klang.

Nun schlagen Bands an der Spree, an der Isar, am Rhein und am Main zum erstenmal eigene Töne an. Sie machen einen frischen teutonischen Rock, der vorwiegend gesellschaftskritische Texte bietet und noch nicht zu gut verkäuflichen Klangmustern geronnen ist.

In Deutschland, urteilte die englische Zeitschrift „Friends“, ist die Popmusik neuerdings „mehr an der Wirklichkeit als an fetten Verträgen orientiert“. Und immer mehr Angelsachsen wollen den „kontinentalen Klang“ („Melody Maker“: „Der zukünftige Trend“) nun auch hören.

Als erste deutsche Gruppen wollen Anfang nächsten Jahres das Berliner Quartett „Birth Control“, das auf Spinett, Viola und Orgel reckt, und die Münchner Musik-Kommune „Amon Düül“, die mit Violinen, elektrisch verstärktem Zymbal und Sopransaxophon komplizierte Polyrhythmen erzeugt, auf Amerikatournee gehen,

„Denn zu lange“, sagt Mickey Shapiro, Präsident der US-Plattenfirma „Prophesy“, „haben wir Deutschland lediglich als Markt für amerikanische Produkte angesehen. Jetzt holen wir zur Abwechslung mal die Talente von dort.“

Zumindest einige der knapp 300 deutschen Popbands, die sich selbst als progressiv bezeichnen, sind in der Tat überdurchschnittlich talentiert: Auf einem Schloß bei Köln probieren die Stockhausen-Adepten „The Can“ an elektronischen Geräten Science-fiction-Klänge aus. In Berlin dreht die „Tangerine Dream“ ihre Verstärker zu heulenden Rückkopplungs-Sonaten auf. In Heidelberg meditiert die „Limbus“-Gruppe stundenlang mit einer Art fernöstlicher Tempelmusik. In München musiziert „Embryo“, in Wiesbaden „Xhol“, in Karlsruhe die „Checkpoint Charlie“-Band.

Dieses Reservoir unverbraucher Klänge wollen sich die US-Plattenmacher nun erschließen. „Prophesy“-Direktor Shapiro hat von „Birth Control“ und „Amon Düül“ bereits Aufnahmen in seinem Repertoire. Die New Yorker Avantgardefirma „ESP“ verhandelt derzeit über die Vertriebsrechte der Heidelberger „Limbus“-Combo, die ihre erste Platte vor einem Jahr noch selbst gepreßt und gehandelt hat. Die Krefelder Gruppe „Kraftwerk“ ist mit ihrer „Tone Float“ schon im englischen Katalog des Weltkonzerns RCA vertreten – nur in Deutschland wird diese Schallplatte noch nicht verkauft.

Denn so interessiert auch das Internationale Musikgeschäft am „German Rock“ sein mag, so wenig Interesse finden einheimische Musiker noch immer beim deutschen Publikum.

Zwar erreichen Billigpreis-Platten einiger Gruppen mitunter stattliche Auflagen, zwar vertreibt die Hamburger Firma „Metronome“ deutsche Aufnahmen auf der eigens dafür eingerichteten Marke „Ohr“, doch in Funk und Fernsehen kommen die sogenannten progressiven Bands kaum zu Gehör.

Und wenn Gruppen wie „Os mundi“ (Berlin), „Missus Beastly“ (Lübbecke/Westfalen) oder „Proud Flash“ (Erlangen) schon einmal zu Festivals eingeladen werden, dürfen sie – für kargen Lohn – lediglich den Auftritt prominenter Engländer vorbereiten.

Beim dritten Essener „Pop- und Blues-Festival“ Ende Oktober beispielsweise kassierten die englischen Star-Ensembles „Air Force“ und „Spooky Tooth“ jeweils 20 000 und 10 000 Mark. Der Band des Stuttgarter Pianisten Wolfgang Dauner bot der Veranstalter 1600 Mark an – Spesen inbegriffen. In Deutschland ist vorerst, so Organist Jürgen Krebsalat vom „Checkpoint Charlie“, „progressiv noch immer dasselbe wie arm“.

Nur zwei von 30 deutschen Pop-Bands halten ihre Einkünfte für „befriedigend“. Die anderen, das ergab eine Umfrage, beurteilen ihre finanzielle Situation als „schlecht“ oder „sehr schlecht“. Die Mainzer Band „Increase“ zum Beispiel geht nach jedem Auftritt mit etwa 250 Mark nach Hause und ist froh, „daß wir überhaupt unsere Musik spielen können“.

Mit ihrer Musik – mit Elektronik und Free Jazz, Folklore und Kabarett, Blues und Beat – wollen die Musiker vor allem „die gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit spiegeln“. Ihr Pop kommentiert, so der Wiesbadener Saxophonist Tim Belbe von der „Xhol“-Band, „Mietwucher, Butterpreis, die Ausbeutung der Lehrlinge, die CSU und das Haschisch-Verbot“. Mit Agitprop-Texten heulen die westdeutschen Pop-Rebellen gegen Reaktion und Repression, mit Genital-Poesie und dionysischen Ton-Trips blasen sie „auch unseren linken Genossen ein wenig Lust in den Arsch“ („Xhol“-Flötist Hansi Fischer).

Mehr noch als ihren englischen und amerikanischen Kollegen geht es „den deutschen Untergrund-Musikanten ums Do-it-yourself der Zuhörer“, um die „Möglichkeiten der musikalischen Gruppentherapie“. So gibt die „Xhol“-Band manchmal Plastik-Flöten ans Publikum aus, und bei der Gruppe „Indogerman Trip“, die in einem ehemaligen Luftschutzbunker in Frankfurt haust, werden Besucher zum Musikmachen auf Kinderrasseln, Schellen, Trommeln und Autohupen animiert.

„Trip“-Veranstalter Bernhard Höke, der für seinen Keller einen Go-cart mit Glocken, Sirenen und einem Spielzeug-Maschinengewehr konstruiert hat, plant darüber hinaus einen Beat-Wanderzirkus, in dem jeder mit jedem zusammen spielen kann.

Solche spielerischen, emanzipatorischen Ansätze, scheint es, sind augenblicklich wohl nur in Deutschland möglich. In England nämlich, und auch in den meisten Großstädten der USA, wo der Markt von Konzernen und von einem skrupellosen Pop-Management beherrscht wird, finden die erfolgreichen Musiker zwischen Flughafen, Hotel, Plattenstudio und Konzertsaal kaum noch Zeit für sich selbst.

„In London und New York“, sagt Mani Neumeier, Schlagzeuger der deutsch-schweizerischen „Guru Guru Groove“, „wird die Musik konfektioniert. Die englischen und amerikanischen Musiker machen für dicke Honorare dabei mit – wir nicht.“

POPMUSIK: SPÄTES WIRTSCHAFTSWUNDER

DER SPIEGEL 34/1974

Bundesdeutsche Schlager und Rockgruppen werden im Ausland zunehmend gefragt – dank gesteigerter Qualität und einer Talentflaute auf dem internationalen Musikmarkt. Selten zuvor gab es so viele akzeptable Songtexte und ein so großes Popmusik-Potential in der Bundesrepublik. Experten erwarten, daß der Export-Ertrag westdeutscher Unterhaltungsmusik 1974 erstmals die nach draußen zu zahlende Tantiemesumme übersteigt.

Bei der Hamburger Plattenfirma WEA tickerte kürzlich ein Fernschreiben aus New York: „Fantastic initial airplay reaction to passport in los angeles and philadelphia, very strong sales.“ Die Langspielplatte „Looking Thru“ des Saxophonisten Klaus Doldinger und seiner Rockband „Passport“, so die entschlüsselte Übersetzung, wurde von amerikanischen Rundfunksendern andauernd gespielt und im Fachhandel überdurchschnittlich verkauft.

Nicht nur in den USA, wo für Doldinger-Platten mittlerweile ganzseitig inseriert wird, auch in Australien und Ostasien spielten die Münchner Jazz-Rocker der deutschen Musikindustrie diesen Sommer stattliche Tantiemesummen ein. Die Band gab, sechs Wochen lang, Konzerte in sieben Ländern. In acht Ländern wird „Looking Thru“ seither gepreßt.

So prominent ist Doldinger inzwischen im internationalen Musikgeschäft, daß englische Rock-Stars wie Brian Auger und Alexis Korner – nach zwei für eine LP mitgeschnittenen Konzerten im vergangenen Herbst – nun im September eine lange Westdeutschland-Tour mit „Passport“ bestreiten wollen. Und Doldinger ist durchaus nicht der einzige Deutsche, der neuerdings auf ausländischen Pop-Bühnen etwas gilt.

Noch vor kurzem als „Kraut-Rocker“ geschmäht, haben sich westdeutsche Popmusik-Interpreten seit Anfang dieses Jahres in die internationalen Hitparaden eingereiht. Münchens „Amon Düül“, Berlins „Tangerine Dream“ und Kölns „Can“ geben derzeit bei Abendgagen bis 10 000 Mark beinahe mehr Konzerte in Großbritannien als in der Bundesrepublik. „Can“, „Passport“ und andere Gruppen reisen im Herbst in die USA.

Eine Schallplatten-Flut schwappt ihnen voraus. „Vor einem Jahr“, sagte der Frankfurter Plattenproduzent Peter Hauke (Bellaphon), „hätten wir unsere Aufnahmen verschenken können, und niemand hätte sie genommen.“ Nun müssen Platten deutscher Rockbands“ die mangels Nachfrage in der Bundesrepublik nicht mehr hergestellt worden waren, aufgrund des plötzlichen Auslandssinteresses nachgepreßt werden. „Würde sich (die Hamburger Combo) ‘Lucifer’s Friend’ wieder formieren“. vermutet das Branchenblatt „musik-informationen“ nach 100 000 in den USA abgesetzten Longplays, „könnte sie drüben vor ausverkauften Hallen spielen.“ Von der Band „Amon Düül“ wurden jüngst mehr Platten nach Übersee verschifft als in der BRD ausgeliefert.

Solche Exporte, dazu die rapide gestiegenen Auslandsverkäufe westdeutscher Schlager-Copyrights, werden die bislang per saldo negative Tantiemenbilanz einheimischer Musikverleger in diesem Jahr drastisch verändern. Noch 1972 wurden von der Gema rund 32 Millionen Mark für Aufführungs- und Vervielfältigungsrechte ins Ausland gezahlt; nur 16,5 Millionen kamen herein. 1974. schätzt der Hamburger Verleger Rudolf Slezak, „könnten die internationalen Erträge deutscher Popmusik unsere Auslandsverpflichtungen bereits übersteigen“.

Denn nachdem im vergangenen Frühjahr ein in der Version von Elfi Graf hierzulande kaum placierter Schlager („Herzen haben keine Fenster“) vom britischen Pop-Duo „Peters and Lee“ unter dem Titel „Don't Stay Away Too Long“ bis auf Platz vier der englischen Bestseller-Börse hochgejubelt worden war, hat ein Run auch auf westdeutsche Notenblätter eingesetzt.

Allein der Londoner Texter, Verleger und Produzent Eric Woolfson kaufte in den letzten Wochen 50 deutsche Schlagermelodien, zu denen er neue Verse verfaßt, zur internationalen Auswertung ein. US-Stars wie Al Martino, Perry Como und Andy Williams gehören zu seinen Kunden.

Für das späte Pop-Wirtschaftswunder macht Woolfson „teutonische Tugenden“ verantwortlich: den Fleiß talentierter Autoren, die Korrektheit „ehrlicher“ Musikkauflaute, „mit denen man gern zusammenarbeitet“.

Tatsächlich ist der Auslandserfolg deutscher Musikmacher eher in der englischen und amerikanischen Talentflaute (SPIEGEL 23/1974) begründet. Wenn die Unterhaltungsmetropolen London, New York und Los Angeles nicht genügend unverbrauchte Popklänge hervorbringen, schlägt die Stunde der Provinz.

Voraussetzung dafür ist freilich, daß die Provinzmusik internationalen Maßstäben genügt. Solange die Bundesrepublik lediglich als Musikkolonie der Angelsachsen galt, hat kaum eine deutsche Plattenfirma auf Weltniveau produziert. Weil sich das geändert hat, kommen die deutschen Spitzenspiele nun endlich ihrem Potential entsprechend zum Zuge. Zwar kopieren Berliner, Hamburger, Frankfurter und Münchner Ensembles überwiegend noch immer ausländische Vorbilder: erstmals indes gibt es zwischen Original und Kopie kaum mehr eine Qualitätsdifferenz.

Die Hamburger Band „Truck Stop“ improvisiert zündendere Rockabilly-Stücke als die Masse der Nashville-Konkurrenz. Die Frankfurter Combo „Tiger B. Smith“ nähert sich in ihren besten Momenten den (aufgelösten) amerikanischen „Doors“.

Schon sind die rund 40 namhaften westdeutschen Tonstudios aufgrund attraktiver Preise, technischer Modernität und Produzentenerfahrung derart angesehen, daß Welt-Stars sie zunehmend frequentieren. Beim führenden deutschen Rock-Produzenten Dieter Dierks in Stommeln bei Köln nahm Eric Burdon unlängst eine LP auf; im Münchner „Musicland“-Studio produzierten die Rolling Stones. Mireille Mathieu aus Frankreich läßt ihre Platten vom Münchner Schlagerkomponisten Christian Bruhn aufnehmen: US-Jazzmusiker fliegen immer häufiger in die MPS-Werkstätten zu Villingen im Schwarzwald ein.

Der frische Wind von jenseits der Grenzen blieb nicht ohne Auswirkungen auf das Inlandsprodukt. Seit Song-Poeten wie der Österreicher Andre Heller und der Niederländer Herman van Veen auf Tourneen gezeigt haben, daß gehaltvolle Texte ihr Publikum finden, steigt das Niveau deutscher Unterhaltungsmusik. An akzeptabler Schlagerlyrik herrscht derzeit kein Mangel. Dazu gehört der Vicky-Leandros-Song „Theo, wir fahr'n nach Lodz“ ebenso wie die Waterkant-Rockpoesie von Udo Lindenberg, den die Plattenfirma Teldec für eine Garantiesumme von einer Million Mark auf fünf Jahre unter Vertrag genommen hat.

Experimente machen sich gegenwärtig bezahlt; deshalb richtete die Berliner Hansa-Musikproduktion „verkannten Genies, kaputten Textern und echten Kreativen“ eine eigene Schallplattenserie ein: „Der andere Song“. Zumindest einer der dort vorgestellten Newcomer hat die Vorschuß-Investition inzwischen kapitalisiert.

Gunter Gabriel, der eigene Lieder verfaßt und Welt-Hits wie Kris Kristoffersons „Me And Bobby McGee“ annehmbar eindeutsch, bewies in dieser Serie, daß es möglich ist, in deutschen Schlager-texten realistische Geschichten zu erzählen und dennoch Platten zu verkaufen. Seine Sozial-Moritat „Hey Boss, ich brauch' mehr Geld“ steht in der deutschen Single-Liste auf Platz sieben.

Das Ticket zum Welterfolg und den Freibrief für eine Anhebung des hiesigen Unterhaltungsniveaus haben die westdeutschen Entertainer jedenfalls nun im Jackett. „Nicht ohne Überlegung“, sagt Klaus Doldinger, „haben wir unsere Band hinsichtlich der Tore, die wir aufmachen wollten, schließlich ‚Passport‘ genannt.“

NEGER VOM DIENST

DER SPIEGEL 29/1975

International werden Popmusiker von der Unterhaltungsindustrie ausgetrickst. Schlußlicht: die deutschen („Kraut“-)Rocker.

„Wir stehen in jedem Rock-Lexikon, doch das nützt uns gar nichts“, so besang, kürzlich im ZDF, Baßgitarrist Lothar Meid musizierende „Helden aus dem Untergrund“. Wer „Kraut-Rock“ (Sendungstitel) macht, so belegte der TV-Beitrag, ist übel dran.

So groß das Renommee der Pop-Germanen im Ausland neuerdings auch sein mag, so unterprivilegiert werkt das Gros der Elektrogitarristen und Schlagzeuger daheim – bei Durchschnitts-Monatseinkommen um 700 Mark.

Nur etwa 100 der rund 3000 Rockgruppen in der Bundesrepublik können – knapp – vorn Musikmachen leben; sie haben keinen Platz in den Medien, keine Chance in der staatlichen Arbeitsvermittlung, und sie erhalten, Neger vom Dienst, keinerlei staatliche Subvention, wie sie die Kulturbürokratie für Provinztheater und Opernhäuser willig zahlt.

Pop-Talente zu fördern – wie es beispielsweise die kanadische Regierung zugunsten ihres Rock-Exports tut -, kam deutschen Kultusministerien auch nach Vorlage der Künstler-Enquete, des „Instituts für Projektstudien“ nicht in den Sinn. Dort wurde, Anfang dieses Jahres, die Situation der Popmusiker ausführlich dokumentiert.

Westdeutschlands Rock-Volk ist, von keinem Interessenverband gestützt, dem Zugriff der internationalen Musikindustrie schutzlos ausgeliefert. Und „der totale Wirtschaftsliberalismus“ der Rock-Szene ruft zwangsläufig Spekulanten auf den Plan – so Pop-Kritiker Franz Schöler in einer „kommerziellen Skandal-Chronik der Rockmusik“.

Die Chronik, Bestandteil einer kürzlich von Schöler herausgegebenen Essay-Anthologie, belegt allerdings auch, daß der Kraut-Rocker lediglich das Schlußlicht in einem weltweiten System von Ausbeutungsmechanismen des Musik-Business ist: Sogar die Beatles und die Rolling Stones waren trotz Spitzen-Umsätzen Ende der sechziger Jahre kaum fähig, ihre Steuerschulden abzutragen.

Nach Experten-Schätzung betrug der Gesamtumsatz der Beatles mit allen Nebenrechten bis 1970 rund eine Milliarde Dollar; bis heute aber konnte nicht geklärt werden, auf welchen obskuren Sperrkonten, in welchen zweifelhaften Management-Kanälen der Großteil dieses Geldes geblieben ist. Denn nicht nur Raubpresser, Copyright-Diebe und Tonband-Piraten beuten Rockmusiker ohne Rücksicht aus, Parasiten hocken auch in allen Abteilungen der Unterhaltungsindustrie.

So sind Amerikas Tourneeveranstalter offenbar stillschweigend übereingekommen, daß eine ausländische Newcomer-Gruppe auf der ersten USA-Tour grundsätzlich nichts verdienen dürfe. Die Impresarios lassen sich die Einstands-Konzertreise prinzipiell von einer interessierten Plattenfirma finanzieren, die derlei Unkosten später von den Musikertantiemen aus Plattenumsätzen einbehält. Geschädigt sind die Bands: Die im Odenwald ansässige Combo „Nektar“ mußte zu ihrer (erfolgreichen) USA-Tournee Ende letzten Jahres rund 100 000 Mark zuschießen, das Kölner „Triumvirat“ und die Hamburger Soul-Band „Atlantis“ hoffen nach ihren erfolgreichen US-Tourneen noch auf eine Abrechnung „plus minus null“.

Natürlich gibt es auch gutverdienende Stars, die ihr Geld gelegentlich bedenkenlos verschwenden. Aber daran allein kann es nicht gelegen haben, daß die Millionen-Dollar-Bluessängerin Janis Joplin nach ihrem Heroin-Tod 1970 ein Barvermögen von nur 2500 Dollar hinterließ. Unklare Verträge, dubiose Abmachungen und die clever verbrämte Profitgier der Pop-Kapitalisten haben es ermöglicht, daß auch der erbberechtigte Vater des schlafmittelgetöteten Gitarren-Genies Jimi Hendrix von dessen auf eine halbe Million geschätztem Nachlaß-Vermögen bislang kaum einen Dollar bekommen hat.

„Im Musikgeschäft‘ soll der umstrittene Beatles- und Stones-Manager Allen Klein gesagt haben, „gibt es keinen geschriebenen Vertrag, den man nicht brechen könnte“ – wie wahr. Vor zwei Jahren verklagte der Sänger und Songkomponist John Phillips vom Ensemble „Mamas and Papas“ seine Plattenfirma ABC-Dunhill auf neun Millionen Dollar Schadenersatz. Die Firma habe – laut Phillips in der US-Musikindustrie ein gebräuchliches Verfahren – vom Handel remittierte Platten widerrechtlich noch einmal ausgeliefert und dafür keine Tantiemen bezahlt. Der Prozeß läuft noch.

Eine ähnlich lukrative Untugend lasten deutsche Rockmusiker, Verleger und Produzenten deutschen Plattenfirmen an. Da sich die Künstlertantieme – vier bis zwölf Prozent vom Großhandelspreis oder 18 bis 22 Prozent für eine von den Musikern finanzierte Eigenproduktion bei Exporten halbiert, manipulieren einzelne Firmen mutmaßlich zu eigenen Gunsten ihre Export-Abrechnungen: Die zum halben Tantieme-Satz etwa nach Holland gelieferten LPs werden von firmennahen Großhändlern nach Deutschland rückimportiert und hier vertragswidrig und gewinnträchtig abgesetzt.

„Grateful Dead“, die ehemalige Hippie-Musikkommune in San Francisco, hat daher nicht nur – wie andere Rockbands – ein eigenes Plattenlabel eingerichtet. Aus Skepsis gegenüber den in Super-Konzerne eingebetteten Vertriebsfirmen etablierte die Gruppe auch einen (von Fan-Clubs getragenen) eigenen Vertrieb. Für die ausgepowerte deutsche Rock-Szene wäre das ein denkbare Modell.

„Als wir unsere Platten vom Warner-Brothers-Konzern vermarkten ließen“, sagt Grateful-Dead-Geschäftsführer Ronald Rakow, „verdienten wir 33 Cents pro LP, jetzt sind es 1,22 Dollar. Von unserem letzten Warner-Brothers-Album „Europe ‘72“ haben wir in einem halben Jahr in den USA 360 000 Exemplare verkaufen können, vom ersten Album „Wake of the Flood“ in unserem eigenen Verteilersystem in der gleichen Zeit 423 000 Stück.“

TRANCE-MUSIK: SCHAMANEN AM SYNTHESIZER

DER SPIEGEL 20/1975

Die Musikbranche staunt über Spitzenerfolge westdeutscher Popmusik-Bands in den USA, dabei wird die Art ihres Elektro-Klages vielfach überhört. Kraftwerk, Can, Tangerine Dream erzeugen auf modernsten Synthesizern die gleichen rhythmischen Strukturen wie tibetanische Mönche und afrikanische Zauberer in ihrer Kultmusik. Die „New York Times“ sieht in dieser meditativen „Trance Music“ schon den künftig dominierenden Trend.

Amerikas Rockfans lernen Deutsch. Kraftwerk, so wird neuerdings in US-Plattenbesprechungen erläutert, sei das deutsche Wort für „electric power plant“. Autobahn wird mit „one of Germany’s superhighways“ oder auch schlicht mit „expressway“ übersetzt.

Kraftwerk, Name einer Band, und „Autobahn“, Titel eines Musikstücks, sind Synonyme für den plötzlichen Auslandserfolg westdeutscher Popmusik-Gruppen, der US-Kritiker bereits von einem „deutschen Wunder“ sprechen läßt. Anfang Mai stand die LP mit dem deutsch gesungenen Fernstraßen-Song und viel Elektronik-Walla-Walla auf Platz fünf der US-Hitliste. Eine halbe Million Longplays und ebenso viele „Autobahn“-Singles wurden in wenigen Wochen verkauft.

Daß die gestern noch als bierernste Kraut-Rocker geschmähten Popmusik-Germanen – Bands wie Amon Düül, Lucifer’s Friend, Passport’ Triumvirat – aus der für Absonderlichkeiten reservierten Ecke des internationalen Musikgeschäfts ins Zentrum von Kommunikation und Kommerz vordringen konnten, ist erstaunlich genug. Verblüfft fragte der „Stern“: „Wie kommt Sauerkraut in amerikanische Hitparaden?“

Als noch bemerkenswerter erscheint indes, daß Amerikanern, Engländern und Franzosen neuerdings vor allem eine besondere Art Kraut-Rock mundet, die deutsche Fans bisher als zu sauer vereschmähten: die esoterische Elektronik etwa von Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze und Can. „Es ist ein harter, kalter Klang“, erkannte der auf Impore spezialisierte US-Plattengroßhändler Glen Fidell, „aber die Leute fahren darauf ab, als wären sie hypnotisiert.“

Mit den Science-fiction-Hörbildern von Elektronik-Rockern der sechziger Jahre wie Pink Floyd, von den „sterilen und verkrampft konstruierten“ Generator-Sounds der Akademiker (Klaus Schulze) ganz zu schweigen, hat das modisch-monotone Sphärenrauschen aus westdeutschen Pop-Studios kaum noch etwas gemein.

Wo in den Synthesizern und Azimuth-Koordinatoren der englischen Rock-Vorhut gestern noch höchst naturalistisch und illustrativ Möwenschreie, Wassergeplätscher, Düsenlärm und Bombendetonationen imitiert wurden, dominiert heute ein „meditativer, flächiger Schall“ („Süddeutsche Zeitung“ über Tangerine Dream): anhaltendes Dröhnen, endlos gleichbleibende Morsesignale, ein schwerfälliges, beinahe statisches Auf und Ah.

Auf die Pink-Floyd-Ästhetik eingeschworen, der zufolge Avantgarde-Elektronik immer noch so vertraut klingen muß, als werde eine Violinsonate aus dem 19. Jahrhundert auf einer Hammondorgel nachgespielt, reagierten Westdeutschlands Popmusik-Kritiker auf die neuen „bewußt schablonenhaften Rhythmusstrukturen“ (Dolf Hartmann) ablehnend oder ratlos. Werner Burkhardt über Kraftwerk: „Mein Urteil interessiert mich hier nicht mal selbst.“ Manfred Sack über „Autobahn“: „So etwas gehört eigentlich gar nicht veröffentlicht.“

Ein Großteil des Publikums ist offenbar anderer Meinung. Ob Tangerine Dream jüngst in Australien, in der Kathedrale von Reims, in der Londoner Royal Albert Hall oder in der Münchner St.-Benno-Kirche aufspielte, ob Can für Briten, Klaus Schulze für Gallier, Kraftwerk für US-Bürger musizierten – überall saßen die Zuhörer in den überfüllten Auditorien, höchst betroffen, wie gelähmt.

Eine für Popmusik-Konzerte gänzlich ungewohnte Rezeptionsweise scheint um sich zu greifen: nicht mehr Anteilnahme am rhythmischen und melodischen Bühnengeschehen, sondern – nur noch davon ausgelöst – Versenkung in die Bewußtseinsströme des eigenen Gehirns. „Hypnotisch“ und „meditativ“ sind die Schlüsselwörter, die in Rezensionen immer wieder erscheinen.

„Wir fahr'n, fahr'n, fahr'n auf der Autobahn“: Auch dieser in der 22 Minuten langen LP-Version des Kraftwerk-Songs vielfach wiederholte Banaltext ist wohl nicht als Sinnträger, sondern als eine Art Mantra zu verstehen – eine Beschwörungsformel, die den Zugang zum Unbewußten erschließt.

Vom Industrie-Image der westdeutschen Bundesrepublik und vom elektronischen Arsenal der Düsseldorfer Kraftwerk-Klangwerker Ralf Hütter und Florian Schneider-Esleben irritiert, sah das US-Magazin „Triad Guide“ in der „Autobahn“-Musik einen „Ausdruck des hochindustrialisierten Nachkriegs-Europa“ und kam zu dem Schluß, das „Steinzeitalter“ der Elektronik und der Rockmusik sei vorüber.

Eher stimmt das Gegenteil. Moog-, EMS- und ARP-Synthesizer, die technisch avanciertesten Musikmaschinen mit ihren Millionen Klangmöglichkeiten, täuschen leicht darüber hinweg, daß an ihren Tasten, Schaltern und Knöpfen derzeit Musikanten drücken und drehen, die in ihren Ambitionen den Schamanen, Priestern und Zauberern uralter Kulte vergleichbar sind.

Nicht so sehr die Klangvielfalt der Musik-Computer sei für die Elektro-Rocker reizvoll, erklärt Tangerine-Dream-Chef Edgar Froese, sondern die Möglichkeit minimaler Ton- und Rhythmusveränderung in einem kontinuierlichen Klangstrom – wie in der indischen Ragakultur, bei balinesischen Tempel-Ensembles, Gebirgsmusikanten in Kaschmir oder in der marokkanischen Panflöten-Tradition. „Wenn sie dir seit Jahrhunderten die Beinchen amputiert haben“, so Froese mit Blick auf den Synthesizer, „dann kannst du nicht anders, als zur Krücke zu greifen.“

Jenseits der bislang gültigen Kategorien Folklore, E-Musik-Avantgarde, außereuropäische Klassik, Jazz und Rock formiert sich zu Fuß oder auf den erwähnten Krücken – eine wachsende Marschkolonne von Spielern und Hörern, die den europäischen Harmonie-Kathedralen und Ton-Architekturen den Rücken kehrt. Der letzte europäische Tonsetzer, der ihn interessiert habe, bekundet der einflußreiche E-Musik-Komponist Steve Reich, sei der französische Geistliche Perotin an der Notre-Dame de Paris gewesen, der um 1200 gelebt hat. Reich holte sich Anregungen zu seinen Stücken „Drumming“ und „Six Pianos“ in Ghana.

Zu einem „Metamusik“-Festival mit 35 Veranstaltungen dirigierte der Kritiker und Funkredakteur Walter Bachauer letzten Herbst tibetanische Mönche nach Berlin, die mit außergewöhnlich tiefen Stimmen monotone Gebete auf einem Grundton sangen, dazu indische Sitar-Virtuosen, japanische Koto-Spieler, englische Rock-Artisten, amerikanische E-Experimentatoren (Steve Reich, Terry Riley) sowie Tangerine Dream.

Solche „Querlinien durch die Weltmusik“ (Bachauer) treten immer deutlicher zutage. Eberhard Schoener, Dirigent der Münchner Kammeroper, ließ vor einem Jahr sein zusammen mit dem Rockmusiker Ion Lord (Deep Purple) komponiertes Werk „Window“ in 16 Ländern über die Bildschirme flimmern; kürzlich transportierte er seinen Synthesizer zur Jam Session mit Gamelanmusikanten für einen TV-Film an den balinesischen Fürstenhof. Schoeners Münchner Kollege Peter Michael Hamel schlägt einerseits mit dem Ensemble „Between“ eine Brücke zu Jazz und Rock, andererseits vollzieht er auf LPs „Buddhist Meditation East-West“ (Titel).

Hamel nennt ein Stück „Yearning For A Unique Ecstasy“ – „Auf der Suche nach einer besonderen Ekstase“. Exakt dieses ist das Ziel der Bewegung: individuelle Trance, Abschalten von flüchtigen Tageseindrücken, Ausklinken aus der Tradition des Abendlandes. In LP-Titeln wird dieses Ziel immer häufiger plakatiert – von der Platte „Trance“ des Jazzpianisten Steve Kuhn bis zur „Vive la Trance!“ der Münchner Rock-Kommune Amon Düül.

„Mit Kunst im europäischen Sinne hat das, was wir tun, schon lange nichts mehr zu tun“, sagt Irmin Schmidt von der Kölner Elektronik-Band Can, „wir haben überhaupt keinen Grund, die

Ruinen einer untergehenden Kultur zu kitten.“ Statt dessen beschäftigen sich die Can-Musiker seit 1968 in einer „Ethnological Forgery“ (etwa: Folklore-Fälschungen) betitelten Aufnahmeserie mit den Klangstrukturen des Orients. Einzelne Kostproben auf der Can-LP „Limited Edition“ erinnerten den „New Musical Express“ an eine „elektronisch imitierte Übangi-Rhythmusgruppe mit Elefanten-Trompeten aus dem Synthesizer“ und an „LSD in der Kasba“.

So hilfreich indes Hanfdampf und psychedelische Drogen noch gestern für den Einstieg in die elektronischen Mysterien etwa von Pink Floyd empfunden wurden, so überflüssig erscheinen fortgeschrittenen Trance-Musikern heute LSD, Marihuana und Meskalin.

Der Berliner Elektroniker Klaus Schulze nennt seine Synthesizer-Choräle „akustische Psychopharmaka“: Bestimmte Frequenzen und repetitive Rhythmen wirken direkt und kalkulierbar auf das Zentralnervensystem und verursachen ganz ohne chemische Hilfsmittel Hochgefühle oder Beklemmungen. William Friedkin' Regisseur des Satanslichtspiels „Der Exorzist“, will das „electric water“ aus dem Synthesizer bei seinen nächsten Okkult-Thrillern zur Gehirnwäsche des Publikums benutzen: Er hat bei Tangerine Dream Filmmusik bestellt.

Populären Elektro-Cocktails von der Art des „Autobahn“-Stückes wird die hypnotische Klangessenz vorerst nur in kleinen Dosen zugesetzt. Doch schon sieht die „New York Times“ in diesem „ältesten nicht-chemischen Weg zur Versenkung einen der wichtigsten Musikrends dieses Jahrzehnts“. Wer, beispielsweise, nie eine Komposition des „Wundermannes“ Steve Reich gehört habe, schwärmte der Funk-Kommentator Karl-Heinz Wocker sogar, wisse nicht, „worauf die Musik des nächsten Jahrhunderts aufbauen wird“.

Doch so weit wird es nicht kommen. Zu offenkundig ist sozialer Eskapismus, Rückzug aus einer als unerfreulich empfundenen Außenwelt in die Fluchtburg Seele, ein Hauptgrund für die gewaltige Publikumswirkung der Trance-Musik. Dem Meditations-Trip der Hippies zum heiligen Zen ist der moderne Massentourismus gefolgt, aber es ist ein modischer Saison-Schlager, kaum mehr.

Jenseits der bequemen „Autobahn“, der berausenden Can-taten und der bisweilen lustvollen Tangerine-Träume erwartet den Zuhörer nämlich ein akustisches Ödland ohne den geringsten musikalischen Reiz. Totale Entspannung, vollkommene Leere wird von den Ideologen der Trance-Musik angestrebt; dazu hilft am besten ein endloser, kaum modulierter Ton.

Annäherungswerte an diese Endzeit-Musik haben Klaus Schulze auf seiner LP „Irrlicht“ oder Peter Michael Hamel in der noch unveröffentlichten „Buddha Meditation“ schon erreicht. Geduld sei sicherlich eine Tugend, urteilte die „Süddeutsche Zeitung“ über Hamels Singsang und Synthesizerklang. „doch angesichts derart monotoner Monomanien reißt sie wie ein überdehntes Gummiband“. Der Sinuston aus dem Elektronik-Generator wäre der allerletzte Hit.

ZIRPT LUSTIG

DER SPIEGEL 29/1970

Die Schallplattenindustrie, hat er geschrieben, sei skrupellos, verlogen und dumm. Unter dem Etikett „Underground“, so wettete er noch vor kurzem, „verscherbeln deutsche Plattenfirmen abgestandene Schnulzen“.

Jetzt ist er selber unter die Plattenmacher gegangen: Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, 27, ein Journalist aus Köln-Dellbrück dient neuerdings als Produzent und Berater der Berliner „Hansa Musik Produktion GmbH“, die einen Teil ihrer Aufnahmen über „Metronome“ vertreibt.

Im Juni legte die Firma die ersten fünf von Kaiser betreuten Langspielplatten mit „Popmusik aus deutschen Landen“ vor. Sie sind attraktiv verpackt und rotieren unter der Marke „Ohr“. Und damit sie sich gut verscherbeln lassen, hat sich die „Metronome“-Werbeabteilung auch einen passenden Slogan ausgedacht: „Macht das Ohr auf“, steht auf jeder Plattentasche, jedem Presstext und jedem Prospekt.

Doch wo Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser das Ohr aufmacht, ist nur selten Gutes zu hören. „Für mein Programm“, sagt er, „suche ich mir Musik, mit der ich kommunizieren kann.“ Und er kommuniziert nun einmal am besten mit Klippversen und banalem Polit-Rock.

Auf seinen Platten ertönt milder Meditationsklang, elektronischer Sakralmusik-Verschnitt und bestenfalls passabler Beat. Am meisten aber propagiert Kaiser die politischen Kalauer vom „Floh de Cologne“ („Die oberen Zehntausend, sie haben keinen schöneren Arsch“) sowie das „Plam-plabbalaplam“ des Ruhrpott-Bänkelsängers Bernd Witthüser: „Das Grab ist tief und stille und schauerhaft sein Rand.“

Solche Ladenhüter, dazu mancherlei Einfältiges, Vulgäres, Obszönes und Triviales aus Amerika, preist der einstige Veranstalter der „Essener Song-Tage“ (SPIEGEL 41/1968), dem die „FAZ“ damals „größtenwahnsinnigen Dilettantismus“ bescheinigt hat, nun schon lange als „Gegenkultur der neuen Leute“.

Im „Stern“, in „Twen“ und in „Underground“, in Rundfunksendungen und gut einem halben Hundert Journalen und Tageszeitungen landauf, landab singt er seinen Kehrreim: „Der Untergrund ist tatsächlich existent,“

Er existiert überall, wo Kaiser ihn aufspürt und damit Geschäfte macht: in seinem Verlagsunternehmen „Kinder der Geburtstagspresse“ (Anzeigentext: „Super-Verlag des deutschen Underground“)“ das US-Sexblätter für 25 Cent importiert und für 5,50 Mark pro Exemplar weitergibt; in seinen meist gleichlautenden Artikeln, die er in großem Stil vertreibt; In seinen Büchern, die voller Fehler sind.

So schreibt er den „Rolling Stone Blues“, von dem die „Stones“ ihren Namen abgeleitet haben, im „Buch der neuen Pop-Musik“ einmal (richtig) Muddy Waters und einmal (falsch) Chuck Berry zu. Der „frühere Eisenbahnarbeiter“ Brian Auger, den er mit den „Rolling Stones“ auftreten läßt, war weder bei der Bahn, noch hat er je mit dieser Beatband gespielt. Das englische Ensemble „Jethro Tull“ heißt bei Kaiser einmal „Tethro Tull“ und einmal „Jethro Tall“. Und was er über die Musik mitteilt, ist durchweg von erheiternder Art: „Das zirpt lustig und flötet verführerisch und wird von einem fröhlichen Blues-Rhythmus untermalt.“

Er weiß es nicht besser. Kaiser hat eben mehr Talent fürs Merkantile als Sachkenntnis und musikalischen Geschmack.“ Ich habe“, so bekannte er einmal, „rechtzeitig den Folksong-Zug erwischt, dann den Pop- und Underground-Zug, und den nächsten Zug werd' ich auch rechtzeitig erwischen,“

Er hat ihn schon. Jetzt fährt Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser bei den Plattenherstellern mit.

PRINZIP DER FREUDE

DER SPIEGEL 40/1973, 01.10.1973

Schallplattenproduzent Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser wird von Musikern beschuldigt, sie zum Drogengenuß angehalten und vor Vertragsabschluß unter Rauschmittel gesetzt zu haben.

Er hat sie nicht nur literarisch angepriesen, „die kostbaren, reinen Sandoz-Pillen“ – der Buchautor („Rock-Zeit“) und Popmusik-Produzent Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, 30, geht mit LSD auch selber gern auf den Trip.

Die Wirklichkeit, schrieb er, sei „die Sanftheit in den Augen eines Menschen, der viele Trips gekostet hat“. Und um dieser Wirklichkeit teilhaftig zu werden, kostete er selber viele, viele Trips.

Dem Rock- und Polit-Underground, den er zuvor in Büchern, Rundfunksendungen und zahllosen Artikeln als linkes „Gegenmilieu“ gefeiert hatte, ist Kaiser dabei rasch entrückt – auf den Chef-Stuhl der von ihm mitgegründeten Berliner „Ohr Musik Produktion“. In schönen neuen Kleidern, in Samt und Latex mit Silberpailletten und allerlei funkelndem Flitterkram, kündigt er seither unablässig von den „Schwingungen der Freude“, von psychedelischen Reisen durch Raum und Zeit.

„Wir sind die Kosmischen Kuriere“, läßt Kaiser in seinem „Ohr“-Pressedienst verbreiten: „Zunächst senden wir unsere Musik, später expandieren wir in eine schönere Welt.“

Mit Treibsätzen für den Flug „durch Sphären und Galaxien, durch die Sternenswelten der Science-fiction“ hat Kaiser seine Musiker nach deren Aussage stets bereitwillig versorgt. „Als erstes“, wies er seinen ehemaligen Bürochef Hans Gysin bei der „Ohr Musik Produktion“ an, „müssen unsere Leute lernen, einen guten Joint zu drehen.“

Es blieb nicht beim Joint. Als Kaiser im Sommer 1972 im Berner Sinus-Studio für seine Plattenmarke „Die Kosmischen Kuriere“ die Debüt-LP „Seven up“ mit dem LSD-Apostel Timothy Leary produzierte, wurde, so eine Teilnehmerin, aus einer „Seven up“-Limonadenflasche sogenanntes „Electric Water“ kredenzt – eine Rauschmittel-Tinktur.

„Da ich sehr geschwitzt hatte“, erzählte später der Schlagzeuger Dietmar Burmeister, „trank ich mehrere Gläser davon und ging auf einen fürchterlichen Horror-Trip.“ Bei der Sängerin Bettina Müller-Hohls, die gleichfalls nichts vom gefährlichen Inhalt der Erfrischung gewußt hatte, erkundigte sich Kaisers Lebensgefährtin Gerlinde „Gille“ Lettmann anschließend, ob sie „gut durchgekommen“ sei.

Nur im Rausch, das versucht Kaiser seinen Musikern fortwährend einzureden, sei „Kosmische Musik“ überhaupt herstellbar. Daher verteilte er beispielsweise bei der Produktion der LP „Lord Krishna von Goloka“ an die Spieler kostenlos LSD. Allein durch die Vorspiegelung einer Gelbsucht konnte sich der Elektroniker Klaus Schulze, wie er berichtet, Kaisers Druck widersetzen. Schulze: „Rolf-Ulrich würde uns am liebsten immer high im Studio haben, aber auf einem Trip kann ich nicht improvisieren.“

Auch um zu Vertragsabschlüssen mit arglosen Musikanten zu kommen, macht sich der Producer, seit kurzem Alleininhaber der „Ohr Musik“, die Wirkung von Halluzinogenen gern zunutze. Erst jüngst, am 2. Juli dieses Jahres, benebelte er die minderjährigen Musiker der Rockgruppe „Him-

melfahrt“ mit „fünf Joints“ (Aussage eines Band-Mitglieds) und ließ sie im Handdampf Kontrakte unterzeichnen, die von den Eltern der Musiker ohne Bedenken bestätigt wurden.

Trotz solchen Geschäftssinns entscheidet sich Kaiser im Zweifelsfall – seiner Überzeugung entsprechend – zumeist für die Droge und gegen den Profit. Als die deutsche Rock-Zeitschrift „Sounds“, die eine „Ohr“-Platte mit einem umsatzträchtigen Gütesiegel versehen hatte, in ihrer Aprilnummer Leary-Photos brachte, die Kaiser („Sie drucken Haß statt Freude“) als vom US-Geheimdienst CIA lanciert empfand, kündigte er, zuungunsten seiner Musiker, die Zusammenarbeit mit „Sounds“: „Das Zeichen „Eine Empfehlung von Sounds“ auf unserem schönen Album „Kosmische Musik“ wird ersetzt durch das neue Zeichen „Eine Empfehlung von Timothy Leary, Liz Elliot & Brian Barritt.“

Liz Elliot und Brian Barritt, europäische Rest-Gefolgschaft des mittlerweile inhaftierten Leary, sind Kaisers Freunde. Am 10. Juni dieses Jahres reisten diese beiden nach Berlin und bekannten in einem italienischen Restaurant gegenüber „Ohr“-Musikern: „Wir sind gekommen, um euch auf die (Rauschgift-)Spritze zu bringen.“

Diese Vorfälle veranlaßten den Solisten Klaus Schulze und die Band „Tangerine Dream“, ihre Kaiser-Verträge fristlos zu kündigen. „Tangerine Dream“-Chef Edgar Froese in einem Brief an Kaiser: „Wie ich erfahren habe, möchtest Du Brian und Liz mit der Führung des Gruppen-Managements beauftragen. Aus definitiven Erfahrungen wissen wir, in welcher hochgradigen Form sie von der Spritze abhängig sind. Hinzu kommt, daß ich Deine Auslegung vom notwendigen Umgang mit Drogen nicht nachvollziehen kann.“

Kaiser, der alles bestreitet, erwiderte in einem Schreiben an Froeses Anwalt Paul W. Hertin. „daß ein Anlaß für eine fristlose Kündigung der Verträge zwischen der Musikgruppe ‚Tangerine Dream‘ und ‚Ohr Musik Produktion‘ von uns nicht gegeben ist“. Er fürchtet nämlich, daß der „OhrExodus einiger Musiker unter den restlichen „Kosmischen Kurieren“ Schule machen könnte.

Seit langem schon werfen ihm seine Gruppen gefälschte Umsatzzahlen und getürkte Pressemeldungen vor. Denn Kaiser, so hatte der Kritiker Barry Graves unlängst formuliert, „ruinierte den Ruf seiner Bands durch eine Publicity, bei der Unseriosität fast ein Stilprinzip zu sein schien.“

Abwanderungsgelüsten seiner Musiker versucht Kaiser durch Abschluß von (nach einem LSD-Präparat so genannten) „Sunshine“-Verträgen zuvorzukommen: Indem er ihnen Elektronik-Anlagen im Wert von 40 000 Mark zur Verfügung stellt und einen monatlichen Vorschuß von 1000 Mark gewährt, will er die Popmusikanten langfristig an sich binden und „von allen kreativen Tätigkeiten“ 25 Prozent kassieren. Froese an Kaiser: „Du nutzt einfach die Situation auf Kosten anderer aus. sollte das Dein Prinzip der Freude sein, so verzichte ich gern darauf.“

Der „Vorstandsvorsitzende in Samt und Silber“ („Jasmin“) läßt sich jedoch nicht irremachen. Ungeachtet der Kündigung renommiert Kaiser weiterhin mit den Namen Klaus Schulze und „Tangerine Dream“ und verspricht seinen mittellosen Kontrahenten bei Wohlverhalten eine erholsame Reise.

„Hast Du nicht Lust“, schrieb die Kaiser-Partnerin Gille Lettmann am 28. Juli an Klaus Schulze. „Dich mal in Afghanistan zu erholen? Es tut Dir nach Eurer Aufregung in den letzten Wochen sicherlich gut.“

THE MYTHOS OF ROLF-ULRICH KAISER (1943-??)

by Eurock, 2006, <http://www.eurock.com>

There is one person from the “Golden Era of Euro-rock” that over the years I keep getting enquiries about - the legendary Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, who along with his partner Gille (Gisela) Lettmann the Sternmadchen (“StarMaiden”) were known as “The Cosmic Couriers” during the era of German space rock. Off and on over the years I’ve been contacted by people - German media people and fans asking “do you know what happened to R-U???”

At some point the two simply vanished from the scene. For almost 25 years now the only word about them (only a rumor?) was that Rolf was living in a psychiatric hospital somewhere in Germany. He had lost his mind due to excessive use of LSD. Also that Gille Lettmann was staying in that same hospital. Last year I got an email from a German television producer saying that he was working on a program about the history of “Krautrock” and did I know how to contact Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser.

This past year on WDR TV there was in fact 2 programs that dealt with the history of “Krautrock” (a derogatory slang label German musicians hated). That term was coined by the late English journalist Ian MacDonald (not the King Crimson member). MacDonald wrote a couple articles in the UK pop press, circa 1970/ ’71. In them he used it as a moniker for the music coming out of the new rock scene in Germany. Not coincidentally, it was those very articles that I read that led to the creation of EUROCK. It was firstly as a radio show in 1971, then a magazine in 1973 which initially dealt with the newly emerging experimental European rock scene. Germany was the main initial focus. That name has been carried on by me now in one incarnation or another to this day.

But I digress; one of the 2006 TV programs was titled KRAUT & RÜBEN, a 6 week series of one hour documentaries on German rock of the “Golden Era”. It contained historical video and current interviews with some of the pioneers. The video was fascinating, but unfortunately the interviews were in German. So whether they shed any light on the “Cosmic Ones” or not I don’t know. My guess is not however as Kaiser seems no where to be found, and almost universally those who were given their first break by his OHR label have little to say about him now, and nothing good. Drug experimentation and eccentric behavior led to his downfall. So he has become persona non grata, virtually forgotten, and as it turns out seems to have suffered a far worse fate than that.

The other program was entitled, DIE DEUTSCHROCKNACHT 1 & 2, produced by Rockpalast. It aired on 2 consecutive Sundays, 6 hours of music each night featuring video of German rock legends then and now. A kaleidoscope of sights and sounds, the early footage was at times amazing; others laughable. The more modern footage on both shows served as a vivid reminder that even the gods of rock get old.

Just the other day I got yet another query from a German Internet newsgroup about Kaiser and his whereabouts. So I contacted my long time “deutscher freund” Klaus D. Mueller, who is a long time supporter of Eurock. He passed along to me, and kindly allows me to re-print here, the following information he learned in a phone call in 2001 about Kaiser which he had printed in his fanzine THE KS CIRCLE in September 2001.

What Happened to Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser?

For many years journalists ask me the whereabouts of Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, once the founder and head of the "OHR" label, and its sub labels ("Cosmic Music", etc. . .) In mid August 2001 I had a very long talk with an insider who had contact with Kaiser until the early nineties. He told me that from the mid seventies on Kaiser was crazy because of too much LSD.

Also because of (t)his behavior, he had plenty of liabilities, and therefore had disappeared from the officials and the rest of the world. He lived the life of a drop-out, in or near Cologne. Had no identification papers or health insurance, etc. (and didn't want any). He asked people to call him only by an adopted fantasy name. He did a lot of meditation, with girl-friend Gille. . . who only wanted to be called and addressed as "StarMaiden". If you dared to write to her real name "Gille Lettmann", the post will be returned with a warning (!)

He had no income, nothing. In the early mornings he walked to Cologne's main market and begged for waste-products just not to die of hunger. The police had to throw him out of his house as he had sent the owner silly letters declaring that he will not pay rent anymore. After that, he lived for some years - at least until the early nineties - in Gille's mother's house. Meanwhile, a physician had officially declared Kaiser schizophrenic. He had taken too much LSD. Kaiser and Gille continued to send regularly silly letters to "important" people: the Pope, the German Chancellor, the president, etc. . .

[Sidebar: Long ago, when I was working at the German post behind the public counter, we also had our handful of friendly, but crazy customers, who used to send once a month their registered letters to many VIP's such as the Pope, Presidents, etc.]

(PS) Kaiser is dead now; R.I.P.

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In reality, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser beginnings were as a Dutch pop journalist who first made a name for himself by interviewing Frank Zappa during the Mothers of Invention's heyday. He then went on to found Germany's first independent rock label OHR ("Ear"), with the help of Berlin music publisher Peter Meisel. OHR dared to release German music that defied that countries conservative "schlager" tradition. The bands he recorded were not simply Anglo-cover bands; some sang in German, others were experimental sonic explorers, agit-rock politicos, and folky cultural "freaks". He released music those in the business thought had no commercial potential, in a time when being different was not simply a fashion statement, before the reality of "the underground" was turned into a market commodity.

In the beginning, Rolf and Gille were in fact somewhat conservative and naive until they took LSD. That experience caused some sort of consciousness shift that ultimately led them down the "cosmic" path. It also created a paradox between their business ideals which were relatively "wild-eyed" conceptually, and their business practices (contracts, etc.) which were much more old school conservative and restrictive. The result was a clash between them and their artists who were into the hippie "do-your-own-thing trip" and determined to break free from the Nazi influenced social order of their parent's generation. They also did not like their music being promoted as "cosmic" and linked to drugs. Now in retrospect you can see the seeds were being sown for most all of what happened later on, in the case of "The Cosmic Couriers" in Germany, or the so called "youth cultural revolution" around the world. At that time and from a vantage point thousands of miles across the pond, in the midst of it all here at home, this crack in the golden cosmic egg was not clear at all. My main exposure and interest was the music they produced, some of which was in fact incredibly adventurous, amazingly unique, and certainly fuelled by artists who were familiar with "chemical substances".

Basically EUROCK's involvement with Rolf & Gille centered on the 1975 "Kosmische Musik" issue that featured their label. I had a friend who was spending the summer before in Germany doing studies at the Goethe Institute. So I arranged for him to go visit the couple at their home in Stommeln near Cologne. He did an interview, spent the afternoon with them, and told me when he returned they were nice, rather reserved, and not at all the spacy cosmic type of their public image. In fact, he said they very business like.

In addition to that EUROCK issue, I also arranged for distribution of their releases in the USA via JEM IMPORTS. At that time JEM was the largest import distributor stateside and had their own record label as well. So in his heyday Kaiser achieved some small measure of success in making a name for his best early artists in Europe, the UK, and the USA. A consequence of that was that his labels releases gained some amounts of exposure, sold a bit better as exports than in Germany perhaps, and generated interest among commercial labels outside of Germany. They were light years from being “hits” that sold big numbers, but were a cultural phenomenon of sorts coming out of Germany, which hardly had a liberal history. OHR ultimately transformed into the PILZ, and then KOSMISCHE MUSIK labels. It paved the way for other larger companies to establish their own label imprints for “Krautrock”, such as Brain and Bacillus Records, a/o.

Thus the boom was on, the floodgates opened for all kinds of new bands - good and bad. Several of the labels artists left Rolf & Gille, moving on to sign bigger contracts, make good money, and become prolific artists who have had long careers. This was in no small part due to Kaiser’s giving them a start when they were free spirited youth. His knack for promoting his artists was innovative and effective for those times. No publicity is bad publicity, and bad publicity is better than none at all is a truism. In reality, artists may make great art, but most often know little about effective promotion. Art and commerce are two very different animals. As the artists left, lawsuits resulted, and Kaiser’s cosmic vision increasingly grew faint and bleak. It all ended in a big legalistic “bummer”. Some artists got the rights back to their music, others had simply disappeared. OHR itself became consigned to the dustbin of German rock history for the most part. The albums became collectors items, notable not only for their music and sonic qualities as producer Dieter Dierks mixed them in Stereo, some being done as well in Quadraphonic, but their creativity in art design and packaging in many cases done by Peter Geitner (now in an asylum). They have been haphazardly reissued at times, however most often not from original master tapes.

In many ways Kaiser’s work foreshadowed the much less imaginative and mindlessly crass form of “hype” that permeates all media today. Every sort of product has been trumpeted as “revolutionary”, or “pick your own BS adjective”. Off hand I can’t think of one that’s been labeled “cosmic”. Not only is that term laced with humor, but it definitely has a unique connotation that is hard to tack onto selling some form of crap to a mass market audience in a mall or supermarket. On some level coining that term was a small act of genius by Kaiser (mad though he may have been).

As it turns out, Eurock’s role in this “cosmic melodrama” was very modest, seemingly coming before their fall from grace into the excesses of that time - too many drugs, and the acid-lifestyle of rock & roll. It was also observed from afar as a spectator, not up close and personal. That adds a different perspective, one with less real knowledge, but perhaps a more objective viewpoint. The basic fact is his labels releases sold modestly, but did start his best artists on their way to having long and successful careers. The others without the talent or business skills perhaps deservedly fell by the wayside. History and hindsight often absolves most of their misdeeds, and forgiveness is granted to those who misstep. Sadly that does not seem to be the case with Kaiser.

Finding out about Kaiser’s fate just recently, all these years later, has led me to some sort of reflection on “my generation” and what it has wrought. For better and worse life today is what we have made it “the nature of business, society, personally, politically, economically. The “Industrial Revolution”, WW 2, “the 60’s” and “tech boom “ have all led to what we now have inherited and become fully integrated into ? life as we know it is some form of social Darwinism. It is no longer them, but us and our generation who are in the driver’s seat of our own destiny. Our lives are now what we are making of them. In this regard, it does seem that whatever idealism we might have had beating in our hearts when we were young is now but a faint pulse. In this material culture the prevailing attitude is that the party could, should and will go on forever. Wither the more humanistic social ethos, replaced by a purely utilitarian and egocentric view of life.

I can’t pin down the exact malaise the sort of ending Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser had represents on a human scale. Or what it says about life, and the nature of relationships between those who pass each other as we travel through it. I do know however that on any street, in “Any City USA” today, lost and nameless people wander. You see them everywhere. It seems that is also the case in the glorious old cities of mother Europe as well. My basic instinct tells me that no one should come to the end a refugee in their own land. We all deserve a better fate than that!

Ultimately Kaiser became a lost soul, a victim of his times, the drugs, and broken relationships. All

this serving as a trigger for some form of congenital schizophrenia that led to his ultimate downfall and becoming a virtually forgotten man. He is not the only one to be counted among the missing in our generation. His story and others from that time should serve as a cautionary tale for the future about what happens when excess and doing your own thing becomes a preoccupation of the day. It seems dreams and dreamers sometimes die hard, and it's not so pretty a death. It should also give us pause to ponder our own fates and perhaps think twice about judging too harshly, lest we be judged as well ourselves in the future.

Without some official confirmation of the date and place of his demise we have no final ending for the story of what truly became of Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, or Gille Lettmann. The best of their releases on all 3 labels now serve as artifacts documenting their work, and creative spirit of the groundbreaking music made during that original German rock era. It may well be that one or both of them still reside, or simply expired, in an asylum somewhere. Another rumor has them alive and well in Australia, yet another in Bavaria. Wherever "The Cosmic Courier" and "Starry Eyed Girl" are now I send them my best hoping they found peace at last. I do think someone somewhere could at least make the small effort necessary to check the public records for a notation of the if, when, and where of their passing. Or, perhaps they both have taken their headphones and finally left this planet on one final cosmic musical trip, to another time, in another place?disappearing into the mythosphere leaving the music they produced as a legacy.

MIR!

A.

EXHIBITIONISTEN AN DIE FRONT

SPIEGEL-Reporter Fritz Rumler über die Münchner „Underground Explosion“, DER SPIEGEL 17/1969, 21.04.1969

Das Münchner Amt für Öffentliche Ordnung tat, was seines Amtes ist. Die Auftretenden, so diktierte es, hätten „ausreichende Bekleidung“ zu tragen; „so muß insbesondere die Schamgegend und das Gesäß, bei Frauen auch die Brust, bedeckt sein“.

Kann unter solchen Restriktionen eine „Underground Explosion“ stattfinden? Kann so die Kunst zutage treten, für die, bekanntlich, blanke Brust und freie Lenden Untergrundlagen sind?

„Underground Explosion“: Unter dem knalligen Titel begab sich letzte Woche im Münchner Zirkus Krone die erste heimatliche Großveranstaltung dieses Genres. Und es zeigte sich, daß Underground mehr heißt als Offenlegen von Verborgenen.

Denn schon der Anfang war in tiefe Dunkelheit getaucht, Eine halbe Stunde lang erschütterte die bayrische Musik-Kommune „Amon Düül II“ mit einer barbarischen Perkussions-Orgie das finstere Haus; dann wurden die Töne friedlicher, und mild entspannt ließen die Musiker von ihren Instrumenten ab.

„Amon Düül II“, durch Zellteilung aus der „Amon Düül I“ hervorgegangen, ist der Stolz des bayrischen Underground. Ein Dutzend junger Leute, die Herren tragen sich wie Apostel, die Damen wie Heilsarmistinnen, führt in einem Einfamilienhaus am Ammersee ein Großfamilienleben und übersetzt anarchische Neigungen in eine Art Musik.

Nach Stammesweise lebt auch das „Wath-Tholl“-Theater des Züricher Schauspielers Pjotr Kraska, 22. Der Zwölfertropp, Alter zwischen 16 und 24, Beruf zwischen Student und Spengler, hat in einem andalusischen Bauernhof überwintert und an seinem Stil gefeilt.

Mit tierischen Schreien trat nun die Kraska-Sippe im Zirkus Krone an, attackierte sich in Kampfballnetten und ekstatischen Blocksberg-Umarmungen. Kraska, der seine Hosen als Notizblock nutzt, will so die „Einheit zwischen Geist und Körper“ erzielen; als ein Zuschauer ein Kraska-Mädchen küßte, stürzte es, wie vom Blitz berührt, zu Boden.

Um so aufgewühlte Gäste im Zaum zu halten, hatte der Krone-Haus-Verwalter Hans Schulz seine Weißhemden-Ordnungstruppe um 10 auf 22 Mann verstärkt. Es sind Männer, sagt Schulz, die sich „was dazuverdienen“; ihr Führer etwa arbeitet tagsüber im Eisenbahn-Ausbesserungswerk.

Als Schulz aber merkte, daß im Saale nur „Studenten sind, die ihren Spaß wollen“, hielt er den Schutztrupp zu Sanftmut an. Die nachfolgenden Darbietungen waren sowieso stärker geeignet, die Aufmerksamkeit zu fesseln.

Denn alsbald trat ein Mädchen ans Mikrophon, das am Leib nur schwarze Schminke trug. Es stieß spitze Schreie aus, verfiel in Stöhnengesang und Dada-Rezitative. Das ist „Anima-Musik“, erklärt der Gatte, der Maler, Filmer, Schmied und Bildhauer Paul Fuchs, Limpe Fuchs, die Sängerin, kann auch am Schlagzeug, das sie am Konservatorium studiert, nur trommeln, wenn sie oben frei ist. Paul pustet dazu in eine selbstgeschweißte Tuba und verstärkt den Strahl, indem er ihn in eine Milchkanne richtet.

Das merkwürdige Paar lebt auf einem Dorf bei Wasserburg in einem alten Pfarrhof, dessen Funda-

mente im 9. Jahrhundert gründen und der mittlerweile als Fluchtburg des bayrischen Underground gilt; die Dörfler schlagen gern das Kreuz, wenn man sie nach dem Pfarrhof fragt.

Was man Limpe nicht durfte, das sollte man Valie Export: anfassen. Die Wiener Verfechterin neuer Kunstformen trug einen Blechkasten an der bloßen Brust, und Gäste waren geladen, durch die Röhre beide Hände nach Valie auszustrecken.

„Es lohnt sich“, verriet ein Ordnungsmann nach dem Zugriff: Der Mann hatte damit an einer Vorführung des „Ersten Tapp- und Tastfilms“ teilgenommen. Denn, so deutet der Valie-Freund Peter Weibel aus Wien: Der Blechkasten ist ein Kinosaal, „nur etwas kleiner“, und darin wird „ein echter Frauenfilm“ gezeigt.

Weibel, der auch Seh-Filme fertigt, verband die Export-Ausstellung mit der Verlesung eines seiner Manifeste. „Schwanz raus“, forderte er, „Exhibitionisten an die Front.“ Schließlich ging er zu direkter Aktion über.

Mit einer Art Stalinorgel, die Wasser spie, rückte er gegen die Besucher vor, und wer sich widersetzte, den trafen Valies Peitschenhiebe. „Wir schlagen“, erläuterte Weibel den Vorgang, „Staatsbürger zu Menschen zusammen.“

Der „Explosion“-Veranstalter Karlheinz Hein, 32, trug seinen Yul-Brynner-Kopf matt schimmernd und zufrieden durch die von mancherlei Licht-Spielen erhellte Arena. Er hat, wie er wollte, „momentan aktuelle Künste“ vorgeführt und hofft, daß ihm die Bayern dafür keine Vergnügungssteuer abnehmen,

Die „Explosion“ geht nun auf Tournee, unter anderem nach Köln, und die lokale Stadthalle erfuhr beruhigt, daß dabei eigentlich nichts explodiert. Die Undergroundler, scheint es, haben das Pulver noch nicht erfunden.

COMMUNING WITH CHAOS

by Edwin Pouncey, The Wire #144 (February '96)

Of all the groups lumped together under the Krautrock banner, Amon Düül II was the most psychedelic, the most cosmic, the most out of control. Edwin Pouncey went to Munich to meet the group's surviving members: there he heard a tale of 60s hippy communes, internecine warfare, drug-fuelled counterculture nights, and strange encounters with Can, Jimi Hendrix and the Baader-Meinhof group.

When the German rock explosion (now recognised as Krautrock) first hit these shores in the early 70s, the temptation to label it as a thriving and productive little European movement was too much for the music press of the day to resist. In truth, the groups involved in making Krautrock happen were spread out across a vast land mass, and many of them were unaware of each other's existence. Can were from Cologne, a city that has now grown almost to the size of Los Angeles. Düsseldorf, the industrial heartland of Germany, produced Kraftwerk, Neu! and Cluster. Berlin, the capital, was home to Tangerine Dream. And Munich, a remote Southern city situated in the magical kingdom of Bavaria, spawned Amon Düül.

"In Germany it was all intolerance and badmouthing each other," explains founding Amon Düül II guitarist Chris Karrer. "We had to fight to be accepted by the people." Amon Düül II and Karrer's fight to be heard continues some 30 years later with the release of a new record, Nada Moonshine#, and a reissue/tour programme that is slowly coming together and should start rolling during the next few months.

Of the original group, four members have managed to survive the various upheavals that have become an integral part of the Amon Düül mythology: Karrer, his longtime comrade and vocalist Renate Krotenschwanz Knaup, bass player/computer programmer Lothar Meid, and artistic supervisor/lighting director (and occasional synthesizer and keyboard player) Falk U Rogner. All agree that this time it's break or bust for Amon Düül II. . .

"I never was a hippy! I accepted them but it was never my thing. I was a fighter. We were all fighters, not hippies" - Renate Knaup

In the beginning there were three Amon Düüls. Amon Düül I was the infamous political/musical commune group led by Ulrich Leopold, the brother of drummer Peter. Amon Düül II formed when Chris Karrer broke away from the commune to concentrate on broadening the musical side of Düül. But before either of these, there was Amon Düül O. Formed in 1966 and featuring Karrer on guitar, Lothar Meid on bass and drummer Christian Burchard (who would later form Embryo), ADO was a short-lived experiment which indulged the trio's early obsession with John Coltrane/Ornette Coleman-inspired free jazz. "I grew up in the 50s during the Elvis Presley era," explains Karrer when I met the group in Munich last December. "At the age of ten I was into dressing up like Elvis, all that 'Blue Suede Shoes' shit. But the next giant step for me was when I saw John Coltrane in 1965 and everything I had seen or heard before suddenly seemed immature. I launched myself into the free jazz scene; we used to hang around jazz clubs in Munich and Barcelona, anywhere we could discover more about this music.

"The next stage in my musical education was when I saw Jimi Hendrix in 1967. I followed this girl to find out where she was going because there were no girls at the jazz club I used to visit. She

went into this new club I hadn't seen before which had a poster outside saying this guy Hendrix was playing there. It was such an event to see him perform in such a small club, standing on this tiny stage in front of these huge Marshall stacks, surrounded by 400 screaming mini-skirted girls and plucking this flaming guitar with his teeth. After Hendrix I went home and broke all of my jazz records."

So intense was Karrer's experience that he went in search of a new group that could recreate and extend Hendrix's brand of freeform psychedelia. He found what he was looking for by stumbling into the communal camp of Amon Düül (I), a straggly bunch of politically-aware outsiders and freaks which at the time included Ulrich and Peter Leopold, together with Rainer Bauer. Later, the commune would expand to take in Bauer's sister Ella (aka Elenora Romana), Helge and Angelika Filanda, Uschi Obermeier and numerous cats, dogs and children. The music they made was equally sprawling and chaotic, an extended acoustic and percussive thrash which was recorded for posterity during a mammoth 48 hour improvised workout. A section of this was released in 1969 on the album *Psychedelic Underground*, while the rest of the session was shelved. When Amon Düül II began to attract attention, however, further unauthorised sections of the work began to appear. Eventually, a second single album, *Collapsing - Singvogel Rückwärts*, and two double album sets, *Disaster - Lüüd Noma* and *Experimente*, were released, much to the displeasure of all concerned. According to a source close to Ulrich Leopold, the man responsible was *Psychedelic Underground* producer Peter Meisel, who "cut the tape up and added extra, unconnected sound effects and things to beef them up a bit."

"I had nothing to do with that recording session," claims Karrer when asked about his involvement with the project. "The only original thing from that period which hasn't been released yet is a 1967 recording of the basic Amon Düül band."

Feeling somewhat discouraged and in need of adventure, Karrer teamed up with artist/photographer friend Falk U Rogner and together they made their way to London, primarily to meet up with another Munich colleague of theirs, Renate Knaup, who was working as an au pair in Muswell Hill.

"I was 16 and a half when I went to work in London," Renate recalls, "and I remember telling a friend at the time that I'm going to be a singer and nothing else. Before I left Germany I was totally into The Beatles and Otis Redding. I knew Chris from Munich from that period; he was playing guitar in jazz clubs but he wasn't really into doing that. When they came to visit me they were already talking about forming the group, so I came back with them to Germany."

Meanwhile, Karrer discovered that London circa 1968 had much to offer the young musician: one experience in particular would have a lasting impact on the music of Amon Düül II. "While we were there we went to the Roundhouse where we saw a free jazz band playing on the same bill as Family, The Animals and some other bands," he explains. "I thought to myself, 'These English people are much further ahead than we are'." When they returned to Munich both Renate and Falk were integrated into the original Amon Düül family, but the continuing chaos, political dogmatism and musical mayhem was becoming unbearable for Karrer and Knaup.

"Everybody was allowed to make noise," remembers Renate with disgust. "I found this so ugly sounding that it made me clam up. If that was their idea of making music it was certainly not mine. I was an amateur too, but I wanted to bring another dimension to the band. There were also certain rules you had to obey and if you broke any you had to go in front of this tribunal and explain your actions to these fuckers! Even when I wanted to buy a new pair of stockings I had to ask the 'cashier' for money. This is why we split from Amon Düül I: they were too involved with this political shit."

Chris Karrer, meanwhile, had another reason for wanting to go it along. "Amon Düül I were going completely against this semi-professional jazz musician image which Peter Leopold and I had adopted. I was really astonished at the direction Ulrich Leopold had chosen to go; for me it was like listening to a bunch of amateurs."

The crunch came when Amon Düül I and Karrer's version with Renate on vocals appeared on the same stage at the infamous Essener Sonntag Festival in October 1968. The ensuing battle between the two groups caused a split, and Amon Düül I and the newly formed Amon Düül II parted company. There were now two communes of musicians, both leaderless, to worry the upright citizens of Munich. "We were hated so much by the normal people," laughs Renate. "We were living

in this huge flat with seven rooms in Prinzregentenstrasse; it was a house where Hitler once gave a speech from the balcony. In front was a taxicab rank with these drivers hanging around all day.” “The normal citizen looked at us and saw a mixture of gangster, hippy, criminal and ape,” continues Chris. “Once somebody rang us up with a nice voice and asked if they could do a feature article on us about how a commune works. They came and asked us questions, took our photos and disappeared. One week later the article appeared and it said: ‘This kind of community stinks and if this is the future of Germany then we need Adolf back.’ ”

Another reason for the authorities and regular folks to be fearful was the opening in 1969 of a club in Leopoldstrasse called PN. It was soon to become a regular venue for Amon Düül II and their army of freaky followers.

“The guy who ran this club was 20 years older than us and from a totally different scene,” explains Renate, “but he sensed there was something going on that wasn’t just a fad but a movement. He accepted all these crazy people for what they were; everyone was allowed to express themselves in any way they wanted. At that time acid was the drug and many people took too much. To see them freaking out in front of you was worrying sometimes because they looked as though they were going insane. There were some really eccentric people there too. I remember very well this Russian guy called Anatole: everybody had long hair but he was completely bald.”

“He used to dance to our music in a very extreme fashion,” adds Chris. “Once I saw him at the front of the stage with this naked old woman and he was shoving his Vaseline finger in and out of her backside to the rhythm of the music while ringing this bell at the same time.” “We never had the police coming round,” smiles Renate. “There were never any fights.”

Amon Düül’s successive and successful appearances at PN soon aroused record company interest: in 1969, the group’s first album, the notorious *Phallus Dei*, was released by Liberty. By this time the group had expanded to an eight-piece: joining Karrer, Knaup, Leopold and Rogner were English bass player Dave Anderson (formerly of Kippington Lodge), drummer Dieter Serfas, Shrat on percussion and vocals, and guitarist John Weinzierl, whom Chris and Falk had liberated from boarding school in order to have him play in the group.

The music on *Phallus Dei* (aka *God’s Cock*) owes much to the shambling and hypnotic improvisations of the discarded Amon Düül I, only this time the playing is more accomplished and ambitious. Renate, however, felt that her talents were not being used to the full.

“When I joined Amon Düül II I started to really get into the music. I never had any problems with experimental music: I loved Ornette Coleman, but the problem I had in the beginning was self confidence. It was difficult to be the only woman involved inside this macho, musical mafia. *Phallus Dei* had no words for me to sing. I only did these oohs and aahs for the vocals. I wanted to be a soul singer, in the same way that Hendrix was a soul singer.”

The second Amon Düül II album, *Yeti* (1970), gave Renate a more prominent role and boosted the rest of the group’s confidence in the recording studio. With a mixture of short songs and cosmically-tuned improvisational tracks, *Yeti* can be heard today as one of the cornerstones of both Amon Düül’s career and the entire Krautrock movement.

“We were satisfied with what we had done,” suggests Renate. “We felt proud about *Yeti* and we were among people who loved us. Nobody could harm us any more.”

As well as the feeling of well-being which the recording of *Yeti* produced within the group, it also offered the opportunity to hold out an olive branch to the surviving members of Amon Düül I, who had also just recorded their second album, *Paradieswärts Düül*. Rainer Bauer, Ulrich Leopold and flautist Thomas Keyserling were invited to contribute a track to *Yeti* entitled “Sandoz In The Rain”, a gesture of friendship which produced one of the record’s most precious and exciting moments.

“We had some free time while recording *Yeti*, so we asked them if they wanted to do something,” explains Chris. “After *Yeti* was released, the Sandoz Pharmaceutical company in Switzerland wrote us a letter wanting to know if it was their company we were singing about [it was in the Sandoz laboratories that Albert Hofmann discovered LSD 25]. We wrote back saying, ‘No, it’s just an English code name.’ ”

There are two more reasons why *Yeti* is an important Krautrock icon. Firstly, it features the group’s

most popular song, “Archangels [sic] Thunderbird”, which was composed by Renate and based on the tune to a favourite hymn she used to sing in her local church choir.

“They recorded the music track in the studio and I had to record the vocal on top. I went into my room with the Revox and for two days I rehearsed. When I was ready I went into the studio and sang it once and everybody went, Wow! This was the way I had to do it. This was always a man’s band and if any of them could have sung properly they would never have chosen me, a girl, to be their vocalist.”

Chris listens to this with a bowed head, but then he looks up and says, “I’m a big fan of Renate; she’s more creative than even she thinks. She knows how to write a melody in her head, and that’s composing.”

Yeti’s second important component is Falk Rogner’s mystical and haunting gatefold sleeve design, one of many images he designed for the group using a mixture of collage and photography.

“For the Yeti cover I used an image of Der Sensenmann[The Grim Reaper], who is often depicted in old German woodcuts,” he says. “At first I didn’t intend to use this photo for the cover. I had been taking some photos with a member of the Amon Düül I commune called Wolfgang Krischke who was the sound man for Amon Düül. Some months later he was found frozen to death near his parents’ house; they said he had taken some acid and fell asleep in the snow. He was a very good friend to Renate and me and an outsider member of the Amon Düül scene. When he died I thought that the photo would be a perfect tribute to his memory. He never managed to find his way into Amon Düül properly when he was alive, so maybe his image as Der Sensenmann will work as a strange cover image and he could be remembered as a magical person.”

Later on that same year Amon Düül II produced a second double album, a sequel to Yeti of sorts, entitled Dance Of The Lemmings. Here the group’s exploration of their new found musical power was slightly less focused, causing side-long tracks, with titles like “The Marilyn Monroe-Memorial-Church” and “Restless-Skylight-Transistor-Child”, to blunder along in a cosmic fog of freefalling improvisation; as a result Renate’s vocal was lost.

Lemmings did, however, introduce a couple of important new players to the group’s complex sound tapestry: Alois Gromer (an old boyfriend of Renate’s) on sitar, and an American ex-GI and jazz keyboard player called Jimmy Jackson, whose contribution to Lemmings and the three Amon Düül-related records that followed involved him playing an extraordinary church organ that would become a crucial component in defining the group’s sound.

“It was a large, ancient Mellotron-type instrument that had been designed by some crazy instrument builder,” Renate explains. “For every key on the keyboard he had made a tape of that note which had been sung by a real choir. It wasn’t sampled or anything.” Chris adds: “He devised a system where he took about 150 matches and stuck them in the parts of the keyboard that didn’t work. He painted these with different colours so he knew which keys he could play. It was the first such instrument in the world and Florian Fricke of Popol Vuh used it for his soundtrack music to [Werner] Herzog’s Aguirre: Wrath Of God. It’s in a museum now.”

Amon Düül were now on United Artists, the label that had signed Can in 1969. A certain rivalry existed between the two groups, and because of the publicity it generated, was allowed to flourish. Years later, Chris is still laughing about how Can’s attempt to sabotage an Amon Düül II show in Barcelona by doping their guitar player John Weinzierl with cough mixture failed miserably. “We went on and played so well that most of the audience went home after our set. Of the 5000 people who were there, only 500 stayed to watch Can play.”

More damning is Karrer’s account of how Can succeeded in cornering the film soundtrack market, an act of self-promotion that, according to Karrer, caused the first real rift in the German rock scene. “The new German film makers like Wim Wenders and [Rainer] Fassbinder wanted music for their films. They came to bands like Can and Amon Düül and asked us to compose something. We all made a decision to say that we would need ten per cent of the budget for the music, which was about 20,000DM. But Can said whatever price the other bands have decided upon, they will do it for less. After that there was no scene, and even today there is no solidarity between the bands.”

In 1971 Amon Düül II went back into the studio to record Carnival In Babylon, which featured Danny Fichelscher of Popol Vuh on drums, Lothar Meid on bass, Joy Alaska on backing vocals and

their trusted producer Olaf Kubler on sax. One of Carnival's highlights is a John Weinzierl song entitled "Kronwinkl 12", a semi-autobiographical piece which referred to the group's newly rented commune in the country, paid for by the advances and royalties from United Artists. Kronwinkl was a huge Gothic guest house attached to a castle and with its own private chapel. It became an open house for freaks and hangers-on: often the group were unaware of who was inhabiting their country retreat. Renate remembers one particularly memorable encounter:

"We came home very early one morning after finishing the final gig of our German tour. Falk and I went to our room and found to our astonishment that someone was asleep in our bed. I screamed, 'What the fuck is going on, who are you?' Then we saw it was Andreas Baader of the Baader-Meinhof gang. At the same time Chris yells out, 'Whaa...someone's in my bed!' And it was Baader's accomplice Gudrun Ensslin. I went upstairs and said to Frau Ensslin: 'Would you be so kind as to explain why you broke into our house?' We were political but we weren't into carrying guns and killing people like they were. We were into making things change through our music. Everybody thought that Baader and Ensslin were being taken care of by someone else, so we all went to sleep. When we woke up the next afternoon, we discovered that they had stolen all our newly-bought clothes."

The following years saw the group back in the studio and undertaking a series of extensive European tours to promote such records as *Wolf Cry* and *Viva La Trance*. Prior to this they had taken part in a project called *Utopia* which had been masterminded by producer Olaf Kübler, the resulting album was an interesting but ultimately messy-sounding experiment which smacked of self-indulgence.

"We tried to be more commercial on *Wolf City* and *Viva La Trance*," Renate sighs. "*Wolf City* was the best album as far as I'm concerned, but after that something changed." "We were very anti-German. We did not want to be German, we wanted to be multi-cultural" - Chris Karrer

The classic Amon Düül period ended shortly after the release of *Viva La Trance* in 1973. When their contract with United Artists was terminated, the group signed a new deal with Atlantic/Atco, a move that would eventually tear it apart and scatter its members across the world.

From the start there was trouble when news was leaked that the German branch of the company was seriously considering renaming the group *Olaf And His Swinging Nazis*. The records that followed were equally dodgy sounding. *Hijack* and *Made In Germany* (a double concept album that claimed to be "Deutschland's Erste Rock-Oper") were supervised by a producer called Jürgen S. Korduletsch, who added an army of professional session musicians to the basic Düül sound and buried it under an avalanche of string arrangements and studio gimmickry. The only interesting tracks on "*Made In Germany*" are four solo synthesizer pieces recorded by Falk Rogner while the rest of *Amon Düül II* were out of the studio.

"I felt it was important to experiment and do things for me," he explains. "The little electronic things I did for *Made In Germany* were like short films; you hear Techno and electronic crossover things today, but I was doing that 15 years ago. At that time Lothar wouldn't touch a machine and Renate refused to sing along with one. I always listened to that kind of music in my studio: I listened to *Suicide*. *Made In Germany* was the single worst concept that came out of the head of Jürgen Korduletsch and the rest of *Amon Düül* knew that. It was a period when the producers started to take over."

Worse was to come, however, with *Pyragony X*, *Almost Alive* and *Only Human*, on which the group was reduced to a five-piece rock outfit that bore little relationship to the massive, brain-pulsating beast heard on *Phallus Dei* and *Yeti*. *Amon Düül II* was now reduced to a name, and for many of the key members, it was time to do other things.

Renate was one of the first to make a decisive move: she sent in search of a vocal teacher who could show her how to breathe properly so that she could develop as a singer. "I did that for a year, and then through Danny Fichelscher I met Florian Fricke and got more and more into his music. I experienced a lot through Florian's music. What I did with *Amon Düül* was spontaneous and, apart from by myself, I didn't rehearse. Florian's music makes you feel stoned when you sing it; the repetition makes you high. He always sat next to me and we sang it through together until I had it right. I found a closer sense of what it means to sing."

As the 70s collapsed into the 80s, Renate began to record with Fricke's group *Popol Vuh*, while

Chris Karrer was trying to salvage what was left of Amon Düül II for one final recording. In 1981 every member of the original line-up came together with new producer Jörg Evers to record *Vortex*, a new set of songs that attempted to edge the power of Amon Düül's past music into a new decade.

"Vortex was a tribute to Renate," says Chris. "She did some of her greatest work on this album. [But] because there was no real interest after the record was released, everybody was disappointed and went their own way again. Renate went back to Popol Vuh, John ent to Australia, Jörg Evers the producer tried to form a punk band, and I went to record and tour with Embryo and [Viennese fantasy painter and musician] Ernst Fuchs."

Another attempt to resurrect the Amon Düül name was put into action by guitarist John Weinzierl and bassist Dave Anderson at the latter's Foel Studio in Wales during the mid-80s. What started off as a viable project, however, turned sour when Anderson, reportedly unknown to Weinzierl, began to release records complete with pictures of Karrer, Knaup and Falk circa 1969 on the sleeves. The rest of Amon Düül II were outraged, and as a result Weinzierl and Anderson were ostracised. Anderson had also teamed up with Hawkwind lyricist Bob Calvert for one of his Amon Düül projects, and when Calvert died in 1989, a 'gathering of the clans' event was organised at the Brixton Academy in London. Those from Amon Düül II who showed up were John, Chris, Renate and Peter Leopold; Falk was also expected but he missed his plane and failed to appear. A similar event was held in Italy later that same year, but after that the group drifted apart again.

What brought them back together was not another reunion attempt but the threat by a German businessman to use the name Amon Düül for one of his ventures. This galvanised the group into making a stand. The original six members got together, sued the businessman, and managed to settle out of court in their favour.

Following this legal success, the group was further encouraged by the interest that was generated by the release in 1992 of a set of live BBC recordings from 1973. The record was the pet project of Düül disciple Phil Burford, who believes that this was the point at which Amon Düül began to re-evaluate their potential.

"I think this was the catalyst," Burford explains. "When they saw how *Live In Concert* went down with the press, that sudden strength they had at that time gained momentum. They played a concert in 1992 and the following year they went into the studio to record *Nada Moonshine#*."

With the release of *Nada Moonshine#* last year, Amon Düül are back on the track they wobbled off so many years ago; only this time they are going in another direction. And, unlike previous detours, it is a direction which those involved are happy to pursue.

"Lothar is using a computer, which has long been a fantasy of his," says Renate. "Chris didn't like Lothar's machine sound at first and he boycotted it. Eventually he saw that it was just another way of composing music and getting things done. I now think that he has finally bitten into the technological apple and he likes the taste of it. I think it's a wonderful combination when he acoustics of the instruments and the vocals come together with the heavy sound of the computer programming."

It would seem that, finally, everything is falling into place for Amon Düül II, but chaos is never far away whenever the group decide to do something creative together. After recording *Nada Moonshine#* it was decided to remix the title track for a video. Unfortunately, the record company involved in releasing the album had neglected to pay the studio and the tapes were confiscated until payment was received. Eventually it was decided to go to another studio and re-record the track. "It came out perfectly," Renate beams, "it moves much more than the original did."

Hearing such ramshackle stories brings to mind the taloned, Lovecraftian stormtrooper that leaps out of the cover of the group's 1973 *Live In London* album. The crawling chaos that this monster represents still seems to haunt Amon Düül, while at the same time providing the context for its still unique, psyche-warping music.

"I'd love not to have so much chaos," says Renate. "For me chaos is destructive. But yes, chaos could be the thing that makes Amon Düül the band it is today. Without chaos it would be boring."

AMON DÜÜL II - YETI TALKS TO YOGI

Interviews with Chris Karrer and John Weinzierl
by Andy Whittaker [orig. published on Delerium's Psychedelic Web; 1997]

PART I - Chris Karrer

"I'm not interested in mere nostalgia, but Amon Düül was too good to forget", were Chris Karrer's opening words to me on the topic of this legendary psychedelic band. It's a measure of Düül's uniqueness that, unlike many other German bands of the late '60s / early '70s, they've never become flavour of the month among the trendmongers. Their music is timeless too for that, and it comes as no surprise that some of our favourite bands of the '80s cite Amon Düül II as an influence, both musically and spiritually'. They were after all, leading alchemists, at a time when it seemed that music really could change the world.

Whilst the band members have long gone their separate musical ways, they still exist as a kind of family, and events transpired in 1989 to put most of them back on stage together, in London and Italy, for the first time in over ten years. To catch up with events, I spoke separately to guitarists John Weinzierl and initially, Chris Karrer (with a little help from the master of ceremonies Dieter Serfas).

Nowadays Chris divides his time between music and painting, the two being neatly combined in his forthcoming LP in collaboration with fellow artist Ernst Fuchs (famous Austrian painter). He's also re-joined jazz-rock group Embryo, plays with the Italian group Militia, and continues his long standing interest in Asian and African music ('World music' was of course no mystery to the more visionary bands of some twenty years ago).

Despite his original comments, Chris seemed happy to reminisce, and it soon became clear that he has retained his ideals: a natural musician, still pushing at the boundaries, but without the slightest hint of pretentiousness. He's a true giant of the psychedelic.

Chris formed the original Amon Düül circa 1967 (memories are a little blurred!), with drummer Peter Leopold, bassist Lothar Meid, and singer Rainer Bauer.

D.S:- They didn't release any records, but Chris was already an inspirational player, and there's a tape in existence that's still worthy of release.

CK:- Yes, we're thinking of releasing it.

We had many influences, such as Hapsash and my own jazz background. We also felt that presentation was very important, I remember there was one night when our bubble machine went into overdrive and engulfed each member of the band in a giant bubble. You should make an effort with the visuals, unlike jazz musicians, who go on stage in old pullovers.

The German music scene was very conventional at the time, so we naturally became a focus for any alternative organisation, and Amon Düül soon became not a group, but a community.

They really did! The Amon Düül community eventually existed in a mansion outside Munich, and

a house in the lakeland area near the Austrian border.

There were three revolutions happening at this time; the musical, the sexual, and the political. Amon Düül were originally part of the musical revolution, but as the community grew, the politics began to take over, and the original creative spirit was getting submerged. The last straw was when it was 'decided' that everyone in the commune was a musician, including the children, irrespective of the results.

Chris, his original vision lost, had some kind of a nervous breakdown at this point.

CK:- I spent two weeks in bed, during which time I composed one side of Phallus Dei in my head. I knew I had to return to Munich and get back to the music.

Chris returned to the commune, but named the band Amon Düül II, as their vision was solely musical. They then started their own very successful club, on Leopoldstrasse, and again became a focus for the 'underground' movement. The growth of the underground meant that they now had sufficient commercial viability to be signed up by Liberty / UA, resulting in the release of Phallus Dei in 1969. The line-up at this stage consisted of Chris and John, vocalist Renate Krötenschwanz-Knaup, drummer Peter Leopold, Falk Rogner on keyboards, Dave Anderson on bass, Shrat on bongoes and percussionist Dieter Serfas.

It was a tremendous debut, with all of what were to become Amon Düül II trademarks: Renate's soaring vocals, the 'tribal' atmosphere combining with an 'other-worldly' feel, and the bursts of excellent instrumental work. Even the side-long title track holds the momentum, being a trip into the cosmos, unlike many kinds of jam session. The lyrics and sleeve notes were pretty mysterious too, even to a German speaker.

CK:- I was, and still am, greatly influenced by the surreal, and the titles reflect this. We got a lot of stick in Germany for singing in English, but this was the language of international communication, especially in music. On the other hand, some of our lyrics were deliberately not in any language; we were trying to remove barriers by singing meaningless songs. The music of those days allowed great freedom, which I dearly miss.

How true! Chris was also responsible for the wonderful sleeve, which reappeared on the German re-issue a few years back, but it's hard to find an original British copy which had a different equally annoying sleeve. The Sunset reissue with yet another (less interesting) sleeve is however very common.

Around this time, some LP's were released in Germany under the name of Amon Düül: Psychedelic Underground, and Collapsing and later Disaster. These were not, as is often said, the work of the pre-Phallus Dei line-up, but the result of the non-Amon Düül II members of the commune (including Rainer Bauer, interestingly) obtaining a record contract on the strength of Amon Düül II's LP. According to Chris, they recorded all three LP's (one a double) in one night! This is believable, as they consist of massed repetitive percussion, distorted guitars and noises, including the children, of course. Worth a listen, if you get the chance, in order to make up your mind whether you agree with Chris that they're "rubbish", though none are easy to find. Collapsing is actually quite listenable, consisting of far shorter tracks than the others, whilst Psychedelic Underground has a great sleeve, which disappeared when it was reissued. The reissue of Disaster also had a new outer sleeve. Another album called Paradieswärts, recorded in late 1971, is a more laid-back affair similar to "Sandoz In The Rain" (from Yeti). The non-LP single is presumably from the same sessions. Another album, Experiment seems to be a bootleg of different takes and unreleased material.

CK:- The only member of Amon Düül II involved was Peter Leopold. He soon realised his mistake, and returned to the band, whilst Ulrich Leopold, the number one 'head' of the time, is now a very respectable organ and guitar teacher.

Amon Düül II followed Phallus Dei with their two classic double albums, Yeti and Dance of The Lemmings, each adorned with unforgettable covers, and with the mix of shorter tracks and improvisations being developed to near-perfection - and well produced, too. Both come unreservedly recommended,

Yeti includes their best-known song "Archangels Thunderbird", the inspired madness of "Eye-

Shaking King”, and the side-and-a-half long title track, which may well feature the playing of some extra-terrestrial guests; certainly there was magic in the air when they recorded it. If there has to be such a thing as the greatest LP of all time, this is as good a candidate as any.

Renate stayed with the yetis awhile, so was missing for DOTL (Dance Of The Lemmings), a comparatively tightly constructed album, featuring Chris and John’s little stories on the first record, and a wonderfully spacey instrumental on the second.

CK:- I still like the sound of those records, at least in parts. Dave plays like an angel on Yeti, although we then had some trouble with him, and he left the band, being replaced by Lothar for DOTL. The “Chamsin Soundtrack” on DOTL won a film music award in Germany. At the time all the German bands had agreed to charge the same amount for soundtracks, then Can undercut it, so of course they got all the film work after that. I could see the ideals were disappearing.

I’d have been happy for Chris to discuss the LP’s for hours, but he seemed keen to move on. However, I had one question last about them; “Who was the guy on the front cover of Yeti?”. The answer was sadly bizarre.

CK:- That was Krischke, our sound man. A little while later, he disappeared and we didn’t know why. Eventually his body was found in the woods, frozen and half eaten by wild animals.

After four more excellent LP’s, (Carnival In Babylon, Live In London, Wolf City and Vive La Trance) which included extra drummer Danny Fichelscher, Amon Düül moved to Atlantic, and released Hijack, which marked a radical change in direction.

CK:- We were being pushed towards making our sound far more commercial - there was a definite attempt to crack the American market. Somehow we let it happen, even my original sleeve for the album was rejected by the record company. I saw much the same thing happen with Roxy Music... Their first two LP’s were very good, very original, but it sounds to me as if they then became subject to the dictates of the record company.

Also, the original method of Amon Düül, to work together around musical ideas, was disappearing. Now we were being pulled apart, musically and personally. I still had my own corner, I got to include my stuff on the records, and at the time I was happy with that. But it was out of control; we lost control of Amon Düül!

The next LP was a double Made In Germany, which has some great moments, but bears witness to the growing tensions in the band.

CK:- I was not happy with the way it portrayed such strong nationalist overtones, which must have bewildered what fans we had left in Germany. We even sent a film to WEA, with Peter playing Hitler, Renate was Eva Braun, and Falk played a Jew. This was not exactly exotic, not my idea of Amon Düül at all. In America it was only a single LP, which lost the concept anyway.

Few people were aware that Amon Düül II even existed after Made In Germany, and Chris certainly doesn’t enthuse about the ensuing ‘70s LP’s, as Renate, Falk, and Lothar dropped out. The music, whilst not at all bad, is not typical Amon Düül II, and new listeners should concentrate on the first three releases.

CK:- We were getting fewer and fewer gigs, and were making LP’s because someone was prepared to release them, but by the time Only Human was done, even John had left the band, he couldn’t face the charade. It was so ridiculous that at the last gig we played there two Amon Düül’s on the bill, mine and Peter Leopold’s! So, without formally ending Amon Düül, I released a solo LP in 1980, then made a final attempt to rekindle the spirit of Amon Düül with Vortex. Renate, Falk and Danny played on the record, with Jörg Evers on bass. But there were no gigs, and little interest in the band, so that proved to be the end.

A listen to Vortex demonstrates the irony of the situation. It’s a brilliant LP which perfectly adapts the Amon Düül sound to the ‘80s; John and Lothar even make guest appearances. But Amon Düül in 1981? Maybe three years later and it would have got the attention it deserved, but at least they bowed out in style.

CK:- We spent a lot of money on our records, and now I’m broke. We could have been millionaires if we’d saved money! (Laughs)

That was the end of Amon Düül II until the 1989 gigs, although the name was kept alive by the British 'Amon Düül' LP's, of which more will be said later. In 1986 posters for the Hawkwind tour promised 'special guests Amon Düül III', but this was no more than a whim of the promoter, and no such band appeared. Chris had never heard anything about it! But what about Amon Düül in the future?

CK:- After Italy I'm sure the enthusiasm is there to play some more European dates, probably not Germany, though. The spirit of the band is very much alive, the magic still exists. And I'd be happy to record a new Amon Düül LP. It's very nice that there are still people who care about us.

The fertile musical mind of Chris Karrer continues to evolve: apart from Embryo, Militia, and the Ernst Fuchs record, he continues to explore other avenues. He's recorded with Afghan musicians, and recently was in Cairo recording with an Egyptian group. "Perhaps I'll go to Cairo and play flamenco in the streets", he chuckled.

Psychedelic to his very bones.

PART II - John Weinzierl

Like Chris Karrer, John Weinzierl is still very active musically. He works regularly as a session man in Austria, and in Munich he organises NRG Think-Tank Corporation, which comprises seven workshops working on songs, with much use of electronics. At the time of the interview they hadn't released any records, but John spoke of an LP in the making:- "In the Amon Düül tradition, but using and playing with the language of today". He too was happy to talk about Amon Düül, but first I asked about earlier times.

JW:- When I was about 13 I had a band, playing Shadows' stuff - The Merseygents, y'know, all dressed up in matching black trousers and red shirts. Everyone was playing Beatles' songs then, and we became one of the first to cover the 'Stones. That's my background, '60s pop, very little original material, while most of Amon Düül had a jazz background, which I wasn't into. I got a few things out of the jazz side, such as rhythms from Dieter.

FB:- How did you come to join Amon Düül II ?

JW:- There was this rumour about people in Munich called 'Hipsters', who were looking for something different, new ways of being together, different kinds of drugs. Drugs were very important. There was a different attitude then - today kids just get bombed, which is the wrong way to do it. We were looking for another way, it was like a holy experiment. You prepared people for it.

I was at boarding school, and one of my room-mates was Falk's brother, so he brought news of Amon Düül. Sometimes we'd escape by car to Munich, and go to the commune. Amon Düül was a symbol: it was the band at all the sit-ins and happenings, the megaphone of the movement, not a 'rock band'. Sometimes they were carried around on the shoulders of the crowd, real heroes.

FB:- Where did the name come from ?

JW:- The intention was not to have a German name, nor an English one, it was to be international. The spelling varied; sometimes Dyyl, sometimes Düül. For six months we had a similar, but different name at every performance; Oma Düük, etc.

At school they told me I was a genius, so I thought "I'm a genius, I don't have to do anything", so of course I blew it. I squeezed the alarm clock into a lump one day, and went to Amon Düül. I had my audition with Chris then; I didn't know what to play, because they didn't play songs. It was a very positive, creative pool, they just went 'vrooom' and something happened, it was fantastic.

The entourage consisted of about twelve people, and film makers and people like that would pick us up and give us somewhere to live, until we got our first place. In Germany in '68 you could get killed for having long hair, and we had to stick together to survive. We weren't part-time hippies or anything; we lived it and we didn't give a fuck, although we weren't mean or bad about it. It wasn't theory, it was there, you could feel it, and we fed off the energy. We had professors coming and telling us we were a revolution in sociology, and we thought "Are we?". In '68 things seemed to be happening everywhere, without marketing, but of course business jumped on the bandwagon.

The minute we had our first LP out, the big cheat started - "You need a publishing company", so we signed, in a very stoned way, and lost 50% of our earnings.

Of course we wanted to make records, but not in any conventional way.

FB:- Like the use of German, English, and nonsense language?

JW:- Yeah, and we used opposities. Like "Henriette Krötenschwanz" on Phallus Dei, it's a very sweet sound, but the lyrics are a slow-motion description of how a steering wheel goes through Henriette's chest.

FB:- How did it become Amon Düül and Amon Düül II ?

JW:- The ideology side of Amon Düül were saying "We want to change the world", which basically at that time everybody wanted, but how? Some people believed if you drop a bomb it might be effective, because nobody listens to us, so groups like Baader-Meinhof started burning down warehouses, and all this shit. The music people in Amon Düül said "We want to make music, and if somebody wants to listen, fair enough. But we don't want to drop bombs, it's just ridiculous to do that." We weren't interested in having legal fights over the name, we were supposed after all to be brothers, so to make a difference we became Amon Düül II.

FB:- What do you remember about the recording of Phallus Dei?

JW:- I was tripping in a record shop with Peter Leopold, and suddenly the building started collapsing. We managed to get to the car, so I was very happy to leave these falling buildings behind, and back at the house everyone said "Hey, we're going to make a record". I was very pleased because the house was all flowers. Off we went to the studio, and we recorded it in two days, on shoelaces.

FB:- What happened after Phallus Dei ?

JW:- Nothing changed, except we had money and could get things together, but we weren't suddenly pop stars. The record company was smiling, so we went on to make Yeti on 16-track. We weren't sure what to do, so we spent 1-2 days improvising and that was one LP, so we said "Let's make it a double". If I wrote a straight song it had to be 'AD'ised' to make it different, like "Archangels Thunderbird", which happened near the end of the recording.

We were getting better reactions outside Germany, where we were just Amon Düül. A lot of really good musicians hated us because nobody was listening to them. We had the PN Club on Monday nights, and when we set up our own equipment; they were laughing at us. But we filled the place, and they stopped laughing.

Also, it was very nice to go to London, because you could actually have long hair and strange clothes and not get beaten up.

FB:- Were you aware at the time how many great ideas you were coming out with on the first three LP's?

JW:- We were certainly trying to push the boundaries, yes. That sort of thing is very lacking today. Even in my own stuff - very good musicians, but... I love to hear the old tapes. We had very bad instruments at first, and the sounds that we made weren't always intended. But then the reviews would praise all these wonderful exotic sounds, but it was an accident. We also tried to paint sound pictures, like "Metropolis", I miss that.

Or, like, I sometimes work as a studio musician in Sydney, which needs a certain attitude, compared to which the Amon Düül gigs in '89 were unreal. Like now we can speak and communicate with real words, but this doesn't happen with Amon Düül, it's just a crazy mixture. Although I like to have things organised, Amon Düül is a creative tank. Few other things can work like that. We could make an LP now, but somehow with Amon Düül it just doesn't happen, even though money could be made. Like the Italian gig, we met four times and had a 25-minute set rehearsed, that's all we expected to play. We got there to find we were the only ones on the bill, so we played 1-1/2 to 2 hours, and everyone went wild. It's not business, is it?

FB:- What's happening on the first two sides of Dance Of The Lemmings?

JW:- "Restless Skylight-Transistor-Child" was an attempt at an extra-terrestrial view. A being

from another-planet comes to our castle - "Landing In A Ditch". Somehow he gets into you - "Little Tornadoes", and all that. The idea didn't get through to people, but if you listen to it very stoned, you can understand it. We wanted to make a film about it, but it got fucked up by money grabbers. On "Syntelman's March" - Chris and I exchanged ideas and really vibed. Those were the days, music was really happening, but as usual the businessmen bought it and turned it into advertising.

FB:- Carnival In Babylon suffers from poor production.

JW:- Yes, and the decay was setting in. We were getting a lot of money and we didn't cope very well with it. We had 'friends' in the castle who we didn't know. The original Amon Düül idea was also being lost, it was now much more dependant on individual ideas. For instance, there was a change on Wolf City, as Lothar wrote quite a lot of the music, and Vive La Trance shows a lot of my influence, with shorter numbers, influenced by John Lennon, I think.

FB:- Still good records, though.

JW:- Yes, the real change came with Hijack. We had to do it to pay the rent. It was an attempt to professionalise Amon Düül and of course it killed the music. So we didn't become a commercial success, and also lost many of our original followers. We'd been ripped off and we needed the money. The new record company bought it, but it was artificial.

FB:- Made In Germany was different again.

JW:- It was meant to be a new start. We were planning to move to America in a Zeppelin, but there was all this Nazi stuff in it, which I hated, it was a gimmick. That's why I did all the fairytale things, to counteract it, and Chris did different numbers. But the producers said, "You need money, do this."

We were interrupted at this moment by a moment of Amon Düül magic. John's cat, Ocelot, took a walk across the sampler, producing a pretty cool space instrumental. It's on tape, and I'm threatening to release it if we never get another Amon Düül LP.

JW:- Not bad. . . That's Amon Düül for you, even the cat is a musician!

After Made In Germany the Amon Düül system was breaking down; we weren't living together, there were crises all the time. Everyone had hassles. Amon Düül had been a family, but disillusion had set in, lot's of different line-ups. Then we had a situation of producers wanting Amon Düül to produce music; they didn't understand the idea of the band, that it was the mouth of something. But as usual, business bought it all - all the youth movement was bought up, and it died as a result.

FB:- Didn't you fight it?

JW:- We didn't have the freedom. Things were happening that were beyond our control.

FB:- Did you realise what was happening?

JW:- Yes, it was very painful. We were making a living, but when we stopped living together the energy parted, and of course it's much more expensive to all live apart, so we needed the money the system provided. Chris and I didn't keep enough control, and we weren't providing enough material. Producers were coming with music business ideas; I like commercial ideas in a way, as a means of getting in touch with people, but you have to fill it with something worthwhile. But one of my worries is that today you play a number and it's very deep, but no-one understands, because they aren't looking for that anymore. But I'm still trying to produce something of value, that's what I'm trying to do with Think-Tank, but it's very hard to get that accepted today.

FB:- You left the band after Almost Alive.

JW:- Yes, it was like a bad marriage. Then I accidentally shot myself in the head. A real classic. I pointed the gun and pulled the trigger; so I was out of it for several months. I started to enjoy myself for awhile. I didn't have the money to start a new band of the type I would like, but for the first time I got my own life together. After living in my family, and then the Amon Düül family, it was a new experience. I had to get out, and I was happy to do so.

Then I formed a tour agency, called Hallucination Company, and a music theatre group, similiar

to The Fool, from the sixties.

FB:- So how come you appeared as a guest on Vortex ?

JW:- I didn't think reviving Amon Düül was going to work, and my agency was going well, so I couldn't commit myself to it. But I was glad to have some involvement.

FB:- It turned out to be an excellent LP.

JW:- Yes. But you should hear the rough mix - it's the best Amon Düül I've heard.

FB:- You then made the LP's with Dave Anderson (the Demi-Monde releases).

JW:- Hmm. Hawk Meets Penguin was actually based on old Amon Düül II tapes. We improvised around them. Yes, I thought it was OK to do that, but no other original Amon Düül members play on the Demi-Monde records.

FB:- It's a very good album.

JW:- Yes it is. I'm not keen on Men Machines though, and those other two LP's shouldn't have been released, they aren't even finished.

Hawk consists of two fairly laid back improvisations, and shouldn't disappoint anyone into the Amon Düül vibe. Men Machines is a more conventional record, although John turns in a thundering "Burundi Drummers' Nightmare". The release of Die Lösung and Fool Moon, has caused a massive row between Dave and John. Dave declares them to be finished products, but the conflict is likely to keep him out of any forthcoming Amon Düül II activity, unfortunately.

JW:- We were going to record Robert Calvert and Chris together. You should have seen those two in the studio - real freaks. I don't mean that in any stupid way - It was magical. Bob shouldn't have died, he was one of the brothers. So I was going to play at his memorial concert. I had it planned, to be carried on to the stage by a couple of girls waving peace signs; "Hello my friends, good to see you all again". I was working on the show, but talk got around to doing an Amon Düül gig. I didn't think it would work, so I planned my show, but Chris, Renate, and Peter amazed me by being there. So with some friends we did "Archangels Thunderbird", "Eye-Shaking King", "Metropolis" and "Flower Of The Orient". After that we did the Italian gig with Lothar and Falk. On the way the old Amon Düül tensions started to appear, but that's part of the dynamic of the group, we argue a lot. Chris and I inhabit two different worlds, but in Amon Düül it all comes together. I wondered if we could still do it, perhaps Wham or somebody had got it, but it was magic in Italy. We were stopping on the way and kids were asking for our autographs. It seems that the old ideas are here again after all, at least for some people. Perhaps we can build bridges to help to bring them together. So maybe we could revive Amon Düül, but it will happen in its own way, you can't force it. But if it seems possible, I'd love to do it - the spirit won't die.

On that optimistic note, I left John to his guitar... Think Tank and his session work are on-going, but he's clearly sensed that there are vibes in the air, giving us the exciting prospect of some nineties magic from one of the truly great bands.

WE CAN BE HEROES

by Andy Gill, Mojo Magazine, 4/97

AMON DÜÜL II

Compulsory sex. Synchronised drug-taking. Maximum heaviosity. All in the name of art...

AT ONE TIME, IT SEEMED LIKE EVERYONE in Germany was in Amon Düül. As the counter-culture shockwave rippled out across the Continent in the late '60s, the group's communal lifestyle and free-form freak-out music suddenly became the very acme of hippiedom for the hippest of the country's hip, and they acquired hangers-on like a runaway snowball. Originally based on free-living American art communities such as The Living Theater, the Amon Düül commune was at the very cutting-edge of the Zeitgeist, and while the presence of famous names like the model Uschi Obermaier brought a certain cachet, the communal principles on which the group was run inevitably brought its own problems. For one thing, nobody would shut up.

"In the first Amon Düül tribe, everybody was playing something," recalls Falk Rogner, the band's keyboard player and graphic designer. "There were only four musicians, but there were 20 people on-stage who were doing something!" Mostly, what they were doing was playing bongos, but even this least taxing of musical tasks required a rudimentary sense of rhythm beyond the capabilities of some of the stoned communards. Everyone could be a musician, but not everyone could play, and so the group was always running at the speed of its slowest member.

Worse still, as the more musical members of the commune were growing increasingly disgruntled, the more political members were starting to flex their authoritarian muscles. Chris Karrer, guitarist/violinist (and probably the band's best musician), remembers the aggressive libertinism of the commune, in which people were brow-beaten and cajoled into taking drugs and having sex. "They asked me, 'You haven't fucked for four weeks – are you gay, or impotent?' I had to take a woman and fuck her there on the floor, where 20 people could see."

If things were bad for Karrer, then they were absurd for Renate Knaup, the band's eccentric singer. "It got to the point where I had to ask the others for five marks to buy a new pair of tights, because we had to put all the money in one cache. It was like Communismus, you know?" A split was inevitable, and when Knaup and Rogner took off for a break in the South of France, things came to a head. "When we returned after two weeks," recalls Knaup, "Wolfgang Kriske, the guy on the Yeti cover, came to the station to pick us up and warned us that the others would be really heavy with us, because we hadn't asked their permission to leave the house! That was it!" By October 1968, there were two versions of Amon Düül playing at the Essen festival, and two communes.

Ironically, though Kriske chose to stay with the original AD, he later became ADII's strongest iconic presence through Falk Rogner's astonishing sleeve photo for their double-album Yeti, which

features him looking uncannily like Iggy Pop wearing a dress and wielding scythe. “It’s a symbolic German figure, Der Schnitter – the Harvester – who cuts down people’s lives,” explains Rogner. “It’s a very strong figure in German mythology. Two months after the split, Kriske was dead: he went to his parents’ home in the middle of winter, took an acid trip, fell asleep and never awakened. So I said, ‘Kriske has to be the figure on the next AD cover.’ ”

Rogner’s covers are often the most enduring thing about the group’s albums, which can be frustratingly patchy as regard their actual content. A trained photographer, he developed his own style, using six slide-projectors and other light-show equipment and photographing the resulting projections, which gives the pictures their densely-layered but ethereal feel. He admits sometimes trying to photograph the incredible images he saw while tripping, only to find nothing there on the developed film. “It’s like trying to photograph God, as Dalí said. You can’t do it, you can’t photograph dreams. Not yet, anyway.” Nearly three decades later, he’s still trying.

At the time in Germany, communes of various types were considered the one-stop solution for all society’s ills. As well as music communes like the two Amon Düüls, there were art communes and sex communes, and some in which the two combined. “There was one woman, she was really small, but she had tits like this, and she made art out of them,” recalls Renate Knaup with wonderment. “She made plaster casts of her breasts and sold them on a big vernissage. It was crazy, avant-garde. People were communicating, which direction to go, what to do, inspiring themselves. . . .”

It seems doddily idyllic, but Chris Karrer sounds a note of caution at regarding commune life in too rosy a light. “It seemed so positive, but there was also a very negative side to it,” he recalls. “There was so much pressure – the police would come round every day, and sometimes you had to drive 20 kilometres to buy food, because local people wouldn’t serve us. Plus, our system was fucked-up – we never organised to take away the garbage, so the rubbish was just growing, growing, growing, until the rats came and somebody decided that maybe sometime in the next few weeks we should find somewhere to dump the rubbish. . . .”

A year and a half of constant gigging later, there was such a clamour for an Amon Düül II album that the band were signed up by jazzier Olaf Kubler, who secured them a deal with Siggie Locke, head of the German arm of Liberty/UA. They recorded *Phallus Dei* – that’s God’s Cock to you, sunshine – and started to build an international reputation. Andrew Lauder, more recently MD of the Silvertone and This Way Up labels, was head of A&R at the company’s British office at the time, and he recalls how the Munich office would constantly send cheesy MOR records over to the British arm, hoping to secure them a wider release.

“By and large, we didn’t put out anything from France or Germany, and they used to get really upset,” says Lauder. “Until one day, the first Amon Düül album, *Phallus Dei*, arrived, and it was, ‘What the hell is this?’ We were intrigued enough to release it – UA at the time had put out things like Hawkwind and High Tide and the Beefheart and Canned Heat albums, so we were fairly adventurous anyway. By the time they got to *Yeti*, I thought that was a really good record, so we put that out unchanged, as a double album. It did OK, not huge figures but well worthwhile, so we put everything out after that.” (And subsequently the earliest Can and Neu! releases.)

Emboldened by their burgeoning international success, the group took to writing and singing in English, and released a succession of further LPs: the double-album *Dance Of The Lemmings* was pretty poor stuff, but the subsequent *Carnival in Babylon* and *Wolf City* raised the quality level again, shifting uneasily between folk-rock and progressive rock.

“For *Wolf City*, we all took acid and used Florian [Popol Vuh] Fricke’s great Moog synthesizer,” remembers Falk Rogner. “We recorded for five hours, and used perhaps seven minutes, for the tune ‘Wie Der Wind Am Ende Einer Strasse’. A friend of ours overdubbed sitar, but apart from that it was all improvised. It was the only time we recorded on acid: we realised that it was a waste to spend five hours on five minutes of music.”

“On-stage, it was often the case in Amon Düül that every musician was on a different drug – I was on whisky, Chris on hashish, [drummer] Peter Leopold and [bassist] Lothar Meid on cocaine, Renate on a little bit of everything. One day we said to ourselves, ‘This can’t go on, let’s try an experiment where we all take the same drug at the next concert!’ We chose whisky – and it was a brilliant concert! But the others didn’t like the whisky.”

Despite such chemically-assisted methods, the more free-form nature of the earlier records increasingly became a thing of the past as the group grew more accomplished, though their communal lifestyle continued to attract fringe elements, such as the fugitive Red Army Faction member that Renate still insists was not an arms dealer.

“His father was a hunter,” she explains, “and he was in love with a woman in the RAF. She persuaded him to steal his father’s weapons, with which she robbed banks. They found out who the weapon was registered to, and came after him. So he came to us. We told him to have a sleep, then go to the police and explain the situation. We had been asleep about an hour when this woman burst in saying, ‘Good morning! Get up!’ Machine-guns and everything! It was crazy! Thirty policemen for 10 people – they were so afraid of us! They were so stupid, they thought there would be acid in the coffee machine!”

It wasn’t the only time the group had a brush with the German terrorist underground. Returning from a gig early one morning in their old Cadillac, the band were, like the Three Bears, outraged to find strangers had broken in and were sleeping in their beds. Angrily, they kicked the intruders out.

“We didn’t know who they were,” admits Chris Karrer. “They escaped, got in their Mercedes and went to see the lake nearby. We ended up having to pull them out of the lake with our Cadillac, then we went back to sleep. The next morning, someone told us they were terrorists. . . .”

“He’s telling it wrong!” cries Renate. “I came back from tour, went to the room I shared with Falk, and said, ‘Who the fuck is in my bed? Get out!’ It was Andreas Baader lying there, in my bed. Chris came down, he had found Gudrun Ensslin in his bed. He said, ‘She won’t get out!’ I went up, said, ‘Who the fuck do you think you are, get out of here!’ But eventually, we were so tired, we just moved them into the living-room and left them there while we slept. They stole all the guys’ new clothes, and disappeared!”

“The next day,” adds Karrer, “we found out they had heavy weapons and were very dangerous. . . .”

Ironically, the police always believed Amon Düül II had strong political contacts with the terrorists, although the group’s infrequent brushes with politicians usually left them chastened by the experience. There was, for instance, the time they were in Berlin for a jam session with Tangerine Dream, after which they visited K1, the first Berlin political commune, famed for its satirical ‘happenings’, and a leadership which included such activist-stars as Fritz Teufel and Rainer Langhans. Everything was fine until, well into the night, the communal loft was invaded.

“A bunch of rockers crashed in, put the record player at full volume, and smacked everybody down,” recalls Karrer. “It was a big massacre – my teeth were broken, and people had knives and guns, so nobody could escape. There was another political party called the Tupamaros, who lived downstairs and were the landlords, and when they wanted to put the rent up they sent rockers up to the loft. It was completely by accident that we were involved; they didn’t know we were just visitors. That kind of violence never happened in Munich. Munich was gentler, more sunny and funny.” (“We have a certain type of air, the Föhn wind that comes down from of the Alps,” explains Renate. “Suddenly, it’s like Rome, and people go a little nuts.”)

But at least they never had to suffer the tribulations of the East. Karrer remembers playing a festival in East Berlin, where the group were allotted a paramilitary group, the Blue Skirt people, as guardians. “After a while they grooved in with us, but they were naive: they didn’t know what a joint was. We rolled a big joint for everybody, and smoked it, then one of these guys came up to us shyly and said, ‘I didn’t know you were so poor in the West that three people have to smoke one cigarette!’”

JOHN WEINZIERL INTERVIEW

by Jason Gross, August 2008

As one of the titans of 60's/70's German psychedelic rock (aka Krautrock, aka kosmische), most rock fans think they know about Amon Düül II but do they really? We know about the great albums, the line-ups and the discography but how much detail do we really know about that band? As it turns out, very little, which is surprising for a group like this. Their storied history is actually very sparse in details. Do a Net search and you'll only find scattered info at best. How could that be?

Part of the problem is that there is isn't much interview material out there to cover all the gaps. Founder/guitarist/songwriter John Weinzierl emerged recently as a source of information, working on an emerging site for the band. This is also this unofficial website which has details of the reunited AD that Weinzierl is a part of, including some info about shows from the last few years.

Thanks to the magic of e-mail, Weinzierl was interrogated about the early history of AD, going from their days as a pre-musical commune through their early classic albums (Phallus Dei, Yeti, Tanz der Lemminge, Carnival in Babylon, Wolf City) and some tantalizing details about a new album that he's working on. In an upcoming second part, Weinzierl will spill the beans about the even more misunderstood, later-day AD catalog.

PSF: Talk about your background and early interest in music before you started playing.

I was born in '49. My father was a zither player who actually made it to play on Bavarian Radio Station. He had to stop playing when his mother died and never took it up again. My mother played accordion. I grew up with lots of classical music and whatever they played on the radio in those days. I remember that I never liked the so-called "Kunstlied" (art song); in fact, I can't stand operettas today and prefer the instrumental sound of classical music. In my teens, it was the Beatles giving us the real kick. As our parents and teachers were against that sort of music, the decision was easy. In boarding school, we formed our first group called "The Merseygents" (red shirts, black ties and trousers) as everybody was into Beatlemania. We started to play Yardbirds songs and Rolling Stones tunes like "Around & Around," "Last Time," "It's All Over Now." Later, we began to listen to Frank Zappa, Pink Floyds, The Doors, and the lot. I think the only albums I ever really bought in my life were Sgt Pepper and Piper at the Gates of Dawn.

PSF: Very little is known about this outside of the group itself. How did you first meet the other members of Amon Düül? Also, how did the other members meet up with each other?

I was in boarding school in Hohenschwangau with Jürgen Rogner - Falk's brother—and so met the early commune, while escaping the boarding school secretly, driving to Munich at nights, visiting the Dülls.

Most of the other members knew each other from their schooldays, visiting another boarding school in Memmingen together; the rest of the members met because of common interest in those days.

PSF: The original group has been described as a "radical political art commune". What important political and social values and ideals did the group have?

In the sixties in Germany, we had a very special generation conflict. The generation before us experienced the Nazis and war times. After the war, there was a completely different political climate, but in many institutions, the old smell was still present. Children asked their parents

about the big war and their role in it, students asked their teachers, and it was hard to get proper answers. Among the youth, the arts, the universities there was this strong desire of freedom, but everything was still formatted in the old way.

Out of this situation arose a great friction between the old and the new, which ended up in the great students' revolution in Europe.

Amon Düül was part of that. In fact, we used to play at the sit-ins and teach-ins in the universities and academies. We were looking for a new way of living together in a free and creative way. We knew about the severe dangers of industrial life, 'cause industry usually develops the consciousness of an amoeba: eat and grow only. We knew that human beings sooner or later would be sacrificed on the altar of greed.

As a single person, it was impossible to resist this, 'cause the outer influences are too strong to resist. That's why we decided to live together in a commune, so we could live as we wanted to.

Together we were so much stronger, and of course we were visible to the outside. We couldn't be absorbed so easily by the mass and could start an individual experiment like Amon Düül.

Amon Düül was never a radical political art commune. It was and is a social experiment and an art commune. We never agreed with people like Baader/Meinhof, who were part of this "new start" in the beginning and later unfortunately became terrorists. We always stated that we wanted to try something new, and everybody who was interested could join in, come to see our concerts, be part of it, but we never wanted everybody to be like us, and we never thought "We're right and others are wrong." We didn't even wanna try to convince anybody of our views. Freedom for everybody was the aim. Not freedom through violence. Every real lasting development can only come through increasing consciousness. Our concerts were not just concerts, but happenings with music. It was not the audience on one side and the artists on stage, like on the other side; we were one family. The concerts were just the framework for a meeting of people with the same intention. In fact I remember many concerts, when we handed out simple instruments that everybody could use, like bongos or tambourines, to the audience, so they could celebrate the music with us.

PSF: Was Amon Düül I at first a commune of people living together that later decided to become a music group?

There never existed something like Amon Düül I. This is a great misunderstanding.

But Amon Düül (the name came only later though) was a commune at first. Most of them were students, involved in all kinds of studies but the lessons in university. When their parents found out about that, and stopped the checks, there had to be a new source of income. As some members played an instrument, the decision to form up a band seemed logical. Of course this had to be a special band, not a middle of the road sort of thing, which was despised to be a square thing then.

PSF: When Amon Düül did come together as a band, what kind of group did everyone involved want it to be? In other words, what was the idea about how the band was going to sound and how it was going to work? Also, was anyone in particular an official or unofficial leader or did everyone try to participate equally?

I don't think there was a definite view of what the band should be like. It should be unique.

The expression of the individual. There never was a leader, or an artificial hierarchy. As the members lived together, there was lots of music happening every single day. It was fun playing, and it was possible to express things through music that you could not express in any other way. We found out you could "talk" with music and transport contents much better than you could do verbally. Of course, we had preferences in the music we listened to and in a way the English and American bands were much ahead in their playing and equipment and so something like idols for us, though we didn't wanna copy them, but be different. This was one of the reasons to choose our name: all the bands worldwide had English names. We wanted something individual, expressing the state of the group: not just a band.

PSF: Also part of AD's legend is that many of the people were "non-musicians" who weren't technically proficient. Did you find that to be true?

There was the word: "everybody is a musician." In the commune, you couldn't say the musos play and the others can't. When there was music being played, everybody could join in. Even the little

children in the commune used to play along. For a long time, this was a part of the sound of Amon Düül reflecting the political view of the commune. This was a part of the new touch in Amon Düül. Not just a band. . .

If you wanna communicate with music, you don't necessarily have to be able to master an instrument.

PSF: It's also rumored that the several Amon Düül albums that eventually came out later mostly came from one single day-long jam that was edited down into all of the different albums? Is this true?

The commune split up after a fight, just after they had had an offer to record their first album. Only some non-musician members went to the studio and recorded material, until they were kicked out of the studio because of recording useless shit - that's how the producer called it anyway.

The tapes were thrown into a dungeon.

Later when we recorded *Phallus Dei*, the first Amon Düül album, this former producer realized that *Phallus Dei* was a major seller. His greed told him to get the useless tapes back from the dungeon and every time we released an album, he cut an album's worth of those tapes and brought it to the market to use our success. Unfortunately, we were too inexperienced then to stop this, and so we have a big pile of rubbish being released as Amon Düül. The sad thing is that some people like this shit. My advice: every album called AMON DÜÜL II is the real stuff. That's why we called the musical part of Amon Düül AMON DÜÜL II. This is the only way to get the good original unique material.

PSF: Did Amon Düül II included some musicians that were not part of the original Amon Düül commune?

All the members of Amon Düül II were members of the commune. Later, other and more people joined the commune, but Amon Düül members were always also members of the commune, with the exception of Lothar Meid who always was an old fart anyway.

PSF: The title Phallus Dei is still an incredible one (it's blasphemous and hilarious). How did the band come up with that title?

I think it's a very creative title. It was a brainstorming idea and made the album sell really well, 'cause it was on the index the minute it was released.

PSF: The line-up of ADII on the first album was very unique also for the time—two drummers, two bassists, and a female singer. How did that come about?

Two drummers because we had Dieter Serfas on drums and when Peter Leopold left the desolate recording session in Berlin to join us, we decided to play with two drummers, because it suited the tribal attitude in our music. There were all kinds of bongo-konga players anyway.

Not really two bass players. It was Dave Anderson who had just joined the commune playing the bass on *Phallus Dei*, the long tune, while I used to play the other (short) tunes. We never played with two bass players at once. . .

And not really a female singer; on *Phallus Dei*, Renate only performed a few "oohs" and "aaahs." It was only later when she got into singing in the front.

PSF: How did the songs on Phallus Dei come about? Were they group improvisations? Was everyone just bringing ideas together that the band was trying out?

Phallus Dei consists of 4 parts that were developed in improvisations, but then were arranged.

PSF: Do you think that the album Phallus Dei was very similar or very different from the concerts that the band was giving at the time? Also, was the band doing a lot of concerts then? What kind of venues and audiences were you playing for?

Phallus Dei was very much like the concerts. It was sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, but it was always the same four parts played in similar fashion.

The band played almost every day. We played universities, academies, underground clubs, and every hall with a power socket and an audience.

PSF: Around the same time, other bands like Can, Tangerine Dream, and Kluster were also starting out. Did ADII feel any kinship/brotherhood with them? Did you feel that you were all part of a music scene?

We felt that we were all part of a big movement, something new was happening and it was happening all over the globe. We knew it wasn't a local thing, even when there were different local triggers. But it was definitely not only the music scene.

I remember playing bass for Tangerine Dream on a few concerts. The bands knew each other and we were playing together a lot.

PSF: Did the German newspapers/press/publications write about ADII early on? If so, what did they say about the band?

We were in all the papers all the time and they said the holy range—according to their single minds—about us.

PSF: Going back a bit, it has been rumored that Amon Düül was originally associated somewhat with another collective called Kommune 1. Is this so? If so, what details do you remember about this?

The K1 was based in Berlin and strictly political. People like Fritz Teufel and Kunzelmann were leading members of the commune. Whenever we were playing in Berlin, we used to stay with them. In the early days we never needed hotels when we were touring, 'cause we used to stay with one of the many communes spread all over Germany. Later Uschi Obermaier joined the K 1. Not very long later the K 1 ended.

PSF: Was Amon Düül II in demand for film soundtracks? If so, could you speak about some of this work and how the band put together songs for films?

Amon Düül II made lots of film music, soundtracks, and scores. We made music for Maria Schell, Veit Röhlin, Alexander Kluge, Werner Fassbinder, Wim Wenders, R. Nüchtern, Syberberg and many others. In fact we received the German Grammy, called Bundesfilmpreis, in 1971 for the music of San Domingo.

The work is multiple. Sometimes you do dramatic scores, which means the music is written to the movie “as the drama goes,” sometimes they just took our music, underlying it to the pictures.

I always liked writing scores the most, 'cause it is real making music, not just formatory shit.

PSF: Yeti seems very different from the first ADII album. How did you see this? What did you see as the main differences?

Well it was the second album, and everybody wanted to see if we could come up with another album. We usually wrote music and played it live. So every album in those days was a manifestation of what we had done and how the band had developed. As there was more tribal music in the period of *Phallus Dei*, though there were the arranged tunes on the B-side, there crystallized a more personal attitude on *Yeti*. There were single writers on *Yeti* heading for a new direction, as well as the tribal results like “*Yeti Talks To Yogi*.” The members showed the development in the group in their music. Also parts of *Yeti* were recorded on the very first 16-track recorders, while *Phallus Dei* was still recorded on a shoestring.

PSF: Was Yeti purposely set out to be one album of more conventional songs and one album of improvisations? Also, how did the “Soap Shop Rock” suite come about?

Yeti was supposed to be a normal album with arranged songs. When we were finished and wanted to do the mix, the sound engineer told us he had recorded everything on a shoestring again to show what a good engineer he was, and that he didn't need 16 tracks to get a good recording.

After going berserk for a while, the band decided to do a double album to use the new 16-track facilities after all. So we added another 40 minutes.

I wrote “Soap Shop Rock” with the voice of Mike Harrison (Spooky Tooth) in mind. Unfortunately, no one could sing like him. It should not be a conventional song but definitely longer, like a suite as you called it.

Two years ago, I met Mike Harrison and he promised to sing the song for me. I'm arranging a new

version of “Soap Shop Rock” at present for my John von Düül album. Maybe he’s gonna be on it.

PSF: How or why did the band decide to work with former members of AD for the last track on the album (“Sandoz in the Rain”)?

This was a session with Rainer, Ulrich, and other members of the early Düül. After we had become famous, we thought it would be a good idea to have a session together with former members on one of our Amon Düül II albums, just to let them play along for the sake of old times. This became “Sandoz in the Rain.”

Sandoz was the company in Switzerland that produced LSD, and thought that’s why we used their name in the song. Later, the company tried to sue us for using their name, but we told them the use of the word “Sandoz” was only a “sound painting thing” . . .

Of course I cannot confirm the rumor; we were all on acid while recording the song . . .

PSF: How was the album received in Germany and abroad compared to the first album?

Enthusiastic.

PSF: After Yeti came out, was the band playing more shows and playing at bigger venues? I’m guessing because the group started getting international acclaim, this changed things.

We were bigger since the release of *Phallus Dei* already. It was just going on and on since then. We had more performances with our international colleges and played lots of festivals.

PSF: The cover of Yeti is striking image- the bright and dark colors, Shrat in a black outfit with a scythe. How did the band come up with the idea for that?

It’s not Shrat, but a guy called Krischke. The picture, which is our logo up to today, is also called “the grim reaper” and was taken in a photo session done before Krischke’s death. He died during a LSD trip, freezing to death in a forest, where he was found later.

PSF: “Archangels Thunderbird” is another striking song from that album. Could you talk about how the song came about?

The song was written in the studio at the end of the recording session for *Yeti*. We had decided to do a double album, but we were 5 minutes short. So I offered the music for “Archangels Thunderbird” and Falk came up with the lyrics, and that was it. I think I’m gonna record this tune anew for my John von Düül album, ’cause I really like it, and want it in the charts one day.

PSF: Since both you and Chris Karrer were playing guitar, what kind of understanding did you have about splitting the parts between yourselves (i.e. playing rhythm or lead)?

Usually, I played the lead on Chris’s tunes and he played the lead when I wrote the song. There was and is absolutely no problem between the two of us. On top of that, Chris used to play sax, fiddle and oud.

PSF: Olaf Kübler is listed as co-producing the records with the band. What were his contribution do you think?

He took care of the financial things for the band. Unfortunately, he never had the right perspective for what was ours and what was his; his musical contribution was none.

PSF: I know this is skipping ahead a little bit but I wanted to ask you about Julian Cope’s book Krautrock sampler. What did you think of the book and the way that Amon Düül was portrayed there?

I’ve really never read it, but lots of people told me about it and I think it’s okay.

As regards all the information in the Net (wikipedia also) about us, I think Julian’s book is more to what we are. The other information in the Net is mostly simply wrong. Very important: we are NOT a Krautrock band.

PSF: After Yeti, did you or other members of the group have any contact with some of the former members of the early band? (for instance, Rainer, Ulrich) Do you know what they’re doing now?

After *Yeti* we had only little contact with them. I met Ulrich the last time at Peter’s funeral [Amon Düül drummer Peter Leopold, who died in 2006], when he (and we) played on Peter’s grave. Rainer

must be somewhere in Vienna now.

*PSF: Where did the title *Tanz der Lemminge* come from? Also some of the song titles were hilariously brilliant: “Dehynotised Toothpaste,” “A Short Stop at the Transylvanian Brain Surgery,” and (my favorite) “The Marilyn Monroe Memorial Church.” How did the band come up with those titles?*

You know what lemmings are, do you? We thought the world is just like Lemmings: running into one direction and falling into the sea and drowning in the end. We didn't think that it is even worse, as you can see nowadays. That's why we called the album *Tanz der Lemminge*.

It stands for the mechanical way of living that leads to destruction, which seems to be a result of the abnormal psyche of man nowadays, and shows that the only way out is AWAKENING. . .

All the titles involved point at the same meaning and were results of brainstormings of the commune and Falk Rogner's creative brain.

*PSF: It seems that the side-long songs are multi-part suites. How did the band come up with the idea to work that way? How did you see *Tanz der Lemminge* as being different from *Yeti*?*

Multi-part suites are very common in classical music. We didn't want to write short pop songs, but get into matters more deeply, and so we preferred to use the classical patterns of serious music, to express our artistic ideas.

Every AMON DÜÜL record is the statement of a different state of consciousness out of a different time. It shows the development of the art project AMON DÜÜL.

PSF: On that album, all songs are credited to you, Lothar, Chris and Falk. How did you share the songwriting duties?

Sometimes just that way, sometimes in equal shares regarding the commune.

PSF: The line-up had changed by this time. Shrat and Dave Anderson were gone while Lothar Meid and Karl-Heinz Hausmann joined. Could you talk about why the former two left and how LM and KH joined?

As the climate in the commune was very tough, Shrat left to form up Sameti. Dave Anderson unfortunately went back to England and we needed another bass player.

Our producer, Olaf “The Thief” Kübler, introduced Meid to us, and whenever we went to the studio to record an album, he joined the band to score the money and usually left after the sessions to leave us to find a new bass player for the tours. I was never happy with that situation, especially 'cause Meid could never play my songs properly—till today. I consider him a mere rip-off artist and even nowadays he is taking parts of my money.

Kalle Hausmann was an electronic guy and as we wanted to go into synthesizer music (mind you: synthesizers didn't exist then, so in the beginning Kalle used to build his own ring modulators and things. . .). We decided to work with him, and I liked it very much.

PSF: You mentioned before that the idea to write multi-part suites was also common in classical music. As such, what classical music was influential on AD's early years and albums?

We used to listen to the known repertoire of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and the lot. You name it, because we grew up with it.

PSF: You also mentioned that the group was still a commune by the early '70's. I don't think a lot of people realized that—most assumed that the first phase of AD (before ADII) was part of a commune. Could you describe how this commune was the same or different from the way it was originally when the band got together?

It was always the same group and the same commune, we had only moved to different places. Usually, we lived in a big house with practice rooms and electronic shop in the basement. What was called AMON DÜÜL II was also always a commune, in fact we still are, but we call ourselves a virtual commune at present. We still believe it's the better way of living.

*PSF: How was *Tanz der Lemminge* received by critics and the public compared to AD's earlier albums?*

Enthusiastically as usual. Every album signifies a different level in our development, that's why they are different. We wanted to live and change all the time and not produce the same music all the time. We hated the attitudes of the record companies, who wanted us to play the same song for years. That's boring, and only features consumption as a means, which we profoundly believe is totally wrong. It leads to what we unfortunately have reached today: the kingdom of industry fascism, the kingdom of the gross, the greedy and the uneducated. Every society like that is doomed and will lead wars to distract from their unnatural ways of living.

PSF: The English press was also interested in the band then. What did you think of their coverage of AD? Also, did the band play in the UK (or other places in Europe) before the show that was recorded on the Live in London album? If so, how was the band received in other countries?

Of course, we'd played all over the continent before Live in London, even in the then-locked up Eastern Bloc. We were the first German band going international. It took the Germans a while to realize this.

In fact, our success was bigger in England, France, and other foreign countries. In the early days we were an academy and university act besides the underground clubs. When we made it big in other countries, we became bigger in Germany also. The prophet in the own country...

When we did Live in London, it was the "Roxy Music" days. The heavy underground days changed into different genres.

In fact, we were guests of Roxy Music in the Greyhound in Croydon, where they had their European farewell concert, before they went on their first U.S. tour, while we recorded Live in London in the same club.

I remember we had hired the Pye Mobile studio of The Who for that event, and funnily, they complained, we were too loud. I couldn't believe that, 'cause The Who were actually known as the loudest band, and we thought their technicians would be used to high volumes.

PSF: At this time, how was AD changing as a live band compared to when it started?

We were still a commune, but on the road all the time. Our center of gravity was music at that time, but the art experiment and the social significance were as important to us and our fans. As we were playing a lot the band became simply better and tighter. There were record people who wanted to make all kinds of industry puppets out of us, but this never really happened till today. Of course this had a certain price, but we paid...

PSF: What was going on with the band between the albums Tanz der Lemminge and Carnival in Babylon?

We had a really great time. Of course, the commune went through all kinds of experiments and changes, also regarding the line-up. But the nucleus always remained the same. In those days, we had this huge big mansion near Munich—28 rooms, lots of people. Sometimes we almost lost control of who was who, but we were the most famous commune in Germany, and everybody tried to be close. The outer influences were not always becoming for the band, but the heat was on... Maybe I'll write a book about it one day.

PSF: Carnival in Babylon had a wonderfully unusual cover. Could you talk about how the band chose that from F.U. Rogner's design?

Usually, we designed a new cover especially for every new album. While we were working on the music, Falk used to work on the cover. I think he is one of the best art directors I've ever worked with.

In the book The Album Cover Album, the book of record jackets edited by Hipgnosis and Roger Dean, introduced by Dominy Hamilton, the cover of *Tanz der Lemminge* is shown among the best covers of the world.

PSF: It seems that on CIB, you had more input as a principal writer. Was there a reason for that?

Chris Karrer and I were the principal writers of most of the albums. Only on some albums, we decided to share everything with the commune—including the authors' rights—and so it says on the covers that we were all writers of a song, communistic party so to say... Today, I think this was a mistake, but it shows our attitude then. To write and force through a song was a serious effort

with lots of often unpleasant situations, because you have something in mind which you have to explain to the rest of the band. In fact, you have to fight for the song.

When we decided to have a “communistic party” on a recording session, everybody got the same share as the other, and the hassle of fighting for your song wasn’t worth it. Of course the result was accordingly.

PSF: Could you talk about how the two tracks credited to you came about (“C.I.D. in Uruk,” “Kronwinkl 12”)? The last track (“Hawknose Harlequin”) seems like a group improvisation—is that correct?

“C.I.D. in Uruk” has a very surrealistic lyric. Uruk was supposed to be the oldest known town, and of course the C.I.D. was supposed to be everywhere—and always. Chris and Falk were using lots of surrealistic sounds, views and pictures. Sometimes it seemed to me as if there was no real understanding of surrealism, but rather an idiotic combination of weird expressions, just to pretend meaning and actually fool everybody. To countercarricate this, I wrote “C.I.D. in Uruk” to really mess with this idea and lead it to the absurd. . . Kronwinkl 12 was the address of our mansion near Landshut. “Kronwinkl 12” is about living there at that time.

I’d like to mention “Pigman” [from Vive Le Trance] here as well. Olaf Kübler was the producer at that time and I began to realize what kind of cheat he was, and how he ripped off our money. Nobody else in the group wanted to know about this, so I wrote “Pigman.” The pigman is Olaf. . .

You’re right about the last track.

PSF: How do you think that Carnival in Babylon measured up to the previous Amon Düül albums?

It was just another step in our development, another manifestation of a period in our musical life.

There was pressure of many sides to change our music, to go for the market much more.

We didn’t wanna become pop musos, but the industry tried to make their influence work when they saw how much money they could score from us. Today we’ve learned that the present use of industry is a threat to human life, an omnidestructive rude moloch killing everything—including itself. One of the seven terrible steps of this development is the “kingdom of the gross, the greedy, and the uneducated” which we experience right now.

PSF: Wolf City is thought of as more “commercial” than previous AD records—shorter songs, less jams. Did you see it that way?

Yes, indeed, some people prefer that— I’m not so sure. . .

PSF: In terms of line-up and instrumentation, things were different then than before. Peter Leopold was now a guest on the album and there were Indian instruments being used. Also, there are 6-7 guest musicians listed in addition to the band on the album. How and why did this come about?

Lots of politics, I don’t really know.

PSF: Could you talk about the two songs credited to you on the album? (“Green Bubble Raincoated Man,” “Jail-House Frog”) How did you come up with the songs? “GBRM” is particularly pretty, I think.

In those days, our producer Olaf went to America to make contacts and score money. I’m not sure all the Amon Düül money really went to us. All kinds of side productions appeared. “Deutsch Nepal” was not a Amon Düül production but an obscure Kübler production, which was put onto *Wolf City* to give it a promotion for Kübler’s product. The seed of money took its course. “GBRM” is talking about lost innocence.

Besides, I think it’s a nice piece of work—one of my favorites—and we still play this song when we play live. In fact I’ll have a new arrangement of that song on my John von Düül album.

“Jail House Frog” (does this remind you of something?) is the story about a mad professor playing the piano in the jungle. After playing the same chords for more than 10 years he experiences enlightenment, which bursts into “CIRCUS.” This is what you hear at the last part of the song, the repeating cords and the circus end. Actually, in those days, it was the only sequence of chords I could play.

PSF: Where did the idea/concept of Wolf City (the title) come from?

The idea was the tough city, eating up their children, it's about merciless inhumane conditions in our life. It's about "the gross, the greedy and the mindless" ruling the world, and it's about losing the fight against the shameless and the mean...

PSF: Around this time, the album/band Utopia also started up. Could you talk about how that sprang up from AD? Was it a side project that met with approval from everyone in the band? How was it different from AD?

This is exactly the obscure production I was mentioning. Amon Düül had nothing to do with it, we were never asked about it, it was just Olaf Kübler trying to make more money with our name.

Well, *Wolf City* is not such a good project to talk about. Sorry. But still I like the album very much and advise everybody to buy it (especially the bonus track "Mystic Blutsturz"). And when you listen to the song "Wolf City," sing along the lyrics as we used to do: "Bull shitty is a girl without titty..."

PSF: Jumping ahead to the present briefly, could you talk about who's been involved in the AD reunion?

The current line-up is: Chris Karrer - oud, gtr, violin, voc, John Weinzierl - gtr, synth, voc, Lothar Meid - b, Renate Knaup-Koetenschwanz - voc, Danny Fichelscher - dr, and our neo-Düül Jan Kahlert - perc, voc, joker. This line-up has been playing (together) since Peter Leopold has died a few years ago. Before that, it was the same line-up with Peter Leopold instead of Danny Fichelscher. No reunions, no comeback, no restart - the band has been like that since '95.

Before that, there were all kinds of line-ups with the current members as the nucleus always (few exceptions like Renate taking a break, or Danny and Peter playing both also). All other line-ups (with) only fewer members of the nucleus is NOT Amon Düül, but some fake shit trying to be Amon Düül. Beware of all information not coming from us directly, especially Wikipedia and sorts - it's pure fiction.

DAVE ANDERSON - THE BASS-ODYSSEY FILES

The Early Years 1949-1969

Dave was born in 1949 and lived in Romford, Essex and then moved to Surrey and went to school until he was 17. He attended the same school as Nick Lowe (ex-'Kippington Lodge' /'Brinsley Schwarz' and solo performer) and they set up a school band, 'Sounds 4+1'. The band did really well and in the middle of a Maths 'O' Level Exam he upped and left, and that ended his time at school; although his father had ideas for him when he left school - but Dave never liked school and couldn't wait to leave. He had great times with Nik Lowe - the music thing just came along and he enjoyed it so much, and that was how it all started ...

Nick Lowe

Dave had some formal musical training when he was about 10 years old when his parents sent him to piano lessons, the lessons however were too much like school so he lost interest in music until he was about 13 years old, when a friend of his who had an acoustic guitar started to teach him how to play 3 chords. They decided to set up a Folk group around the mid 1960's, and when Bob Dylan came along playing electric guitars they followed suit ...

Him and Nick Lowe were doing local gigs around Watford, and when they left school they decided to go to London and look for a manager, eventually they were signed up by Spencer Davies who at that time ran one of the main agencies around. They were quiet successful and played under various names and had steady professional work, but when his father died he decided to go back home to help his mother cope with his younger brothers and sisters which seemed the right thing to do. This lasted for about two months then he couldn't handle it any more and decided to go back and join Nick who by now had joined a band called 'Kippington Lodge'. Nick invited him to join the band for a week-end which turned into six months and invited him to join them when they toured in Germany ...

The group was playing at a small club in Munich called the 'PN Hithouse' (on Leopaldstrasse, the centre of Schwabing, the heart of Munich's Greenwich Village) on a residency for two weeks. On the Monday night the English group were replaced by a German band called 'Amon Düül' whose music was so weird that they kept going back to see them. On their last day in Munich it had been arranged for Dave to have an audition for 'Amon Düül' he was unsure about the audition as he didn't want to be left in Munich, but he was persuaded to go. The audition turned into a competition to see who could smoke the most 'joints', and at the end of the evening when we were all flying high, he was told he'd be their new bass player. So when Nick and 'Kippington Lodge' left Munich, Dave stayed behind and ended up playing with 'Amon Düül' for three years! ...

The Hawkwind Experience, 1970-1971

After leaving Amon Düül II and before joining Hawkwind he went back to England and virtually walked into a job at RCA records as a session musician and was quickly sent out to Rome, and he

stayed there till he got bored. He returned to England and joined Alexis Korner for a while and met Van Der Graff Generator at the 'Speakeasy Club'. When Nic Potter left VDGG, Dave was invited to do an audition for them and was amazed to be chosen straight away their new bass player. This was somewhat of a feather in his cap as the competition was strong. This didn't last as long as Hugh Banton decided to use bass pedals and he was quickly made redundant! Good friendships were built up between himself and VDGG and they did some recording together recently and released it on his 'Demi-Monde' record label. He likened his experience with VDGG to Amon Düül II both sort of a family band. All the bands he'd been associated with, were of a similar musical style.

When Dave was working with AD II in Munich they were invited to a press meeting at UA's office in London. Dave was introduced to Nik Turner of Hawkwind they chatted and found they both had similar musical tastes, Dave was approached several times to join Hawkwind but at first he put it off but his then girlfriend persuaded him to go for it. Dave Brock phoned him up and a meeting was arranged at Brinsley Schwartz's house where Dave had returned to. They did a session together in the rehearsal room in the early morning and woke every one up. This led to me being offered the job on bass.

Dave had been in the band for about six months when they did 'X In Search of Space' it was a very difficult time as the band were on the road every day leaving very little time for recording. Dave found it very disjointed as he never knew who was going to be at the gigs or in the recording studio and if he was playing guitar or bass! He found the whole thing rather depressing. Everyone brought ideas for the album even people outside the group like Barney Bubbles and Doug Smith. All trying to put together a total package. Dave (Anderson) felt it was the right time to do a spacey album, as it was the sort of music that people wanted at the time. Nobody was doing a spacey type project at the time; Pink Floyd were doing spacey things but not putting it together as a concept.

Dave and Nik Turner co-wrote 'Children of The Sun', Nik did the lyrics and Dave played the instruments and did the music. From what he can remember they all contributed on the album, but he didn't think the credits were strictly accurate. Him and Nik put their track on the album almost as a last minute thing as the album was five minutes short. Dave got an call early in the morning around 3am, he got picked up and took to the studio - Nik was already there, so they did it - in half an hour!

Hawkwind gigs were all part of the psychedelic era, there was really a lot of good vibes, for the group and fans, the events were quite escapist, just like an event, there were dancers they all had a great time. The band were gigging every day which Dave felt made it more like a job, but Hawkwind were the peoples band. At first, (bad) publicity made it hard to get gigs but once the ball started to get rolling, Hawkwind was what people wanted. The band sold its self, it didn't need the music press!

Hawkwind have a very loyal following and always will have - and still tripping even after all these years. He remembers a gig just when the 'X In Search of Space' album had been released, and they played at a Teachers Training College in Southampton on Halloween. The venue had been well decked out and everything, but he didn't think they (the organizers) realized what they'd booked - he didn't think that they realized what sort of band Hawkwind were. When the band came back from their break the hall was completely packed out. Dave noticed that some parts he played on bass had a direct reaction on certain parts of the audience, so he decided to play on it as was the rest of the band. Dave said they, Hawkwind, had total control over the audience, but after a while however, the teaching staff pulled plug, as everyone was so high! Dave described the experience as a form of 'energy' from the band to the audience and back again; he never experienced the same before or after. Dave noted that band members didn't speak to each other for about two days, as they were still high on the experience!

Dave left the band mainly because he disliked touring everyday and Hawkwind were doing the same set with no variety. Band members also weren't happy when he bought a sports car and decided to travel alone. He didn't know why they disliked the fact he'd bought a sports car, because they were all on the same wage; he just preferred to take the opportunity to travel alone. Dave was also frustrated by the fact that Dave Brock sometimes didn't turn up for gigs which meant Dave had to play guitar, which is what happened at the first 'Glastonbury Festival'. Dave Brock rung

up and said he wasn't well, but neither was Dave who had diarrhea, other band members weren't well either, but they turned up. He also thinks the band didn't like his first wife, even though in Dave's opinion, without her the band wouldn't have got their first steps onto the musical ladder. Dave now thought it was time to leave and move on as, variety was the spice of life. He'd never spent very long with bands, the longest had been with Amon Düül II. It never bothered him about moving on, because he had the confidence to find something else.

Amon Düül II 1969-1970

"Yeti" 1970

Before joining Amon Düül II, Dave hadn't played a lot of bass, he played guitar, but Nick was the better guitarist so he began playing bass. Amon Düül was good band to learn bass in as long as it didn't sound English or American he could play basically what he liked. Although Dave's initial description of the band's musical presentation was diabolical, he felt this was because what they were doing was so unique and different, he also felt that it was very clever and innovative, using strange instruments and early types of synthesizers.

Dave did the first two albums with them and in his opinion, the original line up of Leopold, Karrer, Weinzierl, Neid, Shrat, Falk Rogner, Renate, Serfas, Fichelscher and Dave was the classic one. The band recorded albums very fast mainly because most studios didn't see them as a good risk. 'Yeti', the double album took three days and 'Phallus Dei' in only a day! Despite this they were very good albums and justified the recording contract, which they only really got because of fans and friends signed a request to the record company! Dave felt that because of their success, and that they were given more studio time for subsequent albums, that after 'Dance of The Lemmings' they lost their direction, as more time was spent getting stoned and drunk than working on albums!

Falk used to write the lyrics, which Dave amended, as he was the only English man in the group. But the entire group had some input. The album covers were produced in Falk's bedroom and were very successful - gaining some awards. Their music formed the basis of 'Kraut Rock' with such bands as Can and early Tangerine Dream they were better managed although these bands' music had a more English or American influence. You could say that Amon Düül were the first 'Kraut-Rockers'. Dave initially didn't like living in Germany in the sixties; he felt it was a very aggressive country at the time, if you had long hair and attended Beer Festivals, shootings were not uncommon, so he returned home after each album. He would then be contacted just before a new album was planned.

One of the most interesting things that used to happen on one of their gigs was that it wasn't unusual for fans to climb on stage and 'bop' members of the group! In Bavaria for example whilst the band was in the middle of an improvisation, a fan got onto the stage and started threatening us, by the time the road crew had removed him I found I was playing a completely different tune to everyone else! The band moved to a big castle about 80 miles from Munich. One morning about 6am they found themselves being raided by the police with machine-guns down their noses, it seemed they'd been informed that shooting had been heard, and the castle was being used as a terrorist training ground! Things were very heavy around this time! He remembers flying in to Munich one time which he was used to, and he knew where to stand and what to carry to get through passport control quickly. When he suddenly found himself in the middle of an Arab terrorist shoot-out with the Police ... he'd never ran so quickly in his life, he even dropped his guitar and cases!

In Dave's opinion all bands had freedom to express themselves through music, but most chose to stick to a more popular format rather than experiment with new sounds as Amon Düül did. As was the use of early laser effects and lighting, new synthesizers were being built in Germany at the time and as the main German band, they had access to this new equipment. The band at this time also provided film sound tracks, as Munich was the centre of the German Film industry. It was the time in Munich during the student riots and one day we were travelling to Hamburg in a convoy of four cars when we pulled over and our manager was arrested as he was a student leader and spent six months in prison! What a way to start a gig - without your manager!

Dave left the band mainly because he really wanted to be in an English band, he still felt isolated in Germany. If you were a German band you wanted to make it in England, but if you were an English band you wanted to make it in the States; and that's what he desperately wanted to do. The band continued recording another eighteen albums. His time with Amon Düül II was a very exciting period of his life.

Amon Din 1971-1972

After leaving Hawkwind he set up a band with ex-Hawkwind guitarist Huw Llyod-Langton called Amon Din. The band did some backing work for Hawkwind, and some gig's on their own, but Dave found it wasn't working as he planned. He'd formed the band to play his music but as Dave was busy with the day-to-day running of the band he found most of the music they were doing was Huw's. Dave also found that supporting the band financially was costing him too much and they were also having trouble with drummers after John Lingwood left. Dave had at this time bought Foel Studio, so in 1972 the band folded after doing some gigs and recording. Funnily enough Huw is doing some of the same songs now, ten years later!

The Between Gig's Era 1972-1984

Having concentrated on his studio producing Dave hadn't been on the road or performed live for several years. Although he did some local barn dancing and guested on several other albums, he found he missed touring, gigging and meeting people, which he thought was very important. Dave had kept in touch with Nik Turner and had met Dave Brock occasionally at Guy Evan's (VDGG) house, but he hadn't really kept up with what Hawkwind were doing. (A separate paragraph will deal with Dave's Foel Studio years etc, in more detail - editor)

Hawkwind - 'Earth Ritual' Tour 1984

He got a phone call out of the blue from Nik Turner who invited him to guest on Hawkwind's 'Earth Ritual Tour' (1984) that night!. Dave leapt at the chance but couldn't go on tour till the next day as he had commitments at his other studio in London. Dave found the audience much younger (as well as the oldies, surely? - editor) than he expected and the band were tighter and better, and using great backdrops and more equipment. Dave was relieved that his meetings with Dave Brock showed no signs of the bad vibes that had been between them before, and he felt this partly because Hawkwind were going through a bad time recording wise and Dave Brock wanted his advise. Dave felt that subsequent recordings with Flicknife Records were probably as a result of those meetings. Dave enjoyed touring with Hawkwind and he liked the audience contact and was thrilled when they recognized him and cheered him on stage. There were very few sound checks - it was very spontaneous and it was great to be back with Dave Brock and Nik Turner again. (if only for a short while - editor)

Inner City Unit 1984-1985

When Nik first formed Inner City Unit, Dave gave them some recording time at Foel Studio although he did some session work with them but wasn't prepared to commit himself to touring with them, so he lost touch with them. Later in the year, Nik came to see Dave at his London studio and said he wanted to re-form ICU. So in the summer of 1984, ICU went up to Foel Studio and put together the 'New Anatomy' album, but as Dave was still busy in London he was only able to do minor session work with the band. Dave did perform with ICU at a festival in London which was a great experience, he likened it to a classic Hawkwind gig, dancers, jugglers, fire-eaters, dogs, children and goats, the event is still remember, even today!

Then they arranged a winter tour to promote the 'New Anatomy' album and they were very mindful not to be classed as a second Hawkwind when performing live, even though some of the link-music was very spacey-like and sounded a little bit like Hawkwind. But no one ever consciously intended it to sound like Hawkwind. He was having a great time playing and touring with ICU, and the tour's climax at 'Dingwalls' in London was great, Robert Calvert was there too. He was also on the band's first video recording, and he enjoyed meeting the fanzine marketing people, like myself (Orbit), Trevor Hughes (Hawkfriendz) and Brian Tawn (Hawkfan). But as it turned out, the 'Dingwalls' gig was his last with them. He wasn't actually told that was his last gig, he just wasn't telephoned and informed of the next one, which he felt was disappointing, he'd rather been told if he was not wanted or whatever.

The Bass Odyssey Files

The Bass Odyssey Files originate from a series of in-depth taped interviews conducted over a three day period in 1985 at Dave's Foel Recording Studio's in North Wales. For those who have a copy of the originally released tape, then you'll enjoy this visual enhancement. Dave Anderson reserves the right to produce a complete and accurate package. An up-date, entitled Biog 2, will encapture the years 1985 to 2004.

Many thanks to Janice, for her invaluable assistance in collating, and transcribing from the original tapes.

KRAUT-ROCK (INTERVIEW MIT CHRIS KARRER)

Matthias Holtman, 2008

<http://www.alternative-musik-forum.de/f28/kraut-rock-2929/>

In der gemütlichen Zweizimmer-Wohnung von Chris Karrer im Münchner Stadtteil Schwabing ist die Zeit stehen geblieben: Obwohl elf Uhr vormittags, hat das Sonnenlicht zu dieser Oase des indischen Tands, der plüschigen Sofas und rauchverhangenen Luft keinen Zutritt. So stellt sich der Jugendliche von heute die Hippie-Höhlen der späten 60er-Jahre vor; und genau diese Ära ist auch das Zeitalter, über das Chris Karrer am liebsten spricht.

Denn der schmale Graubart mit den Jesuslatschen, den orientalischen Leinenklamotten und dem kecken Filou-Bärtchen ist eines der letzten überzeugenden Hippie-Exemplare in diesem unseren Land - und darüber hinaus ein Original der vielbeschworenen wilden Zeit um das sagenumwobene Jahr 1968, das mittendrin im Geschehen steckte und das - viel wichtiger noch - trotz allem überlebt hat.

Gleichzeitig ist der 56-jährige Wahl-Münchner mit Heimatstadt Kempten eine lebende Rock-Legende: Gründungsmitglied der Band, die bis heute als Inbegriff des kuriosen Kraut-Rock-Phänomens gilt - Amon Düül. Diese wüste wie genialische Formation gründete sich einst als Münchner Kommune mit elf Erwachsenen und zwei Kindern, die alles gemeinsam machen will, unter anderem Musik. Kurze Zeit nach der Gründung spaltete sich die Band in die politisierenden, rasch in die Bedeutungslosigkeit verschwundenen Amon Düül und in die sich Richtung musikalische Professionalität bewegenden Amon Düül II um den Gitarristen Chris Karrer. Letztere waren vor über vierzig Jahren die erste deutsche Band, welche die Kraut-Rock-Welle auch über die heimischen Grenzen hinaus zum Begriff machte. Damals schmückten die Schwabinger sogar die Titelseiten von englischen Musikgazetten wie etwa dem Melody Maker. Vor Amon Düül II hatte niemand aus der popmusikalischen Wüstenei Germany ernsthaft in Großbritannien auf sich aufmerksam machen können. Teutonische Rock-Bands übten sich bis dato gleichermaßen brav wie ungelenkt darin, den anglo-amerikanischen Idolen nachzueifern.

„Amon Düül II allerdings“, urteilte der Melody Maker anno 1970, „ist die erste deutsche Gruppe, die als völlig eigenständiger Beitrag zur internationalen Pop-Kultur angesehen werden kann.“. In das selbe euphorische Horn stieß auch John Peel, der britische Star-DJ, der zum großen Förderer des Kraut-Rocks in seiner Heimat wurde und die Teutonic Sounds in seiner Sendung rauf- und runternudelte.

Kein Wunder: John Peel war stets auf der Suche nach neuen, aufregenden Klängen - und Amon Düül II lieferten sie ihm. Orgiastische und psychedelische Klänge trafen in den Frühwerken der Band wie „Phallus Dei“ und „Yeti“ auf fantastischen Surrealismus, der pompöse Bombast eines Richard Wagner duellierte sich mit lyrisch-zarten Folk-Klängen. Und alles stand dabei im Zeichen der Improvisation, die aus manchen Amon Düül II-Stücken zwanzigminütige Epen machte.

„Die Improvisation“, erinnert sich Chris Karrer mit verschmitztem Grinsen, „war das ein und alles. Wir hatten keine Zeit, um viel zu proben. Wir handelten nach dem Grundsatz: Wer üben muss, der hat es wohl nötig. Das Leben damals war viel zu aufregend, um sich ins stille Kämmerlein zu verziehen und sich ausschließlich auf die Musik zu konzentrieren.“.

Parallel zu Amon Düül II formierten sich auch an anderen Orten der Republik wie Berlin, Köln oder

düsseldorfer innovative Bands, die der Besatzermentalität der hiesigen Rock'n'Roll-Szene entkommen wollten, indem sie mit neu gewonnenem Selbstbewusstsein nach neuen Tönen suchten. Nicht nur deren Musik klang häufig äußerst merkwürdig, sondern auch ihre Bandnamen: Faust, Can, Popol Vuh, Kraftwerk, Ash Ra Tempel, Tangerine Dream, Guru Guru oder Cluster, nur um die bekanntesten zu nennen. Bis weit in die 70er-Jahre hinein waren die Kraut-Rocker das popmusikalische Aushängeschild einer bis dato verunsicherten Nation, die endlich zu ihrer gegenwartskulturellen Identität finden wollte.

Doch zum Ende jenes denkwürdigen, aufregenden Jahrzehnts machte der Bildersturm des englischen Punk auch vor deutschen Hörgewohnheiten nicht halt, verdrängte die Kulturrevoluzzer von einst aus dem Blickfeld und strich sie gar für lange Zeit aus dem Gedächtnis der Konsumenten. Wer in den 80er-Jahren noch über Kraut-Rock sprach, der galt als kauziger Nostalgiker, der offensichtlich versuchte, an der Zeit festzuhalten. Von Glück reden konnte, wer, wie die Düsseldorfer Elektronik-Tüftler Kraftwerk, inzwischen von den Medien einer anderen musikalischen Strömung zugerechnet wurde.

„Wir waren“, erinnert sich Chris Karrer, „zu Beginn unserer Karriere der absolute Underground. Doch in den späten 70er-Jahren gab es den nicht mehr, unsere äußerst revolutionären Ideologien und Visionen von früher brachen im Alltag immer weiter weg, das reaktionäre Spießertum war erneut auf dem Vormarsch. Erschwerend kam hinzu, dass Amon Düül II nie eine Single-Band oder in den Charts waren, sondern stets ein subkulturelles Ereignis. Phänomen und Ausdruck seiner Zeit, eine Art personifiziertes Gesamtkunstwerk. Wahrscheinlich hatten wir unsere Szene-Bedeutung stets völlig unterschätzt. Deshalb konnten wir später niemals davon profitieren.“

Ähnliche Erinnerungen an seine musikalische Vergangenheit hatte auch Florian Fricke, am 29. Dezember 2001 mit nur 57 Jahren viel zu früh verstorbener Mastermind von Popol Vuh, während eines Interviews, das ich mit ihm Mitte der 90er-Jahre führte. Der klassisch ausgebildete Komponist und Pianist stand seinem Projekt bis zu seinem Ableben über dreißig Jahre vor. Bekannt geworden ist es vor allem durch die Soundtracks zu Werner Herzog-Filmen wie „Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes“, „Nosferatu“ oder „Fitzcarraldo“. In England, Frankreich, Italien oder den USA steckt man Popol Vuh gerne in die New Age-Ecke - in die jene Band nach Ansicht von Florian Fricke aber absolut überhaupt nicht hineingehörte.

Für ihre nicht unbeträchtliche Anhängerschaft passte Popol Vuh sowieso in keine Schublade. Florian Fricke war neben dem Klassik-Rock-Veteranen Eberhard Schöner der erste deutsche Musiker, der bereits anno 1969 über einen Moog-Synthesizer verfügte, auf dem er die ersten beiden Popol Vuh-Alben, „Affenstunde“ und „In den Gärten Pharaos“, einspielte - noch heute gelten diese beiden Scheiben als Sternstunde im Bereich experimenteller elektronischer Musik.

„Ehe Amon Düül II oder mein Projekt anfangen, die Musikszene in Deutschland zu prägen“, resümierte der introvertierte Grübler bei unserem Gespräch im Jahr 1995, „gab es nur seichten Schlager auf der einen oder ein Sammelsurium schräger Töne auf der anderen Seite. Also: Kitsch oder die völlige Negierung von Tonalität à la Karlheinz Stockhausen. Wenn man ein seriöser Musiker sein wollte, galt die Faustregel: bloß keine Melodien. Dadurch gab es natürlich ein riesiges Vakuum in der Musiklandschaft. Und genau das versuchten wir zu füllen.“ „Außerdem“, erinnerte sich Florian Fricke, „litten all die einheimischen Musiker vor 1968 unter einem kulturellen Minderwertigkeitskomplex. Doch die gewaltigen Erfolge der Beatles und der Rolling Stones mit ihrer rebellischen Attitüde hatten zur Folge, dass in ganz Deutschland eine irre Aufbruchsstimmung entstand. Wir jungen Wilden fühlten uns plötzlich als Weltbürger. Und bei aller verschiedener musikalischer Prägung von Can, Amon Düül II oder Popol Vuh hatten wir doch eine Sache gemeinsam: die Andersartigkeit gepaart mit diesem World-Feeling. Das übrige Europa war verunsichert wegen dieser Bewegung, und um uns wie gewohnt abzuwerten, verpasste man uns das pauschale Etikett „Kraut-Rock“. Wir Musiker fanden das zu Anfang total blöde. Doch die Musik-Industrie stürzte sich darauf, als sie merkte, dass damit Geld zu machen war. Und irgendwann traten auch wir die Flucht nach vorne an, nannten uns „Kraut-Rocker“, und füllten diesen Begriff mit jeder Menge Leben. Die große Ernüchterung kam allerdings schnell. Denn während sich alle „Kraut-Rocker“ zu Beginn jener Ära noch kannten und unterstützten, ließ dieses ungeheure Kollektivgefühl schon Mitte der 70er-Jahre nach. Jeder von uns musste schauen, wo er blieb. Das Hippietum war endgültig passé.“

Bis Mitte der 90er-Jahre dümpelten die meisten der Kraut-Rock-Veteranen vor sich hin. Chris

Karrer schloss sich Embryo, eine Weltmusik-Formation aus München, an und vagabundierte ein Jahrzehnt lang durch die Welt. Florian Fricke stellte einen Großteil seines Schaffens in die Dienste des Filmemachers Werner Herzog, für den er Soundtracks fabrizierte. Faust, Gilla, Between und viele andere Bands lösten sich mangels Nachfrage auf. Can und Kraftwerk zehrten vom Ruhm vergangener Tage. Guru Guru, Tangerine Dream oder Cluster hielten sich äußerst mühsam und mit stetig sinkenden Verkaufszahlen über Wasser. Kraut-Rock, so schien es, war endgültig zum rein historisch-nostalgischen Relikt der Pop-Geschichte verkommen.

INTERVIEW MIT TANGERINE DREAM

Riebes Fachblatt 5/1975

FB: Wie sieht die langfristige Musik-Konzeption von TD aus?

EF: Von konventionellen Instrumenten wie Gitarre, Geige und Bass möchten wir ganz auf Elektronik umsteigen und von arrangierten Kompositionen loskommen. Wir notieren keine Noten mehr, studieren auch keine Stücke mehr ein. Wir finden es langweilig, uns selbst zu reproduzieren. Jeder ist gleichberechtigt, niemand macht anderen Vorschriften. Es gibt keine Komponisten und keinen Bandleader in der Gruppe. Auch Soli sind verpönt, damit sich kein anderer unterordnen muss.

FB: Ist das die totale Musikfreiheit?

EF: Nein, im Gegenteil, es erfordert absolute Disziplin. Wir sind tolerant, aber sehr streng, unsere Arbeitsweise ist anstrengend. Jeder muss drei bis vier Stunden am Tag üben, um bei den Proben neues Tonmaterial einbringen zu können. Die Vorschläge werden dann auf Logik überprüft und gemeinsam die Entscheidung getroffen, welches Tonmaterial für einen Titel aufgenommen wird.

FB: Wie entstehen die Platten von TD?

EF: Wir gehen eine Woche früher ins Studio und tun zuerst gar nichts. Das Wichtigste dabei ist, uns wieder aufeinander einzustellen, weil wir sonst getrennt leben und jeder seinen privaten Neigungen nachgeht. Nach diesen Vorbereitungen fangen wir erst zu spielen an. Früher haben wir alles gespielte Material gesammelt. Bei der letzten - „Rubycon“, die im April erschienen ist - sortierten wir aber von Anfang an und haben alles, was uns nicht geeignet erschien, gleich verworfen.

FB: Kann TD dieselbe Musik wie auf ihren Platten auch im Konzert spielen?

EF: Das wollen wir gar nicht, und damit unterscheiden wir uns von anderen Gruppen, die auf Platte und live das gleiche bringen, nur in technisch schlechterer Qualität. Wir bleiben stilistisch unserer Platten-Komposition treu und lassen den Ablauf des Konzertes völlig offen. Manchmal dauert ein Auftritt vier Stunden, ein anderesmal hören wir bereits nach anderthalb Stunden auf.

FB: Wie einigt man sich beim Konzert auf den Schluss?

EF: Wir kennen uns nach vielen Jahren schon soweit, dass wir hören, wenn der andere nicht mehr weiterspielen kann, wenn sich die Klangflächen abgenutzt haben. Unsere Musik hat feste Regeln - wenn in einem Stück die Klangstrukturen so stark ineinanderfließen, dass sie sich auflösen, ist eben auch das Stück zu Ende.

FB: Wird TD auch einmal ein theoretisches Werk über die eigene Musik herausgeben?

EF: Wir wollen uns nicht durch elitäre Begriffe in den Elfenbeinturm einschließen. Unsere Musik soll auf jeden individuell wirken. Als Grundsatz gilt nur, auf fließende Übergänge zu achten und niemals abrupt neue Themen einzuwerfen. Theoretisch ist unsere Musik genauso beschaffen, wie sie György Ligeti in seiner „Klangfarbenmusik“ beschreibt.

FB: Trifft der Titel „kosmische Musik“ bei TD zu?

EF: Es war ein bedauerliches Missverständnis, als man versuchte, unseren Stil zu kategorisieren.

FB: Warum spielt TD ausgerechnet in Kirchen?

EF: Des besonderen Klangs und günstigen akustischen Echos wegen, was in unseren Kompositionen gut zu integrieren ist. Dementsprechend stellen wir auch die Lautsprecherboxen auf, damit die Klänge reflektiert werden. Außerdem bemühen wir uns, die ursprüngliche Funktion einer Kirche als lebendiger Brennpunkt der Gemeinde, als Ort der Kommunikation zu erneuern.

FB: Wie steht die Kirche dazu?

EF: Ich glaube, unsere Motivationen wurden schon verstanden. Es geht darum, einen geistigen Safe aufzubrechen, zu zeigen, welche Bedeutung Kirchen auch heute noch haben können. Man kann sicher darüber streiten, ob der Mensch einen transzendentalen Bezug braucht, aber das muss er schließlich mit sich selbst ausmachen. Keiner sollte übrigens glauben, es gäbe keine toleranten Kleriker.

FB: Für wen macht TD Musik?

EF: Für jeden, der bereit ist, ein bisschen Konzentration und Geduld aufzubringen. Unsere Musik bedeutet keine Flucht und auch keine schönere Welt. Sie bringt nur ein stark verändertes Zeitgefühl zuwege. Wenn man unserer Musik zuhört, darf man nicht auf die Uhr schauen.

FB: Was für Pläne hat TD nun weiter?

EF: Eine Australien-Tournee mit zehn Konzerten haben wir ja im März hinter uns gebracht, ebenso ein Konzert am 2. April in der Royal Albert Hall (als erste deutsche Rock-Formation übrigens). Jetzt steht eine für Mai geplante erste US-Tournee an, des weiteren schreiben wir für William Friedkin (Regisseur von „Exorzist“ und „Brennpunkt Brooklyn“) die Musik für die nächsten vier Filme. Schließlich gibt's auch einige Aktivitäten rund um die Veröffentlichung unseres neuen Albums „Rubycon

INTERVIEW WITH KLAUS SCHULZE

by Jason Gross (May 1997) for Perfect Sound Forever

It's not just the pioneering work that he did as a member of Tangerine Dream or Ash Ra Tempel that has made Klaus Schulze such an important figure in modern music. Even more than that, his solo career has helped to establish electronic music as a strong medium. Calling his music 'classical' or 'rock' or some other label doesn't make sense anymore as it's able to stand on its own as something that he's explored for over 25 years now and still going strong. This has meant playing for heads of state and royalty as well as sell-out crowds across the globe. Just about everything I've heard him do is a treasure. If I'm being really gushy, that's what happens when you're a fan, even if you can't get every single fact straight- I flubbed up on Stockhausen, record companies he's worked with, and the track listing of his latest release. Otherwise, I did get a few reasonable questions in to look somewhat credible!

To Klaus D. Mueller, we say 'danke vielmals!'

PSF: Could you talk about the work you did in with PSY FREE? Are there any surviving recordings?

KS: No, there were no recordings made. Why should we, or someone else? Psy Free was a trio consisting of guitar, organ and drums. I was the drummer. We did what the name suggests: psychedelic, free music. Not "free jazz" which was in common at this time, but more rock orientated noise. We played in Berlin clubs.

PSF: With Tangerine Dream, how did you come to work with Edgar? What was your, Edgar's and Conrad's idea about the band and its music? What did you think of its later music? With ASH RA TEMPEL, how was this band different for you? What was the idea behind it?

KS: There was no "idea" behind it. Please understand that we did it not with today's retrospect view. We just did it. Then. And we had fun doing it. This goes for both bands, TD as well as A.R.T. For Tangerine Dream: One evening their drummer was absent, and I joined instead. And I kept the drum chair for the following eight months or so. During this time, we also recorded the first album. I told the following story very often: at one of our concerts I tried to play some organ tapes that I had recorded and treated in an uncommon fashion. Edgar didn't like that. He wanted just a drummer for his guitar/bass/drums group, and no "funny" experiments. Therefore, I left. Conrad Schnitzler soon followed. Both of us in a friendly way. Which was no big thing then. Nobody cared. We all were more or less amateurs, beginners, there was no big money involved. Bands came and vanished. People founded groups, joined groups, left groups, disbanded groups, members changed among groups. . .

Then I founded Ash Ra Tempel. The two guys, Manuel (Göttsching) and Hartmut (Enke), were playing a kind a fast blues rock when I met them. My fast bassdrum style impressed them. From

Blues we changed to “Space” rock.

PSF: You rejoined Ash Ra and Tangerine later- maintained good/close relation with bands?

KS: Yes, I’m a musician. I also like to play with others, sometimes more, sometimes less. It happened in 1973 that I played with Edgar and Chris again, and with Manuel and Hartmut. There is nothing special behind it or about it. Manuel is still today a good friend. The others I see rarely, but with Edgar I phone from time to time. I also played with Stomu Yamash’ta and his “super groups” in 1976 and ’77. And, in the sixties, I played in bands before T.D. or Ash Ra Tempel.

PSF: What led you to go solo? How did that feel after being in all of these bands?

KS: Thanks, I feel good. I went solo because I could do much better what I wanted to do. I didn’t have to ask or discuss things and ideas that are already shaped in my head.

PSF: It’s been suggested that John Cage, Terry Riley and Karlheinz Stockhausen influenced your work. Is this fair?

KS: “Fair”? Neither fair nor unfair. Better words would be: nonsense, absurd, false. Everytime a journalist cannot cope (pun intended) with a certain music, he mentions “Stockhausen” as a kind of synonym. Have you ever checked Stockhausen’s output? About 5 (five) compositions that could be called “electronic”, and they were done about 30 to 40 years ago, made with an oscillator or something like this. He did over hundred of other compositions that have no relation whatsoever to electronic music. Besides, what I heard meanwhile, sounds awful to my ears and to most other people’s ears. Stockhausen is maybe a good theorist. But, who’s listening voluntarily to his actual music, and who “enjoys” it? I also had and I have nothing to do with Cage or Riley. Not with their music nor with their theories and philosophies (if they have any. . .). This is simply not my world. When I started to do my music, and before, I was listening to Jimi Hendrix and Pink Floyd, before to the Spotnicks and Ventures, but not to the names you mention. Nobody in my surrounding and in my age did. This was a kind of “culture” that just did not exist among us. Only many years after, and because every third journalist asked me about “Stockhausen”, I finally bought his theoretic books and I read them. Interesting stuff, I must admit, but the results are not my cup of tea.

PSF: I’ve heard that you’ve done some work with music therapy. Could you talk about this?

KS: This was because I had a girlfriend then (circa 1973) who was working in a mental hospital. They used musical therapy, and because I was a musician (and the doctors were certainly tired of always the same music) I was asked to make some tapes for them, which I did. It was an, hm, “interesting” experience. A totally different world.

PSF: Could you talk about the 10-day concert you gave in April 1973 (‘sound environment’)?

KS: You got all this small info from The Works, didn’t you? Yes, I was invited to make the sound environment at a booth of a huge electronic company, during the Hanover Industrial Fair in 1973. It was a job. Slightly good paid. But not as much as my producer then told the press. And they printed this hokum: “First cosmic millionaire”.

PSF: Over the years, you’ve changed the keyboards you’ve used for your albums. Has it been that the keyboards influenced the music or was it vice-versa where the music dictated which keyboards to use?

KS: It’s a kind of reciprocation. Sometimes a new instrument (keyboard or others) is very good or challenging and the influence is large: I use it extensively. But there are also new instruments

(keyboards or others) which are not so groundbreaking, and they have not a big influence on my playing. But isn't that normal? With every instrumentalist? Should I mention Glenn Gould?

PSF: TIMEWIND was dedicated to Richard Wagner. What kind of influence was he for you?

KS: I dig Wagner. But I also dig J.J. Cale.

PSF: Could you talk about your collaborations with Stomu Yamashta (Go)?

KS: I talked so often during the past twenty years about it, please excuse me as I'm not in the mood at the moment to do it all over again. If I remember well, some of my Yamashta stories and sentences are printed (if I may say so) in my "official website." Stomu was and is a fine man and an inspiration.

PSF: In 1977, you did shows at the London Planetarium. Do you feel this is an idea atmosphere for your music?

KS: It was the very first time that a concert was given in a planetarium! I don't know if a planetarium is the ideal place for each and every music. I care for a good sound. And some concert places have a good sound, some have not. A planetarium with its hemisphere shape is difficult to play, if I remember well (?). There are echoes and shattering from all sides, if you play too loud. But in fact, I don't exactly remember what it was like, then, twenty years ago, in London.

PSF: There are a lot of 'electronic' and 'classical' elements to your work. Do you see yourself are melding the two or perhaps creating something altogether unique?

KS: You cannot compare these two. First, "electronic" is the way I generate my melodies and rhythms. Just "a lot of" it? This is an understatement. Second, "classical" is a given style in music. I don't interpret "classical" music (there was one exception, where I did exactly this. But I think you don't mean that). I invent and play my own music, and I do this with electronic means. This was sensational once, because it was unusual. Today it's normal, except in "classical" music.

Maybe some of my compositions remind you on some "classical" music? Some of the Beatles stuff remind ME on some classical (baroque) music. That's the way the cookie crumbles.

PSF: You started Innovative Communications and Inteam to control your own music. Did you find the problems with these companies taught you anything about the music business?

KS: Sorry to take away your naive believings: I did not start IC and Inteam to have control over my music. I had control before and after. A look at my discography shows this, because my albums were still with another company when I started IC and after. I never had many problems to do my music and to give it to a record company. Rarely do they try to argue with me about my music, probably because it's still too far-out. Who wants to argue about a thing that he doesn't understand? The problem was the journalists who also did not understand much of my music, but they wrote about it. I think you fell into the usual trap laid out by parts of the press and other writers: that the poor musician has always to fight the evil companies and managers. No. Because, also the world of showbiz is not just black and white, good and bad (There was a book written by a certain Chris Cutler; he sees it this way. Poor man).

PSF: Audenty (1983) was a very interesting project- collaborations, stories and sound effects. How did this come about?

KS: A "project-collaboration"? "stories"? H'm. I used the wonderful cello player before, and also Michael Shrieve's drumming, as well as Rainer Bloss' piano playing. It's nice to hear that you seem to like that album. "How did this come about?" What should I answer? Doing music and

albums is my profession. I don't remember today how it "came about" Audenty. Just another fine album. . .

PSF: Could you talk about the meetings you have with Robert Moog and Pink Floyd in 1995?

KS: These meetings were private. As everyone else, I was a fan of Pink Floyd in the sixties. And the Moog sound is legendary. I met Robert Moog face to face first at an electronic festival in Austria in 1980. I did the opening concert then, and both of us were in the jury to choose which newly invented electronic music instrument would get a prize. Later we phoned, and we met again at a music fair here in Germany. My interest in his new toy, the Theremin, isn't very big. It simply does not fit into my way of playing music. I do not want to fiddle around with my hands in the air.

PSF: You've been using sampling of music in the last few years. How has that changed your work?

KS: Sampling is a much easier way to do what we did long ago with tape loops. The sampling technic is faster, cleaner, anything you want. Because of the digital revolution. I had to realize that the use of samples has its rules, too. If you use "normal" sound samples, nobody takes notice. It's just not very special. If you use sensational good and exotic samples, everybody will notice: Ahhhh! Great! But very soon the same people get tired of it. Therefore, extraordinary samples you can only use once. Never a second time, except maybe for a quotation. Yes, sampling has changed not just my way of playing and composing. For instance, I could store all the sounds of my old instruments into a sampling archive, and could get rid of these heavy, instable tools. If I want to play a Mellotron, I use the sampled sound and a master keyboard . . . instead of the old mellotron keyboard with its unsteady tape loops cassettes.

PSF: Were you surprised by the recent interest in your work by trip-hop, techno, ambient musicians/DJs?

KS: First, yes.

PSF: Around 1972 and Black Dance, you really starting using synthesizers. How did this change your music/ideas?

KS: This is 25 years ago. It certainly changed my music, and not only mine. But how in particular? This is hard to tell after all these years. Everything changes permantly. How boring if it wouldn't. These are the kind of questions that should be asked not to the actual musician, but to the recipients, the listeners, the historians.

I, as the "doer", the creator, don't think much in the direction: How did this or that change my music? The only time I have to think about it is when an interviewer asks me that. Do you know what I mean? It's a layman's impression or idea. Which is okay, but please understand that I don't have a satisfying (honest) answer. I just did it then, I worked, I made my music. With the available tools. Available at the time and to me, economically. I leave the explanations to others.

PSF: Favorite collaborators- Wolfgang Tiepold, Harald Grosskopf, Arthur Brown, Michael Shrieve. How have they added to your music? What qualities do you look for in collaborators such as these?

KS: I remember to answer quite often to this kind of question when it actually happened, 15 or 20 years ago. But: "How(?) have they added. . .", this I hear for the first time. Maybe my English isn't good enough, but I don't know exactly what you mean with that. What qualities? This is much easier to answer. As always in a musical collaboration: One has to like each other. As simple as that.

PSF: ANGST was a film that was cut to the music- not vice versa. For soundtracks- how do you

approach the work? Do you see the director's work/go through story line?

KS: Of course I have to read the "story line", the script. "Angst", in contrast to all other "soundtracks", was different in handling. Don't mix them up. "Angst" was special, because the director cut the film after my music, which is not the normal procedure. Normally, the composer, the musician, has to follow exactly the director's script and advice, to the point, which can be parts of a second. And all this is written exactly in the script. As: "14 min. 22: door shut, music fade in (strings). 14 min. 38: music stops (abrupt.). Dialog starts. 15 min. 12: dialog ends. 15 min. 14: music starts (congas/sequencer) loud ..." etc.

PSF: For Mediterranean Pads, Klaus Mueller says 'The first album that shows a new beginning' Would you agree? If so, how do you see this?

KS: This was certainly said in a wider and correct context (?) But I don't know which one. Therefore, I cannot say much to it. [NOTE FROM KLAUS MUELLER: And I'm too lazy to check]

PSF: In 1992, you were recording synthesizer interpretations of some 'classical' music on Goes Classic with pieces by Schubert, Brahms, Grieg, and Beethoven. How have these composers influenced your work? You included your own piece on Goes Classical also- do you see yourself carrying on a tradition or being a part of a tradition then?

KS: We are all part of a tradition, at least we depend on the past. How else? These composers did not "influence" my work, at least not more than the Beatles or any other musician's work that I know and heard once. Of course I like the works of these old composers, as many people do, partly since hundreds of years. But the recording I did just because it was fun to do it.

PSF: Is there any particular live CD (or unreleased live concert) that really captures your best work (i.e. Royal Festival Hall and Dome Event)?

KS: A concert is a concert is a concert is a concert. An album is an album is an album is an album. Musically, both have nothing in common. When I was good during a concert, it is the greatest thing (to me) that I ever did. When I released a new album, this is the best album I ever did. My "best work" is always the latest music that I did and/or released. Otherwise I would not have done it.

PSF: In the last few years, a number of compilations of your work have come out- Silver Edition, Jubilee Edition, The Essential 72-93, Historic Edition. Did you feel it was time to sum up your career for now?

KS: The Essential is a sampler that includes parts of already released and available older albums. One among many other KS samplers. They are made by the record companies who own the old rights or who get the licence from the owning companies.

The sets ("...Edition") are filled with formerly unreleased music and they are put together and released by ourselves in a limited edition. For the sets, the idea to do them was Klaus Mueller's, and I'm sure he told the world already why he did it, in his announcements, in interviews, but also in the set's booklet texts. He likes to do the impossible.

PSF: With Are You Sequenced?, your compositions consisted of shorter tracks (as opposed to your earlier work). How did this come about? (ED NOTE: I was mistaken here- as Klaus notes, it does consist of one composition that is broken into sections)

KS: If you see it this way... No. Honestly and seriously: Where do you hear shorter tracks on my Are You Sequenced? Have you actually listened to the nearly 80 minute piece? It's ONE track.

Didn't you notice? Funny... Even if I do an album with "shorter tracks" – and I did in the past – what's so interesting or particularly about it? A composer composes longer and shorter tracks, a musician plays longer and shorter tracks. It depends on many things: His mood, his ideas, the available duration (of a single, an LP, a CD...), the requirements of a soundtrack (see my "Le Moulin de Daudet" with 21 tracks on one CD) or a concert (main titles between 30 to 80 minutes, encores between 10 to 17 minutes), and other things.

A funny story: There was a guy who only knows pop music from Singles, maximum 3 minutes. One day he discovers that the world is larger and that there is many other and different music made and available, in concerts, on scores, and on million of records, with all kinds of length. And when he gets older he discovers that there's even a piece with a title that gives just the duration: "4:33" – and when he goes on to study music and life, he'll realize finally what this piece is about.

KLAUS D. MUELLER INTERVIEW

by - Archie Patterson, <http://www.eurock.com>

Klaus D. Mueller has been one of EUROCK's best "friends" over the last 25 years in Germany. Over that time many phone calls; faxes and emails have been exchanged all in the service of information and support for each other's cause. Along the way we talked about many aspects of our life and love of music. It was both educational and fun.

As friend, manager and publisher for Klaus Schulze since the beginning, KDM was been involved in the German music scene and has done every kind of work to help make the music happen over the years. He's set up equipment, promoted concerts, started labels, hustled record companies, done favors for fans, and ruffled a few feathers along the way as any outspoken, dedicated promoter and crusader will. He's grown up with music of some sort always in his life, and is one of the few who will always give me his good advice when I ask. Even when he was critical, there was a little smiley face next to his comment and I respect what he says.

As EUROCK began again to focus on net-journalism in the year 2001, I wanted to do interviews with the artists and people whom I respected and felt deserved perhaps long overdue recognition for their many years of making or supporting the music. KDM is high on the list of people who qualify. I hope you enjoy his story.

Q: Do you remember actually when and what was the very first record you heard, or bought, all those many years ago in your youth?

First it was the usual "Schlager" (hits) of the day, German "Schlager" of course; the names would mean nothing to you (later I learned: mostly cover versions of American hits). I was very young then. Then I remember hearing the Schellack with "Rock Around the Clock" by guess who, over and over again. I loved it. Then it was (already my own) singles; I chose by song not by artist, then, in the mid to late fifties, American pop music of the time, 1957 to '60. We could hear the AFN here in Berlin, and especially the program "Frolic at Five" from five past five to six in the afternoon (hosted by a George Hudak; the opening music was always the same: "9:20 Special" by the Harry James Orchestra; but this I found out only much later), ...this program was not just my favorite, but all Berlin teens listed to it. Here we heard the hot music of the day and from God's Own Country that was never (never!) played on German radio (Eddie Cochran, The Drifters, Bobby Day, The Everly Brothers, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, Fats Domino, Paul Anka, Little Richard, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Pat Boone, Brenda Lee, The Coasters, Ricky Nelson, Bobby Helms, Duane Eddy, Connie Francis, Wanda Jackson, The Kingston Trio, The Ventures, Don Gibson, Neil Sedaka, Johnny Cash, Marty Robbins, Johnny and the Hurricanes, Bobby Freeman, Freddy Cannon, Lloyd Price,.

Mind you, there was no "youth culture" in Germany and in Europe, the teenagers were not seen yet as important customers. Blue jeans were just coming up (only one brand, the now classical Levi's). "Black" music was not so often played on the AFN, as was white music; I don't remember hearing much of Chuck Berry or Bo Diddley then, on the AFN. Instead of Ivory Joe Hunter's originals they often played the white copies by Pat Boone etc. (But I realized that only very much later).

My first single that was of any importance to me had a black label, and it was "Just Walking in

the Rain” by Johnny Ray.

Later, when I was 15 I discovered Dixieland music, cheap Dixieland I must confess (Dixie was then a short sensation in Europe). From here I heard Lonnie Donegan (“Rock Island Line” etc.) and for a short time some Skiffle. Alexis Korner’s first album was an eye-opener... and from there I went on to discover the originals: Big Bill Broonzy, Josh White, Leadbelly, and all the black singers, guitar pickers, harmonica and piano players of the thirties and forties, and finally from the fifties: Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, Chuck Berry, Little Walter, Bo Diddley, Howlin’ Wolf... I saw some of them in concert at those famous annual “American Blues Festivals.” This was in the early to mid sixties. And I changed very quickly from cheap Dixieland to real historic jazz, up to “modern” jazz.

Q: When you were growing up what was your favorite type of music?

As just described: Mostly it were the more “hot” hits of the days, the more rhythmic and wild stuff: Rock ‘n’ Roll. I could sing-a-long with most of my singles, without knowing what I sung! Then it was Blues and Jazz from the past & present. I was very much into Charles Mingus & John Coltrane when they did their things. But I also loved the classic things from the twenties or thirties and forties, from King Oliver to Charlie Parker. Before I forget him: Ray Charles was always a favorite of mine.

At the end of the sixties I also had my listening experiences with Terry Riley and similar avant-garde musicians. Even worked for him at two huge & long 30-days-festivals in Berlin.

Q: You are a collector of information and music - do you have still today a large collection of records and CDs?

Still a child, I gave away my “collection” (about 20 singles and EPs) of Rock ‘n’ Roll for the same amount of Skiffle singles, around 1958 or ’59. Soon I dropped also Skiffle and started collecting Jazz and Blues, seriously for about ten years, buying at auctions etc. I was really into that scene. In 1970 I realized that I just collected, but rarely listened anymore to all the many LPs I had bought. As a result I sold the whole collection of albums, EPs, singles, and about 200 books (discographies etc.) to a Belgian collector. (A week later most of the money was stolen).

I started to collect again (only jazz and blues) in 1985. Ten years later I had the whole history of this lone genuine American art form on records again.

Q: During the beginnings of German rock in Berlin. What were the first bands you remember starting up in Berlin?

If I remember well, it was “Agitation Free”, their friends “Os Mundi”, and soon later: “Ash Ra Tempel” and “Tangerine Dream”. And I worked for a lesser-known band that played in American clubs on each weekend. I carried their equipment. With Agitation Free we had concert tours in France. But my main job in 1970 to ’73 was being the tour manager for English or American artists, groups, even orchestras: Lionel Hampton, Duke Ellington, Paul Bley, Van der Graaf Generator, Baden Powell, Marty Feldmann, ... etc.

Q: It seems to me that Berlin always had a tradition of avant-garde and artistic types living there. Am I right in this? In the early days were there places for the first bands to play and a scene of any sort there in say 1966, ’67, ’68, ’69?

Berlin is a large city and the cultural scene was and still is very much supported by the government, I mean money wise. This brings a lot of “avant-garde” to the foreground; also a kind of avant-garde that is forgotten very fast (and justifiably). I remember the “Living Theater” visiting Berlin, they were a sensation. Also the concerts of free jazz musicians like Peter Brötzmann were great then - young Brötzmann was really energetic. In the early seventies I did the furniture removal for a man called Steve Reich, who was a citizen of Berlin then (!). I did the same job for Ax Genrich when

he left Berlin and moved to Heidelberg. Memories.... :-)

Of course, the government did NOT support rock music. Places to play were some small clubs that change names and owners every three months. All that started only after the “cultural revolution” in 1968 (a copy of what had happened at Berkeley a year before). Before that, we had “beat music”, modern German groups sounded either like poor Beatles or like poor Stones. The music you are thinking of, Archie, started in circa 1969.

Q: When did you first start working with Klaus, Manuel and the others back in those days?

Must have been in 1972, with “Agitation Free”. Also in '72 and during one of my tours with international groups, I met Hartmut from “Ash Ra Tempel” in Frankfurt. He kindly invited me to visit him & A.R.T. when back in Berlin. I did so and became friends of Manuel, Rosi, and Hartmut, seeing them nearly daily. I helped them too with carrying speakers, amps, etc. to rehearsal rooms or concert venues. I was well known then for my “magic box”, a simple toolbox that contained “everything” that was needed (so it seemed to the guys).

Klaus Schulze I met first in the old office of the OHR label, when we (A.R.T.) asked for some cash to travel to Switzerland to do what became the SEVEN UP album. KS had left A.R.T. a year ago and discussed matters with an OHR secretary about cover and photo for his first solo album. Later that year I also got to know him better and started to help him out, too. I even started to live at his flat, together with him and his girl friend. In 1973 I worked regularly for A.R.T., TD, and KS (which means: on all their gigs).

Q: How did you get involved in the scene? There was very little business consciousness among musicians in those days (and maybe still today...); did you have some management, or personal business experience to help them?

With the exception of Edgar Froese, I was a bit older than all the Berlin musicians I worked for. In 1970 I had finished with a regular full time job that had lasted the previous 10 long years, and therefore I knew what work means. In opposition to all (!) those musicians my background is the “lower class”. I had no such naive ideas, I was a very realistic person and I still am. Also I had my European tour experience with sometimes quite difficult people from USA, Brazil, England...(even more difficult if you know that my English was sparse then :-). Of course I had no knowledge about management or the music business. I was an accepted member of Agitation Free and A.R.T. except that my job in the group was the technique and transport. Only later - and just with KS - I started to look after business things too, and learned a thing or two.

Q: In America the birth of psychedelic music created an even larger social scene that ultimately changed society even up to today. Was it like that in Germany as well - a social revolution caused by the music, or?

West Germany copied and still copies everything that comes from the USA, including every silly fashion. In addition to the music from England, of course the German young bands also copied the (not so silly) music from America. At least: they tried. The San Francisco groups were highly regarded here, as much as British “Pink Floyd” and a lot of the many English blues rock groups. Sadly, their ability to do the same as the Anglo-Americans was not so prominent. Therefore, some believed that drugs were the necessary thing needed, what an error. What came out from the efforts by a few of the young & idealistic Germans lead finally to their own style. The huge majority of the German bands played the usual rock stuff, but with that stiff rhythm (Can and Kraftwerk were clever - or courageous - enough to take this as advantage :-).

Q: In fact was this new form of German rock music really such a big musical movement back then, or perhaps even in those days, the hype was bigger than the reality?

There was other music that was much bigger, which is a situation not very different from today.

Only to the ears, eyes, mind and life of the interested people like you or me, this scene was important. The common man listened to other music. Probably Captain Beefheart's TROUT MASK REPLICIA album sold more than TD of their first three LPs.

Q: From your perspective, what was the reaction of the German people in general to this new phenomenon called "Krautrock"?

No one in Germany called this music "Krautrock" then. Ash Ra Tempel or TD was called "Ash Ra Tempel" or "Tangerine Dream", or "those crazy people" :-). The nationalistic British music press put the label "Kraut" or "Krautrock" on some of the bands, if they noticed them at all (after '73 and mostly because Virgin released some of them and paid for advertising). Of course, the Brits meant "Kraut" spitefully.

The Germans as a whole didn't react at all. Some journalists mentioned the names some people bought the records. As said above, it was a minority. German rock music was not highly regarded. Apart from the albums I got for free from the people I worked for, I never bought a record by a German artist or group! It was just not cool. Pink Floyd WAS better than TD. Hawkwind WAS better than A.R.T. And the Stones WERE and ARE much better than all the hundreds of German copies. The exception was in 1973 when Kraftwerk hit it big with "Autobahn".

Let me take a parallel to the second wave of German bands, ten years later, called "New German Wave", in 1980 to '82. The better of those bands in the very early eighties sold hundreds of thousands of copies of albums and singles, played concerts in front of many thousands, had TV appearances, won awards, etc. (Ideal, Trio, Nina Hagen...). The first wave ten years earlier, Can, Amon Düül, TD, A.R.T., Klaus Schulze, they sold one or two, maybe five thousand copies. The eighties' German bands sold 100 times more. This is the reality. But, selling is not everything.

Q: Do you have any idea how much a percentage of the market sales of the new German rock bands accounted for overall - or did "normal" music still dominate the business even then?

If you speak about the early era: the latter. A successful album in Germany was then: 50,000 to 100,000 copies. 250,000 copies was Gold, 500,000 copies: Platinum. Every month there are lists published of Golden and Platinum albums. No Tangerine Dream, no Can, not one of the groups you think of, among the dozens of records. Same for radio play: nothing on the main stations at normal playing time. Nothing in the charts. Only exception was Kraftwerk after 1973. Oh, yes, and there was this Michael Rother, he had a huge success once with one of his records. But these two exceptions are not really part of the "new music scene" in Germany around 1970. These 2 had HITS with the wider public because they actually composed a song with a melody, a pop hit. That's still the key to success in music: a good melody. For instance, not one TD album contains such a catchy tune.

Q: In the early days what was the record industries reaction to the music of KS? Over the years what was the largest selling KS album and how many copies did it sell?

Why & how should the record industry react? There was no such reaction.

Sales figures? Recently I discussed with KS if I could publish such figures in "The KS Circle", the monthly publication about Klaus. I have fascinating statistics that I made in the late seventies and in the early nineties. We agreed that these figures are still nothing for outsiders. Because: any statistic would be misinterpreted by most readers because they don't know, or forget: a record that is for 20 or 25 years available, sold of course more than one that is on the market for just the last six months. An album that is distributed worldwide by a huge label (for instance: TIMEWIND, MIRAGE, or BABEL), would sell automatically more than an album released only in Germany. This says nothing about the quality of an album. Readers would only see the figures... and not what's the reality behind them. Also people are used to (and seem to believe) exaggerated figures that other artists tell them. And IF I would print our figures, I would be honest. Therefore, we

NEVER published sales figures of KS' albums.

Q: For a very long time now you have worked with Klaus Schulze. What exactly was the nature of your relationship with him?

I worked with him (notice the "with"), by doing the things he's not able or not willing to do: from bookkeeping, statistics and writing letters, to carrying and maintenance of the instruments. Also making photos, covers, tour management, the stage set-up, the stage lighting... Care of the instruments' I dropped in the early eighties. Officially, and since 1978, I'm his publisher; I "publish" his compositions. And that's my only income. Except if I produce albums, then I get my share from this too.

I gave an older interview the heading: I try to bring order into the chaos. This explains in 8 words my job. If someone wants to know more details about my work then and now, this other interview is to find in the "Miscellaneous" section on the KS website: www.klaus-schulze.com.

Q: During the last 30 years together you and Klaus did 2 independent record labels (Innovative Communication and Inteam) to release his albums, and music by friends. Was there a specific reason for you to do this - because of economics, desire for creative control, lack of interest by larger record companies, or?

With both I had nothing much to do (!). I was against them from the beginning. KS is not the right person to lead a company. First, he had a good partner in IC, Michael Hajentes. Only when this partner left Klaus and later founded "Edel", I had to replace him, voluntarily without any payment (!). I still was "the publisher" only. Okay, I said to myself, if I finally accept to do this unwanted job, I'll do it right: I found a rock group here in Berlin, signed them for IC, produced them, and 18 month later we had a Platinum album.

Later, after I had left IC and Klaus had sold the company, he asked me to join his second effort "Inteam". I said no. I saw that the label would be soon bankrupt, for various reasons. Exactly this happened. A real musician should not try to manage a company, and vice versa.

Q: Today what is the situation like for new bands, and more experimental artists in Germany like KS since the market has become so dominated worldwide by the mega-corps?

It's the same as it was 30 years ago. Good interesting new music has always a chance. It doesn't matter if the record companies are huge or small. And with "good interesting & new" I do not mean: "good" for a loony clientele, "interesting" to those with no taste, and "new" for those who don't know much music. Sorry for these harsh words, but during these many years I've had my experiences with bad taste, with naive crazies, and with egocentricity :-)).

Q: In America, the record stores have become like huge corporate supermarkets for the latest top pop products. The smaller indie stores have a real hard time and often exist only by selling used vinyl LP. Is it the same in Germany, or does a strong independent spirit still exist there in the music field?

I don't know. This is - if it does exist - it's a part of the much younger generation. It's their game. I haven't visited a record shop for ages; I buy only by mail order (because what I look for is rarely in the shops anyway :-)).

I remember my last CD shop visit: I ordered a six CD set by Charlie Christian, on a Portuguese label. When after three weeks I collected and paid the CDs, the shop assistant asked me what kind of music is that? He actually has never heard about the man who invented & publicized the electric guitar (and its use) to the world! Millions of guitar players do what this black man offered, sixty years ago. ... These are my little problems, far from thoughts if there are bigger or smaller shops. But maybe you're right and in smaller shops there would be shop assistants who know a

bit more about music and its history?

When I look at all the many small labels that release new electronic music - and I don't speak of those old-fashioned copycats, but of a new generation that's doing quite interesting new stuff - it's rarely on a multinational big label, but mostly on small labels you never have heard before... Which is also very clever by the multies because of the risk involved. If it's a seller, the musicians involved come to them anyway (& voluntarily!). That's the way the cookie crumbles.

Q: What do you think of the current bit of renewed interest in the old Krautrock artists? Is it misplaced nostalgia by fans, or perhaps rediscovery of some good music that has been forgotten?

What "good music"? :-) The few good ones from the past were always there, or their classic records were always available. The rest was luckily forgotten. I spoke to people who suddenly see their old, forgotten bands in the dim "Krautrock" limelight — they wonder & laugh about the people who suddenly think that this music was and still is great. One of the greatest admirers & promoters of this mercifully forgotten music is a well-known drug addict & crazy man (This is not my description, but from a rock lexicon).

Q: How has your music taste changed over the years? Do you still like the music of your youth, or do you listen to different things?

Of course I listen to different music than I used to forty years ago. It's all kinds of music, except for pop or rock music, be it today's or yesterdays. For present pop I listen sometimes to the radio, during work, just to be up-to-date - "ah, another Beatles copy" :-).

Privately it's mostly so-called "classical" music that I pull out of my shelves and put into my CD player. And here I go as much into detail as I did during the sixties with jazz & blues, until I was an expert. I'm now on the way to becoming an expert in classical music as well :-).

I feel nothing anymore when I listen to an old Pink Floyd album, but I have that special feeling if I listen to Gustav Mahler's 9th Symphony, the last part, the "Adagio", especially by the "Berlin Philharmoniker" under John Barbirolli. Besides some nostalgic moments, the only "pop" music I still love to listen to and still buy, album for album, is: Van Morrison. My age.

Q: Now that you have passed the half-century mark age wise, do you ever reflect about what things would have been like if you hadn't made music your love and your life?

"Now"? This mark I passed already six years ago :-). Yes I do reflect, mostly when & because people ask me about little or special parts from the past, and I like to give answers. But, sorry, Archie, I have no answer to the "what would have been" question. Literature is my other love.

“I TRY TO BRING ORDER INTO THE CHAOS.”

Interview with Klaus D. Mueller from November 1994

Q: In which year did you meet Klaus Schulze and under what circumstances? When did you become his manager?

kdm: I started to work for music groups in 1970: As European tournée manager for well known jazz and rock groups, for a big music concert promoter. Funny is, that my very first tour was with the “Paul Bley Synthesizer Show, featuring Annette Peacock” - I had no idea then, that these funny (and heavy) new instruments: Synthesizers, would have such a big influence on my further life. Between the jobs for this promoter, I did little jobs in my home-town Berlin: beside more stupid jobs, I worked for rock groups as a roadie. My interest was more (and still is) into direction avantgarde (classical, jazz & rock), so I came into this scene of groups like ASH RA TEMPEL, KLAUS SCHULZE, TANGERINE DREAM, AGITATION FREE, OS MUNDI. German rock was no “business” then, and “roadies” were unknown. I was an amateur, and the musicians I worked for, were also amateurs. They were not good paid for their gigs, and I was not good paid, then. I remember many beautiful French tournées with my friends of AGITATION FREE. I got thirty or fifty Marks per day, that was more than each member of the group received. But we all loved it. The French amateur promoter then was Assaad Debs. He is still in this business today, but no amateur anymore. Assaad is today one of the big French music managers. After nearly twenty years, we met again in January '94, when he was in Berlin with his group Les Rita Mitsouko, and he arranged the Klaus Schulze concert at La Cigale in May '94. Assaad is still as charming and friendly as he was twenty years ago. I love him. During my work with ASH RA TEMPEL (KS had already left), I saw KS the first time in summer 1972 in the OHR office. He was there to bring a photo, and we (ASH RA TEMPEL) were there to ask for some money to drive to TIMOTHY LEARY in Switzerland to make Seven Up. Later this year or early next year ('73) I did a removal for him, and from this time on I visited him and his girlfriend (he was divorced from his first wife) a few times. Then KS moved to a former shop in the Schwäbische Straße, and built his little studio there. In one of the rooms I started the office of Klaus. He was quite disorganised with daily things, so I brought some order into his paperworks, and I helped with his studio, the instruments, the mixer, the speakers, by doing some electric work. I tried to bring order into the chaos. After a while I also lived in this former shop, which was now studio and office. Then we (KS, his girl-friend and I) moved to a bigger apartment, and KS gave the shop/studio to EDGAR FROESE, who still used it as his Berlin studio until 2005. I went on to work for KS on a permanent base, very rarely I worked also for other people. We started to do our first concerts and tours, we went together to record companies, making deals, we learned a lot, and we had a lot of fun. In 1975, we both moved to a house in the countryside of Germany. KS' reputation and his music went bigger and bigger. I still worked for him because it was fun and a good living. I was free, I could do what I wanted. I got not paid, and we had no contract. But if I needed something, it was there. We were compagnons. And both: carefree & crazy. When the Schulze business went bigger and bigger, I realized that I needed an “official” status, so I became his publisher. I am still today just this, his publisher. I only get my money from publishing some (most) of Klaus' compositions. A “manager” gets about

Q: What are your remembrances of this era of progressive psychedelic rock music? Today they say that the early seventies were a very good period. . .

kdm: What is today called by some people “psychedelic/progressive rock music” was in the late sixties and early seventies the normal music that we were interested in and listened to. Everybody tried to cover the ROLLING STONES, the PINK FLOYD, some American Westcoast bands, or JIMI HENDRIX, but what came out in Germany was different. I suspect, that it was the inability to do the music they like so much, that they unconsciously created a new music. And I suspect, it was not the first time in musical history. Each era has its own good things, each generation has its own heroes and idols. The twenties was the “Jazz Age”. The thirties had “Swing”. The forties had the invention of solo singers. The fifties had the invention of white Rhythm and Blues: Rock’n’Roll. The late fifties had the European revelation of the Blues, which led first into Skiffle, then in the sixties into the Beat music: the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Animals, Who, Them, and many more. The late sixties had the hippies and their music (including the music and the people we speak about: TD, KS, A.R.T.). The seventies had surely some highlights(?). The eighties saw a return of the energy and the power and the rage of Rock’n’Roll: Punk and New Wave. Of course each and every person has his own preferences, which mostly is the music of the years of his adolescence. What I try to say: I don’t see “the seventies” as a more euphoric era than “the eighties” or any other decade, because I know too much about musical history.

Q: Did you realize that these groups (T.D., KS, . . .) will be famous a few years later?

kdm: When I started to work with Ash Ra Tempel, TD, or KS, it was not in my head to think about the high or low “selling” of the LPs or the concerts. I didn’t care, and it was not part of my job and my thinking. But of course I was happy and proud when I heard in the local radio station Walter Bachauer’s famous Monday late-night programme, where he played some music from my friends, and said some positive words about it. That this kind of music was (and still is) not selling like DON MCLEAN, CAT STEVENS, AMERICA, NEIL YOUNG (Hit albums in ’72) or ALICE COOPER, THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND, PINK FLOYD, ELTON JOHN (Hit albums in ’73), was clear then, to all involved. But I realized soon that KS was, of the whole musicians that I worked for, the one who “will make it”. He was already in 1973-74 a romantic fanatic when it came to his music. He never listened to other music than his own. He had no other interest, . . . except: girls. Lotta chicks.

Q: To be the manager of a solo star like Klaus Schulze has brought also some joy and disagreements with certain people, I suppose? To organize tours, recordings, deals, isn’t as easy as people may think. What are your experiences?

kdm: As told before, I am not “the manager” of Klaus or any other artist. I’m more a close friend and adviser. But of course, my job brought to me plenty of joy and plenty of vexation. It’s never boring. Most of the vexation is because I work very hard, precise, correct, the same as a few other people that I know. But then there are those many (!) people that I have to work with, who are just mediocre, ignorant and stupid blockheads. They don’t care about their doings. They are born as stupids and haven’t learned a thing since. My impression, and that of the deceased Peter Wirths (former manager of Schmölling): All idiots in the music business get in record companies the jobs as “A & R Managers”. I speak very often with friends about the people who do their job not correctly, and who drive me mad, because it brings just additional work for me. One of those friends, Archie Patterson from America, told me once, that these people and their mistakes are necessary; otherwise our lives would be very boring. A philosophical statement. I agreed. What else can I do: Shoot them all to the moon?

Q: Some groups have decided to come back with big shows, laser and poor music. A lot of these

groups come from the seventies. What's your opinion?

kdm: Which groups? I'm not interested in these things. Privately I listen to other music than the "normal" fan. While I type this it is: GLENN GOULD, Two-Part Inventions and Three-Part Sinfonias, by BACH. Before, it was an old VAN MORRISON album.

Q: What do you do in your job, yesterday, and now?

kdm: In the beginning it was fun, together with interest in the music, interest in the music business, interest in the record business. I loved the black round vinyl discs. During all these past 25 years I learned a lot about it, because I loved what I was doing. And I still love it, and I still learn many things. Time goes on, fashions change, the media change, I change, Schulze's music changes slowly. From the beginning until 1980 my job also included the set-up and the maintenance of KS' equipment, the P.A. and the light, everything. With more paper-work for IC and KS and with the digital era I dropped this part of my job (but I still do the light, mostly). Yesterday it was travelling, driving the truck, carrying heavy boxes, soldering, taking care of the whole stage and the artist and the promoter. . . Today it's mostly thinking, writing, reading, phoning, faxing.

Q: You are in the music business for 25 years now. What are your general impressions about the last ten years?

kdm: I don't know what kind of answer do you expect? There are many memories, all kinds of memories. To judge a past era with today's knowledge is always difficult. The older one gets, without becoming a couch potatoe, the more one realizes that there is no real change in showbiz. It's always and all over the same, except that the rhythm changes from time to time. Young people grow up, discover music, enter the music business, and do the same crazy good things and the same mistakes that were done before, by the former generation. . .

Q: There are a lot of Electronic Music album releases, in the UK, USA, France, Germany, everywhere. Does this "explosion" - in numerical terms, not in sales - makes you think?

kdm: Oh, certainly yes. The new technology, the new keyboards, samplers, computers and software seem very easy to handle! Without any musical knowledge you get very quick a nice sounding "new age" song (A "quickie"?). That thousands of younger and older men (rarely women), sit at home and do their own electronic Hausmusik is okay. That most of them want to do (and actually do) their own CD, is not okay. It's too much. For a long time, KS and I, we didn't think much about all these many mediocre hobby musicians. Yes, we even liked them and supported them. But in the early nineties we realized the flood of mediocrity; others played us some of those CDs; we saw even raving reviews in music magazines about sudden CDs from former fan-letters-writers (who told us in their last letter that they cannot do music at all, and in the next month they have their own CD out) . . . or from former journalists (!). We discussed this, with colleagues like Edgar, or with serious journalists (who don't do at weekends some e-music as well and rave about it in their next article or radio broadcast). Slowly, a kind of aversion grew - especially and only if one listens carefully to the boring music of most of these amateurs. . . Because it was KS and Edgar who fought hard, who starved, who put their souls into Electronic Music in 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978. . . ; it was KS with his (!) money who established in 1979 the first label for young electronic musicians: Innovative Communication. It was KS who founded a school to learn synths, from 1978 to '79. It was Klaus who turned on KITARO (1975) and many others to electronics. It was Edgar and Klaus who made hundreds of concerts for 25 years, and who gave thousands of interviews, showing and explaining the world about this crazy new music. So, we have indeed some reason to speak, and therefore we say now: Merde. I compare today's situation of e-music always with the situation that black hot jazz music had to undergo in the past: Twenty years after something really great was "invented" and changed the history of music, some young (white) fans tried to do the same, and out came funny "Dixieland music". More young fans copied then this revival, copied the copycats, and what came out was far away from the primary idea, it was a meaningless poor sound

that used just the formula, without any essence. It had no balls. Some years ago I tried to start a discussion about this, especially in British and American electronic music fanzines. Soon I gave up my efforts to explain, to discuss about it, because the reaction was just “My friend so-and-so (who’s doing e-music) is much better than KS (or TD)”, or similar fan behaviour. I repeat: This kind of music, at least its surface, is so easy to produce. Even an unimaginative non-musician can produce at low cost some nice sounding electronic music tracks, these days. And that exactly happens, en masse. I ask all those hundreds of hobby musicians that they check first: what is art? what makes a piece of sound a piece of music, then a piece of art? I ask them to study their craft. I ask them to study the masters, the history, the present conditons. I ask in every profession for nothing less than Mastery. We used to love all those musicians who do electronic Hausmusik just for fun, privately during their spare time, and for their own and some friends’ fun. But when these well-meant amateurish tryings are seriously put on the market, being reviewed, among, say, the last or some historic CDs of TD, Vangelis, Eno and KS, and these amateurs are even compared to those professional CDs by the Masters, this is simply disgusting. They just are not on the same level (and who has ears can hear the immense difference in quality)... Of course, the naïve amateurs read their reviews too, and what should they believe? That they are in the same class as TD, KS, VANGELIS or ENO? Some time after, they wonder why nobody buys their CDs, despite those raving reviews in some fanzines (often by spare-time writers who also make e-music during their spare time, which then get reviews in sister-fanzines). And then they blame the radio who “suppress” their wonderful music, blame the big record companies, blame the foolish record dealers, blame everybody else, including the public... who do not visit their concerts (the average amount of visitors in a concert of such musicians are: thirty to sixty people, if I can trust the reports in European fanzines, and my own eyes). Those amateurs are just fans (and if they stay just fans, of whom ever, we love them). I wrote somewhere else and I repeat here: I fear, there exists a profound misunderstanding of the concept of being an artist. I could go on for many pages. I’ve seen and experienced the above mentioned amateurs from the late seventies on, and all too often since (The first one was a certain Adelbert Kraack who changed his name into ADELBERT VON DEYEN, without much of a success. He even copied Schulze’s letterhead, envelopes, the covers of Schulze LPs, his titles. It was very funny then, and also triste to watch). Don’t forget, I’m into this e-music and business from the very beginning, day by day. I work for it and with it, I helped to build it. I know it thoroughly. It’s my life (and I have only one). I was present in the old OHR office. I was present when EDGAR FROESE and RICHARD BRANSON made the first deal. In December ’73 I witnessed PETER BAUMANN mixing Chris’ sequenzer up front - and a classic LP was born (KS, who was not present, mentioned this 22 years later in an interview; he said erroneously that Chris was the one. No, it was Peter). I swung the crying JEROME FROESE baby in my arms. I saw three marriages of KS. In hundreds of concerts since 1970 I was tour and stage manager with electronic and other professional musicians. I worked my way up to the boss of a (then) most successful record company, even had a Platinum hit LP as record producer and as publisher... And I found time during this quarter of a century, not just to help dozens of unknown amateurs (!), but to reflect about many spectres of Electronic Music, the more as I know and love other music scenes. I have an open mind to many forms of music and art. Also, I do value amateurs, value them highly, if they don’t try to pretend being more than just this. And if they try to make themself larger, by trying to put the Masters down (yes, this happens very often), I slap their faces, verbally. On the other hand, I do know that the young turks have to act like this, have to shake at and to undermine the old heroes’ monuments. That’s part of ongoing life, of the lively arts. KS did the same, 25 years ago. The old die, the young leap out and fight for their place. But I prefer when they do it not with just bold words, but by giving their whole life for creating mastery and new (!) and sensational (!) music and albums and concerts. And this I don’t see for miles. Not in the e-music scene. Laughable, if not absurd is it, when some of these species explain their non-success with their status. You know, this romantic story that “every big artist was without success during his lifetime” (a legend, if one checks), or, they say “my music is too much ahead of our time” (but I can hear only a copy of TD’s or KS’ music as it sounded fifteen years ago).

Q: This year, Klaus has released a lot of albums: one soundtrack, a WAHNFRIED, a sampler, a 2CD opera, a classical cover CD, a double live set... Isn’t it too much for a lone keyboarder?

kdm: I ask: Isn’t it great? Doing music is Klaus’ profession. Look at JOSEPH HAYDN’s output:

At least 107 symphonies alone! BACH wrote over 300 cantatas, besides his 250 organ works, et cetera. Especially when Klaus releases so many different CDs as he recently did, he's not to blame for it, but you have to shout: Hallelujah! Horrido! Encore! Klaus is not just a "lone keyboarder". His work today includes the use of computers, the knowledge of the software, of the mixing desk, the various effect devices, the samplers. He needs time to think about his doings, he has to reflect it. He has to convince others that his doing is great and worth the work and the money they put into. He even has to convince me, sometimes. I am the first and occasionally very harsh critic to Klaus Schulze and his music. Therefore, I also know about his (sporadic) less excellent musical sides. Rarely someone else found out and wrote about it, be it publicly or to me. What I mostly hear and read, when it comes to negative critique, is just (sorry) silly fan or enemy twaddle. Very rarely someone writes a profound review about one of Klaus' records, be it positive or negative. There are a few exceptions. The trouble(?) is that Klaus is still rated as a "pop" musician. No serious professional journalist or music scientist ever noticed KS, or the "electronic music". For these species, "electronic music" is still connected with the fifties, with the name of STOCKHAUSEN - despite the fact that dear Karlheinz has not made much of e-music: During the last 25 years not one electronic title, and before just 5 (yes: five. But over 100 -one hundred- non-electronic compositions).

Q: What are your dreams, projects for the next years? For KS, or other friends...

kdm: My "dream" is, that KS will listen a bit more to what I tell him about some essential business things. He's still a naïve little boy, sometimes. But, in my correctness and my astrological constellation, I'm the same as his father was. Therefore, KS will never listen to me, because he never listened to what his father told him. I hope that one day my lazy friend Manuel will do a sensational new CD. For what other reason I gave him my whole professional audio studio, already over ten years ago (and for free)? Projects: It's KLAUS SCHULZE's own music and own life (which is the same for him), therefore he decides what he will do in the future. I have no fear that he stops having crazy new ideas. I love especially those. In 1997 I will release the mammoth project Jubilee Edition, and then we'll see.

I still try to bring order into the chaos (but you should see my working desk!)

DIE WAHRE GESCHICHTE DES KRAUTROCK

von Klaus D. Müller (Juni 1997), (Rückübersetzung aus dem Englischen von „‘Romihe“

Hintergrund

Von 1968 bis 1974, also zu der Zeit in der diese neue deutsche Musik entstand, war ich sowohl zeitlich als auch örtlich anwesend. Ich arbeitete für und lebte mit einigen dieser Gruppen, ich sah und hörte und ich sprach mit diesen Gruppen wenn ich auf und für Festivals arbeitete. Ich hatte ein offenes Haus für diese Gruppen und manchmal blieben sie über Nacht um das Geld für ein Hotel zu sparen. Ich besuchte die Konzerte dieser Gruppen, auch wenn ich dort nicht geschäftlich zu tun hatte.

Zehn bis fünfzehn Jahre zuvor hatten wir Tausende von Amateuren die Dixieland spielten. Dann, in den späten sechziger Jahren, starteten viele Amateure den Versuch, amerikanische West Coast Bands oder englische Blues-Rock-Gruppen zu kopieren. Die deutsche Rock-Szene war geboren, und ich war ein aktives Mitglied. Ich war selbst kein Musiker, aber ich beobachtete, half und schrieb. Ich selbst nannte mich zu der Zeit „Deutschlands zweitgrößter Roadie“ weil die Berufsbezeichnung des Tourmanagers noch unbekannt war. Der erste „Roadie“ war ein gewisser Hans Riebeschl aus Hamburg. Er gründete ein Musikmagazin für die neue Musikszene, genannt Riebe's Fachblatt, mit technischer Beratung aber auch mit Promotions-Adressen und ähnlichem. Auch für ihn schrieb ich.

Natürlich war ich sehr interessiert an Rock-, Pop- und Jazzmusik, und ich las alles was darüber auf Deutsch oder Englisch verfügbar war. Ich erinnere mich sehr gut daran, dass „Deutschrock“ damals (wenn überhaupt beachtet) nur als schlechter Witz angesehen wurde. Und ich erinnere mich, dass ich einmal von Lee Jackson, dem Bassisten von The Nice in den (später) berühmten 'Speakeasy Club' in London eingeladen war. Die Band, die an diesem Abend spielte waren Deutsche. Ich kann sagen, dass sie keinerlei Eindruck hinterlassen haben. Niemand von den anwesenden Rockstars und deren Freunden nahm Notiz von ihnen. Und aus den Gesprächen erinnere ich mich nur noch daran, dass die am meisten beeindruckende Sache für die Engländer der hässliche Name war, den die Band hatte: Birth Control. Ich erinnere mich auch, dass eine Gruppe mit dem Namen Eloy unter den Insidern und Journalisten in Deutschland nicht mehr als ein 'Running Gag' (Pink Floyd oder Moody Blues für Arme) waren. Ich erinnere mich an Faust, die in Deutschland niemals wirklich bekannt oder beliebt waren weil sie als Erfindung eines außen stehenden Journalisten galten, als reines Promotions-Produkt aber nicht wirklich als „lebende“ Gruppe.

Im Jahr 1976 war ich Konzert-Veranstalter in Berlin und kannte auch diesen Teil des Geschäftes ziemlich gut. Wir veranstalteten Konzerte für die Supremes, Jerry Lee Lewis, Leo Kottke, Bob Marley, und ähnliche. Einmal hatten wir eine deutsche Band: Can. Wir mussten die kleinste verfügbare Halle (dieselbe, in der eine Zeit zuvor Tangerine Dream gespielt hatten) nutzen. Dies geschah nicht, weil wir Can nicht mochten oder wollten. Das Gegenteil war der Fall. Es war das Publikum, dass so wenig an Can interessiert war. Denn ungefähr zur gleichen Zeit - Mitte bis Ende der siebziger Jahre - füllten Konzerte mit Klaus Schulze oder Tangerine Dream die zweitgrößte Halle (5000 bis 6000 Sitzplätze) in Berlin.

Letztendlich waren Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze und natürlich Kraftwerk damals die einzigen

großen Gruppen, sowohl weltweit und auch in Deutschland. Und noch bis in die frühen neunziger Jahre waren Klaus Schulze und Tangerine Dream die einzigen, die in einer britischen Top-100-Liste, welcher Art auch immer, aufgeführt wurden. Ich erinnere mich, dass in all den vielen französischen Zeitschriften die ich während der gesamten siebziger Jahre durchblätterte, abgesehen von diesen drei Namen (und manchmal Ash Ra Tempel), kaum eine deutsche Band jemals erwähnt wurde. Später hatten wir dann natürlich einige Namen, die in der deutschen Rockmusik und in Deutschland (und nur dort) groß geworden waren, doch all diese sind nicht auf den Empfehlungslisten dieser „Krautrock“ Experten (denn sie sind SEHR erfolgreich hier): Udo Lindenberg, Peter Maffay, Marius Müller-Westerhagen, Herbert Groenemeier, etc.. Was Udo Lindenberg zum Beispiel für die deutsche Rockmusik getan hat war die Sensation, er brachte die deutsche Sprache in den Rock ein und das tat er SEHR gut. Da kann man durchaus von einer Revolution im deutschen Rock sprechen, auch wenn ihre Musik nicht mein Geschmack ist. Aber ich habe ihren Einfluss zu akzeptieren.

Was ist Krautrock?

An vielen Leuten stört uns die Verwendung von Schlagwörtern, die für uns sind wie das sprichwörtliche „rote Tuch für den Stier“. Früher war es „New Age“, heute ist es „Krautrock“. Was noch schlimmer ist, die meisten Menschen glauben an diese Worte. Wir nennen sie spaßig „unsere Kalifornier“. Einige von ihnen bezeichnen ein langweiliges, 25 Jahre altes Rock-Album „progressiv“ - heute! - und mir fällt darauf keine Antwort ein.

Es gab hunderte, wenn nicht tausende Bands, die in Deutschland Rock spielten und englische oder amerikanische Bands kopierten (wen sonst?). Hier ein paar, die etwas mehr bekannt wurden weil sie Aufnahmen gemacht haben: Birth Control, Lucifer's Friend, Franz K., Chris Braun Band, Eloy, Kathago, Epsilon, Gift, Grobschnitt, Hardcake Special, Hoelderlin, Ihre Kinder, Jane, Kin Ping Meh, Lilac Angels, Metropolis, Missus Beastly, Mythos, Thirsty Moon, Nine Days Wonder, Novalis, Panther, Parzival, Pell Mell, Randy Pie, Release Music Orchestra, Sameti, Sahara, Satin Whale, Scorpions, Sixty Nine, Thirsty Moon, Harlis, Ramses, Streetmark, Breakfast, Triumvirat, Wallenstein, Wind, Bastard, Blonker, Broeselmaschine, Bullfrog, Checkpoint Charlie, City, Condor, Dirty Dogs, Duesenberg, Epitaph, Gate, Harlis, Highway, Anyone's Daughter, Message, Schocke Fuehrs Froehling, To Be, Lady, Bakmak, Caro, Michels, Lutz Rahn, Mass, Munju, Octopus, Ougenweide, Pancake, Maniacs, Eisberg, Shaa Khan, Monroe, Dirk Steffens, Straight Shooter, Subway, Tiger B. Smith, Torfrock, Tritonus, Wolfsmond, Michael Wynn Band, Alcatraz, Eulenspygel, Fritz Mueller Band, Murphy Blend, alle nur allein aus den siebziger Jahren.

Wenn es um CAN geht (eine Band, die ich sehr schätze), dann, ich kann mir da nicht helfen, habe ich das Gefühl, dass auch sie zunächst nur versucht haben angloamerikanische Musik zu kopieren. Und nur, weil sie nicht dazu in der Lage waren dies richtig zu machen (vor allem wegen des schrecklichen „deutschen Taktes“, ein typisches Hindernis für die meisten deutschen Bands), kam schwups etwas Neues dabei heraus. Was sie speziell machte war, dass sie dies akzeptierten und weitermachten indem sie es zu ihrem „Stil“ weiterentwickelten. Nicht viele Gruppen wagten es dies zu tun. Die es taten sind, auch heute, nach wie vor großartig, z.B. Tangerine Dream und Kraftwerk.

Und dann gibt es noch die meisten, wenn nicht alle, damaligen DDR-Rock-Gruppen, die noch schlimmer waren, denn sie kopiert nur die westdeutschen Kopien. Ich erinnere mich da u.a. an: Puhdys, Stern Combo Meißen, etc..

Die Bücher

Die Freemans, Julian Cope oder Dag Asbjornsen, sie alle denken dass Krautrock GROSSARTIG ist, kennen aber die Wirklichkeit nicht oder wollen sie nicht kennen. Sie alle kennen diese Musik nur von Aufnahmen, die ihnen selten, fremdländisch oder sogar exotisch vorkommen. Letztendlich war keiner dieser Autoren dabei (weder zeitlich noch räumlich) als diese Musik entstanden ist.

Cracks in the Cosmic Egg - Steve Freeman/Alan Freeman

Steve und Alan Freeman sagen: „...fast jede bahnbrechende neue Form der Musik begann in Deutschland“ (!) und „...ihr Einfluss findet sich in allen Formen der modernen Musik ...“, und „...es gibt Hunderte von obskuren Bands, die nur ein einziges „one-off“ Album produziert haben, von denen viele außergewöhnlich waren...“ Ihr ganzes Buch widmet sich „der bedeutendsten und einflussreichsten musikalischen Bewegung des 20. Jahrhunderts.“ (Autsch, sollten sie möglicherweise noch nie von, sagen wir mal, Schönberg, Strawinsky und der Erfindung des „Jazz“ und vom Blues, der später zum Rock'n'Roll wurde [und, viel später, von einigen deutschen Kids armselig kopiert wurde] gehört haben? „The Crack in the Cosmic Egg“ enthält noch immer viel zu viele Irrtümer und schwerwiegende Fehleinschätzungen, allerdings nicht so viele wie die meisten anderen Bücher zu diesem Thema.

Ich hatte einen Journalisten hier, der mich (für die deutsche Ausgabe des „Rolling Stone“) ernsthaft nach Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser befragte. Ich kenne ihn aus früheren Zeiten. Er war vorher Herausgeber und Produzent und managte in den siebziger Jahren eine dieser Bands, die im „Cosmic Egg“ Buch genannt werden. Er konnte nur laut lachen als ich ihm zeigte, was die Freeman's voller Bewunderung über ihn und seine Gruppe geschrieben hatten. Tatsächlich waren sie nur ein Haufen von lausigen Amateuren, die mal so, mal anders kopiert hatten, wie er mir gegenüber einräumte.

Ich hatte lange, freundschaftliche Gespräche mit den beiden Freeman's, als sie für eine Woche hier in meiner Wohnung lebten. Ich gab auf als ich realisierte, dass sie alles glaubten was ihnen je ein Musiker erzählt hatte, insbesondere wenn es zu ihrer Theorie passte. Sie stellen nur dann skeptische Fragen, wenn etwas nicht zu ihrer Denkweise passt. Zumindest haben die Freeman's viele der Leute die dabei waren interviewet. Leider verfügen sie nicht über das nötige Wissen um in allen Fällen reine Promotionsprache von der Realität zu unterscheiden. Aber sie gaben sich große Mühe. Und sie schreiben in einem leichten, spielerischen Stil. Ich mag die Freeman's nach wie vor. Alles in allem haben sie einen guten Job gemacht aber ich empfehle, ihr Buch mit kritischen Augen zu lesen.

Krautrocksampler - Julian Cope

Cope ist ein Wahnsinniger, ein verrückter Mann (wenn ich den Musiklexika trauen kann). Er war nicht dabei und er hat auch nicht die Leute gefragt die dabei waren. Er ist nur ein Fan mit „einen Namen“. Ja, Cope ist begeistert von seinen geliebten exotischen musikalischen Vorlieben. Und wenn die Medien, die Journalisten und die Leute es einfach nur als genau das nehmen würden, Großartig. Fein. Wunderbar. Aber sie glauben, es ist die Wahrheit, nur weil er Julian Cope ist. Warum braucht es bei so vielen Menschen immer „bekannte Namen“ um ihnen zu sagen was sie zu glauben haben? Können sie nicht für sich selbst denken? Können sie nicht einfach die Musik anhören, ein wenig über die Herkunft und Vergangenheit herausfinden und sich dann ihr eigenes Urteil bilden? Ist das wirklich zuviel verlangt? Vielleicht. Der andere Weg ist halt einfacher.

Vor langer Zeit, las ich einen (oder zwei?) von Cope's Artikeln im englischen Musikmagazin WIRE. Es war über Can oder Amon Duul oder so ähnlich. Es war das allererste Mal, dass ein englisches Magazin einen langen, wohlwollenden Artikel über eine echte deutsche Band und echten deutschen Rock brachte. Es war auch deutlich zu erkennen, dass Cope ein Fan war. Ich mochte den Artikel genauso wie ich alle anderen Artikel in der Ausgabe (insbesondere die Tatsache, dass MEIN geliebtes Album „Out to Lunch“ von Eric Dolphy in einigen WIRE Umfragen die Nr. 1 geworden war) mochte.

Viele Monate später wurden diese begeisterten Artikel eines Fans in Buchform veröffentlicht. Wiederum später (1996), wurde das Buch auch ins Deutsche übersetzt und hier veröffentlicht. Und dann fingen die Probleme an. Deutsche Journalisten, die scheinbar noch weniger Ahnung hatten als Cope, sprangen auf das Buch an (hier drüben scheint Cope so etwas wie ein Gesangsstar zu sein) und begannen Artikel zu schreiben. Alte, längst vergessene Bands wie Amon Duul oder Faust kamen wieder zusammen, machten ein neues Album und gaben einige Konzerte. Die Promotionmaschinerie der beteiligten Plattenfirmen schien gut zu funktionieren. Als Ergebnis hatten wir noch mehr Artikel über die alten Zeiten und die alten Bands von denen eine schlechter war als die andere. Alles war durcheinander. Einfache deutschen Heavy Rock-Gruppen die niemanden interes-

sierten wurden dann plötzlich als „kosmischen“; Gruppen bezeichnet, Gruppen die von jedermann ausgelacht worden waren als sie sich vor 20 Jahren in ihrer Art von Rock versuchten, galten plötzlich als „historisch wertvoll“. Ein Mann wie Florian Fricke (Popol Vuh), der zwanzig Jahre lang keine elektronischen Instrumente mehr angefasst hatte, wurde nun „Elektronikexperte“ genannt. Und alle Schreiber beriefen sich dabei auf das Cope-Buch.

Anfangs war es noch lustig das alles zu beobachten aber plötzlich sahen sich die wenigen wirklichen Erfinder (Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze, Kraftwerk) zusammengeworfen mit dem einfachen und längst vergangenen Krautrock. Qualitätsmerkmale (wenn ich das mal so sagen darf) hatten auf einmal keine Gültigkeit mehr. Irgendjemand erzählte mir, dass Cope so eine Art Top 50 Alben in seinem Buch hat und dass es sich bei den meisten darunter (wenn nicht bei allen) um jene schrecklichen „Kosmischen Joker“ Alben handelt. Diese Alben werden allerdings nicht dadurch besser, dass ein verrückter englische Sänger sie liebt (und dies vielleicht gerade aus nicht-musikalischen Gründen). War er der einzige der in seinen jugendlichen Jahren diese Alben besaß und daher stolz auf sie war? Ich kenne dieses Syndrom aus MEINER Kindheit, bei mir war es „Jazz“.

Vor ein paar Wochen erzählte ein Radio-Mann (der, nebenbei erwähnt, in den ersten fünf Jahren der siebziger Jahren dieses Jahrhunderts oder so, Teil der deutschen Rock-Szene war) Klaus Schulze und mir „on-air“, was Cope in seinem Buch über „Elektronische Meditation“ geschrieben hatte und wir alle brachen in herzliches Gelächter aus, während wir noch immer auf Sendung waren. Wir waren uns alle einig, ES GIBT bessere und bedeutendere Alben in den Annalen der Rockmusik. Da waren viele sehr gute, wesentliche und wichtige Rock-Aufnahmen aber nicht eine aus Deutschland (mit seltenen Ausnahmen, sagen wir mal, Kraftwerk). Wie auch immer, im Radio waren wir uns einig, dieses Buch muss Mist sein.

Das Problem ist - und das ist nicht Cope's Schuld -, dass alle deutschen Journalisten Cope's private Vergnügungen als gegebene historische Wahrheit hinnehmen. Sie behandeln es als sei es ein Buch voller Fakten. Nein, es ist nur Cope's private Meinung. In dieser Betrachtung ist sein Buch sicherlich sehr gut und spannend. Aber in seiner Auswirkung auf solch dumme Journalisten und einige Fans ist es erschreckend.

Oder, und das kommt mir gerade in den Sinn, könnte es sein, dass all diese unmusikalischen Leute am Ende damit ihre eigene Bibel haben? Es gibt so viele sehr gute Musik, aus den vergangenen sieben Jahrhunderten bis heute und die deutsche Rock-Szene der 1970er Jahre ist dabei vielleicht auch einen kurzen Besuch wert, aber... Aber... Ein großes „aber“.

Cosmic Dreams at Play - Dag Asbjornsen

Vor ein paar Jahren schickte er mir ein paar Seiten seines geplanten Buches und bat mich, ein paar Seiten zu Ash Ra Tempel, Klaus Schulze, Agitation Free und Os Mundi. zu überprüfen Die ganze Sache war einfach schrecklich. Dieser norwegische Mann wusste überhaupt nichts außer dem, was auf den Covers der Alben in seiner Sammlung geschrieben stand oder was er versehentlich in einigen norwegischen (?) Rock-Zeitschriften gelesen hatte. Meine Liste der Korrekturen war länger als sein ursprünglicher Text. Natürlich riet ich ihm vorsichtig, es besser sein zu lassen. Er hat es nicht verstanden. Die Fehler waren fundamental. Er wusste nicht eine Sache. Erst kürzlich hat mir ein deutscher Journalist die lustige Geschichte erzählt, dass Asbjornsen nicht zu wissen scheint wer Herman Heese (dessen Texte auf einem „Between“ Album gelesen werden) war. Soweit ich mich an die Geschichte erinnere, ist Asbjornsen der Ansicht, Hesse sei ein Mitglied der Band.

Verstehen Sie mich nicht falsch. Ich bin jemand (nahezu der einzige) der seit zwei Jahrzehnten erzählt und schreibt das Leute wie Klaus Schulze, Manuel Goettsching, Tangerine Dream, Kraftwerk, Can, Neu, Harmonia... etc. ihre Werte haben. Vergeblich! Nehmen wir zum Beispiel England: mit Ausnahme von ein paar Freaks scheint dort zunächst niemand daran interessiert zu sein. Die Freeman's hatten ihren eigenen kleinen Laden und ein Versandgeschäft. Sie hungerten sich fast zu Tode weil es dort nur selten Leute gibt, die stapelweise Krautrock Alben kaufen. Sie haben ihre eigene Zeitschrift, die wirklich hervorragend gemacht ist, mit viel Wissen - viel mehr als Julian Cope hat - aber sie haben nur einige wenige Leser. Diese Szene war ziemlich klein, zu klein für meinen Geschmack. Und dann, SCHLAGARTIG, der gegenteilige Effekt. Das kann doch nicht gesund sein. Ein langsam wachsendes Interesse an diesen alten deutschen (und anderen exotischen)

Bands wäre das, was ich wollen würde. Aber nicht einen kurzen Boom.

Insiders' Views

Hier ist eine Sache, die Sie berücksichtigen sollten, wenn sie das Lob der Musiker über diese Epoche lesen. Ich habe es erkannt als ich bei einem Interview zugegen war, das mein Freund Manuel (von Ash Ra Tempel) gab. Ich weiß, dass Manuel (wie alle anderen Insider die ich kenne) sich nie um das Thema „Krautrock“ gekümmert hat. Er hörte ihn nie wirklich und er besitzt nur ein oder zwei Can LP's weil wir die Jungs persönlich kannten. Manuel hört nach wie vor nur Soul und Rockmusik, so wie wir alle es taten und tun. Um es kurz zu machen, Manuel war, wie jeder andere, nicht mehr an „Krautrock“ interessiert als an, sagen wir, einiger alberner Musik aus den zwanziger Jahren. Dann kam dieses Interview und Manuel antwortete auf alle Fragen zum Krautrock als sei er ein Experte darin, als wenn er ihn schon immer gemocht hätte. Er tat dies weil es das Thema des betreffenden Artikels war und weil es Teil von Manuels Job ist, seine Musik zu promoten. Und wenn ein Krautrock-orientierter Schreiber zu diesem Thema Fragen stellt, dann gibt er seine Antworten zum Krautrock in seiner gewohnt freundlichen Art und Weise. Wenn ein Techno-orientierter Schreiber ihn nach Techno fragen würde, so würde er ihm sein Interesse an Techno zeigen. Mit Klaus Schulze ist es das Gleiche. Sollte ich sie nun Lügner nennen? Natürlich nicht. Doch was werden sie tun wenn plötzlich Dixieland wieder in Mode kommt?

Zumindest in der Heimat des Krautrock, kümmert sich niemand um Krautrock, zumindest nicht das größere Publikum. Er wird nicht im Radio gespielt und nicht auf den Musik-TV-Kanälen. Und ich kenne einige der Verkaufszahlen von wieder aufgelegten Krautrock-Alben, weil ich daran die Veröffentlichungsrechte habe! Sie sind gering. Sehr gering. Und ich spreche dabei von Alben, die von J. Cope und durch die Brüder Freeman als die Wesentlichen, als zu den Besten, den Top 50 oder Top 100 aller Zeiten gehörend herausgestellt wurden.

Wenn ich auf diese Verkaufszahlen schaue, beweisen sie mir, dass diese Alben nur den persönlichen Geschmack einiger englischer und amerikanischer Aussenseiter treffen aber historisch unbedeutend sind. Über einige würde ich sogar sagen, sie waren bereits qualvoll und widerlich als sie das erste Mal erschienen sind und sie sind auch nach 20 Jahren nicht besser geworden. „Historisch unwichtig“ sind sie, weil die beteiligten deutschen Musiker lediglich versucht haben zu kopieren, was sie aus Amerika und England gehört hatten. Und diese Kopien waren überwiegend schlecht und sind es noch immer. Mancher könnte sie gutmütig nennen. Ich bevorzuge nach wie vor das Original.

Fazit

Die Presse ist darauf aufgesprungen, zumindest für diese Saison. Ich habe mit diesen Leuten eine Menge zu tun. Es gab zum Beispiel jede Art von Büchern über diese deutschen Rockgruppen aus den siebziger Jahren, und niemand außerhalb von Sammlerkreisen hat sie je beachtet. Dann kam das Julian Cope Buch und alle Presseleute schrieben über „Krautrock“ und zwar einer schlimmer als der andere. In einem großen deutschen Magazin, das kostenlos in einer großen Kette von Plattenläden verteilt wird, berichtete ein Schriftsteller über die Konzerttour der wiedervereinigten Gruppe Amon Duul (eine normale Folge der Presseaktivitäten der Plattenfirma). In diesem Artikel wurde die gesamte Krautrock-Szene mit erwähnt. Plötzlich war dann fast alles und jeder Musiker „elektronisch“ (was einfach nicht wahr ist, denn neben Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze und Kraftwerk-Clan war es fast niemand sonst).

Die mit Abstand lustigste Sache war, dass ein Mann, der seit 1974 und noch bis kürzlich buchstäblich als Elektronik-HASSER bekannt war, Florian Fricke (von „Popol Vuh“), nun in eben diesem Magazin als DER EXPERTE für elektronische Instrumentierung bezeichnet wurde. Ekelhaft. Derselbe Autor war uns einmal als „Autorität“ und „Berater“ genannt worden, als eine deutsche Filmgesellschaft uns gebeten hatte, in einem TV-Film über „Krautrock“ mitzuwirken. Wir haben Nein gesagt. Solange dieser Mann eine „Autorität“ für sie darstellte, wollten wir nicht an einem solchen Film teilhaben.

Fragen Sie also die Menschen, die dabei waren und die kein Interesse daran haben Promotion zu machen, die nicht einfach nur Fans (ausländische dazu) sind und die nur die simple Wahrheit erzählen. Heute erzählen alle Musiker der Presse, dass sie „Elektronik“ schon immer genutzt und eingesetzt hätten und dies nur, weil die Elektronik in der Musik letztendlich gewonnen hat. Und wer will schon der Verlierer sein.

Dies ist die Situation. Momentan ist „Krautrock“ eine kleine Welle in Deutschland. Von den kleinsten bis zu den ernsthaftesten, jedes Magazin berichtet darüber. Und was ich bisher gelesen habe war (zu 95

FAUST: CLEAR

by Phillipe Paringaux, Rock & Folk, Feb 1972

From the cover of the Faust Tapes

Germany seems to be the only country on the Continent capable of making a really original contribution to what we call rock music. Here come Faust, who confirm this suspicion, which had already been aroused by Amon Düül (and, as a matter of opinion, the former is even better than the latter). The essential reason for this Germanic phenomenon is very probably that these groups - who are neither British nor American and KNOW it - view rock as it is played in its lands of origin with a certain amount of detachment, eliminating to the best of their ability any attempts to reproduce a "feeling" which cannot belong to them; in this way they reject most of the musical elements which form the vehicles of this feeling, taking no more from American or British rock than a state of mind. The elements of their music they look after for themselves, and the fact is that this carries them a good deal further.

And so it is with Faust: more than the reproduction of emotions through the human voice, more than the explanation of these emotions through elaborate texts, more too than an instrumental virtuosity which hardly puts the instruments themselves in question (it's not enough just to plug them into an amp to transform them), more than an exciting, hypnotic rhythm: the group has chosen to retain from all the elements of rock just that which is most neglected today: the investigation of new sounds, an area which is given so much attention on this album that it becomes the album's essential feature. Sound. Electronic and acoustic.

The record could have been subtitled "An Application of Technology to Rock'n'Roll". Once again the term rock'n'roll isn't enough to define a music which touches on all the limits of contemporary music. Faust hurl themselves regardless of all risks along this impassioned path, and travel to the very farthest esitrelnes of experimentation. The result turns out to be one of the most intense and truly progressive albums in the history of rock. Nothing less.

Noises never heard before, strange groupings brought together with a remarkable sense of sound aesthetics, burns and caresses, the grating of metal, the crackling of electricity. All the resources of the studio have been exploited with devouring curiosity - but also with a remarkable sense of proportion. Because - in the game of technique just for technique's sake - Faust risk nothing less than the loss of their soul. The soul remains intact through the crashing and grinding of a music which leaves all coldness behind and which, when it wants to, knows how to affect the emotions. And its intelligence continues through the whole album - behind the delirious, dizzying sounds to which it gives shelter a musical structure reveals itself, presenting a precise schematic profile around which irrational effects can be laid down. A structure which is a good guarantee against the chaos in which all attempts of this kind are in danger of drowning, a structure which is nonetheless flexible enough to allow the spontaneity without which all such experiments would become cold and lifeless - as happens with many of the explorers of contemporary music.

Here, moments of mania and moments of peaceful ecstasy are carefully distributed throughout the album, the first piercing, congested, tearing; the second sometimes suggested by the simple presence of an unamplified piano or some obscure recitation. The record opens with a long, jumbled feedback effect behind which one vaguely makes out the Stones singing "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" and

the Beatles answering them with “All You Need Is Love”. Irony or homage? The influence of these two groups on Faust is hardly in evidence - in fact, no influence is in evidence here and you have to bend your ear to make out, here and there, features which wouldn't necessarily be disowned by Zappa or last year's Soft Machine. The album closes with a dialogue between two voices, recited in the Velvet Underground manner. between the two of them an extraordinary, swelling, baroque sound, grandiose, grinding and harmonious, long pieces scattered among the fury of wild, liberated instruments, and moments of held breath, melody.

Faust is undisputably a group to be seen and heard. Will the success of the elder Amon draw them to our shores one day? That would be risking quite a commotion - the objection that a studio work couldn't be recreated on the stage falls to pieces of itself: all the second side of the record was recorded live.

Don' t forget Faust.

THE SOUND OF THE EIGHTIES

by Ian MacDonald, NME, 3 Mar 1973

A low buzzing sound, at first almost subliminal, emanates from a position somewhere between the twin stereo speakers. It wavers, hesitantly, from side to side - and then spreads out into all the channels, intensifying in volume, until one end of the room is transformed into a wall of drizzling white noise.

Some music can be glimpsed vaguely on the other side of this translucent electronic barrage, presumably the group playing the intro to their first number. But no, it's the Stones singing "I Can't Get No Satisfaction".

And before you can sort this out and start wondering about copyright and how are they getting away with this and what's it for, "Satisfaction" has disappeared, reading back into the aural haze - which is still swelling in volume, as if stung to irritation at being interrupted.

And now here comes the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love": a tiny match to answer the Stones' complaint that immediately fades back through the drizzle.

A couple more seconds, and the electronics abruptly cease. Wipe out. Somebody shouts something incomprehensible into the ensuing silence; it might have been English or German but again you aren't given the chance to muster your thoughts because a piano has begun to play.

Some recognisable chords in a fragmented time signature give way to atonal dislocation. False start? Now the pianist tries a second idea, you grasp the tempo, and - at least - the group enters in force.

You realise why the preamble was necessary: quite simply, Faust sound like nothing else on earth.

The few minutes I've described can be found on Faust's first album, released in Britain in mid 1972 six months after it was recorded in a converted ex-schoolhouse near the village of Wumme, just outside Hamburg.

Noting all the minor innovations in rock since Lennon and McCartney hauled the music body out of the twelve-bar trap of rock-and-roll and rhythm-and-blues - noting Brian Wilson's visionary production job on "Good Vibrations", noting the experiments half-completed by the Velvet Underground and the United States of America into the sound-limits of a Late Sixties rock-group, noting Captain Beefheart's casually suggested fusion of primitive blues with free jazz ("free-rock", in fact) on "Trout Mask Replica", and forgetting neither "A Day in the Life", "Tomorrow Never Knows", or "I Am The Walrus" - taking all of these contributions into account, I have to say that the implications of what Faust are doing form the most significant conceptual revolution in rock for ten years.

Why should such a revolution have occurred in a country which has next to nothing in the way of a rock tradition (inasmuch as it's possible to speak of "traditions" in a field which, at the most, encompasses only two decades)? Precisely because of that absent tradition - and it's no coincidence that the first writers to recognise this were from France, a country likewise lacking in rock "roots". "Rock & Folk"'s Philippe Paringaux has observed that the more adventurous of the German bands owe their experimental precepts to the fact that, possessing neither the traditions nor the temperaments of American and British rock musicians they "view rock as it's played in its lands

of origin with a certain amount of detachment eliminating to the best of their ability any attempts to reproduce a 'feeling' which cannot belong to them... taking no more from American or British rock than a state of mind".

Listening to Faust, who are by far the most extreme of the German experimental bands, one can indeed discern that which might be termed "the rock consciousness", but at the same time one is forced to admit that (on Faust's first album, at least) the element of rock in the group's work is neither critical, nor particularly salient. Faust at their least compromising, simply play music using instruments developed through rock. Uwe Nettlebeck is Faust's producer, advisor, and encourager. He formed the band in early 1971 at the request of a Polydor A&R man who was looking for the definitive "detached" German rock-group.

"The idea," Uwe recalls, "was not to copy anything going on the Anglo-Saxon rock scene - and it worked. I like Faust more than I like the Beach Boys or the Velvet Underground or the early Mothers because their music is just not "industrial product".

"They're not 'professional' in that sense - they're just trying to be themselves and put on nothing but their own music. I've always liked the idea of releasing records which lacked conventional 'finish' in terms of production, but which have that private thrill of spontaneity that I miss in the business. In other words: the records should sound like bootlegs, as if recorded by somebody who passed a group rehearsing or jamming and then cut the recorded material wildly together."

Because of the demands of a commercial company, this idea has only partially realised on Faust's two records (a glimpse of it can be heard in *Why Don't You Eat Carrots?* from the first album), but I've heard selections from the band's private tapes recorded continuously over the past two years, and this collaging technique, in its undiluted state, is one of Faust's most radical conceptions. It differs primarily from the kind of sound-collages made by Frank Zappa in that Zappa is, creating ambiguities by juxtaposing apparently unrelated ideas (including ad-libbed speech, musique concrete, and finished - and self-sufficient - songs). In other words, part of Zappa's talent is purely organisational. He organises the sounds he's predetermined and creates continually where none existed before (by simple virtue of the components being separate).

On the other hand, the components of Faust's music aren't conceived as separate. They take the notion of continuity so much for granted that one sometimes gets the feeling that, behind that amazing rapid fire of successive musical images, there was once a straight forward, unassuming little 12-bar. Faust aren't, like Zappa, trying to piece together a jigsaw with the parts taken from several different jigsaw sets; they're taking a single picture (which may be extremely unorthodox in its virgin state), chopping it into jigsaw-pieces, and fitting it together again in a different way.

Both methods have their order and logic, but Faust's has to be the less contrived in that their materials are from a single body of musical thought. In their earlier stages (for, it must be admitted, Faust have recently - at least, on their second album, *So Far* - ceased to explore the innovation) this New Continuity was as organic as the band's entirely processed sound, ie. it was the music, not just an organised embellishment of it.

Once again, a French critic put his finger on the particular quality of the urgency this feature of Faust's music possessed: Christian Lebrun wrote (in "Beat"): "Bob Dylan, believing that the Cuba Crisis would let loose an atomic cataclysm, composed 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall', in which each line was the idea for a separate song he didn't believe he would have time to write. Faust's music is a bit like that; each musical phrase, each fragment, each quotation seems to be a part of a whole music that time is pressing them to play." How did Faust arrive at this concept? By simply investigating the technology of the rock medium in the same way that they arrived at synthesizing, not one sound or instrument, but the whole group: by really looking at the art and meaning of magnetic tape-editing, and then cross-indexing this with the naturally interrupted continuity of the everyday experience. And they arrived at the sounds to fit this structure simultaneously with finding a rationale for the purely technological side of the group's set-up: because they were the same discovery. The fact that hardly anyone in the world has found a theory and an integrated role in music for the electronically-produced or altered sound except this German rock group is much more of a cultural vindication of our music than William Mann's acceptance of "Sergeant Pepper" - because here rock has out-stripped mainstream music, not limited or genuflected to it, as Tony Palmer believes it should. Contemplating the electronic Mephistopheles that Faust had to

invoke to reach this position, Philippe Paringaux points out that the band “risk nothing less than the loss of their soul” - which is exactly what most of the parallel experiments in the mainstream have foundered on.

FAUST AND FOREMOST: INTERVIEW WITH UWE NETTELBECK

by Karl Dallas, Melody Maker, Mar 1973

An interview with Uwe Nettelbeck conducted during the recording of the first Faust BBC Sessions

It is twelve noon, and in the smoky sunshine of a London afternoon a group of German longhairs are unloading a huge Mercedes truck full of electronic gear of various shapes and sizes and carrying it into the BBC's number one eight track studio, which has just been vacated by Victor Sylvester and His Ballroom Orchestra.

It's not a small studio by BBC standards, but when they've done there is barely room for the five Germans to pick their way among the wires and synthesizers and sound generators and other electronic paraphernalia.

BBC Sessions It is also four-and-a-half hours later before Faust, possibly the hottest word-of-mouth group to emerge out of the Common Market mists of Eurorock, are ready to start recording.

Producer John Walters confides to me that he hasn't had so much mail about any new name since the earliest days of Family, despite the fact that both their Polydor albums have received very little exposure in this country.

When I saw the first one, a wholly transparent disc enclosed within an equally transparent sleeve - mindblower number one - I determined that I had to have it even before I'd heard the music on it which might have been James Last for all I knew of the group.

I took it home and put it on the turntable, and then came mindblower number two: as the disc revolved, some sort of stroboscopic interaction between the grooves on one side and the grooves on the other - because, remember, being transparent, you could see both sets - made it look as if the disc was revolving a quarter turn, then stopping, then another quarter turn, then stopping again, and so on. I took it off and checked there was no equipment malfunction before I realised that I was the victim of an optical illusion.

After this the music could have been a complete let-down, but it was in fact mindblower number three. Here, as the man said, words begin to fail me, for mere vocabulary can't really express the multi-dimensional complexity of what they were doing. I doubt if even German, with its propensity for long-winded poly syllables, has words adequate to describe it.

Things were not helped by the fact that there are so few parallels one can draw either in the field of rock or modern classical music. One thinks of unsuccessful experiments like the Beatles "Revolution No. 9". Inevitable OK classical names like Karlheinz Stockhausen or John Cage leap to mind.

But producer Uwe Nettelbeck, an intense bearded ex-journalist and film-maker who first conceived of Faust in 1970 rejects this sort of comparison and asserts that what they play is in fact rock.

"I want it to be popular music," he said. "As far as terms are concerned I wouldn't like to have it in that bag with Stockhausen, Cage and all that, what you call experimental muscle." We are avant garde not as a style but just as an accident, not by purpose. Just because some things we are doing nobody else is doing, it puts us in a position to be avant garde but that's just accidentally. I don't rate such terms very high. It's just music.

“And I would rather like it to be considered as rock. Why not? It is. It is rhythmically based very often, it’s using elements of rhythm and blues and all that in a different and twisted way, but it is still using it. I am not very much into rock music. I am listening to the records but I don’t know much about other groups. I only can say what groups the band and I like, it’s very strange, it goes from things like the Shangri-Las to Frank Zappa or early Velvet Underground, even the Beach Boys.

vAs far as content is concerned we are realising the particular situation a German band is in, by not having any roots in rock music, but on the other hand knowing all the stuff because our record shops are just the same as yours, there’s no difference. But it puts you in a strange relation to the stuff because you neither speak English nor have any connection to anything in it. It’s a second sort of reality.”

“So we try to make an amalgam from all the material which comes to us to form something which goes beyond quotations. The material should be altered, shouldn’t stay the same, never, and this should be combined with sounds”.

Their very first, Clear album began with quotes from the Stones’ “Satisfaction” and the Beatles’ “All You Need is Love”, while the second, “all black” album (So Far) has a song, It’s a Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl, which is recognisably derived from the Velvet Underground.

By now John Walters has wandered off, saying that his role as producer is almost superfluous. The BBC engineer is checking for level, but all the band is giving him to work on are pure tones from their sound generators. Perspex black boxes covered with dozens of white buttons enabling four out of five members to generate all kinds of sounds and inject them direct into the recording.

These boxes, in fact, are one of the secrets of Faust’s unique blend of sounds - and the reason why they have not appeared in public before now, the reason why their Manchester Free Trade Hall gig on June 6 is only their seventh in two years.

vThose machines weren’t ready before now,” said Nettlebeck. “We had to have them custom made and it took two years. We wouldn’t like to play without them because it would be too much of a compromise, we wouldn’t have been able to switch sounds, to play collages on stage.

It would interrupt the flow of the music every time we had to, because we would have to disconnect and connect to get different effects and all that. With these machines we just have to press a button”.

The remarkable thing as Faust begins to warm up for their “Sounds of the Seventies” recording is that already they are beginning to sound like their albums, which were the product of painstaking hours of over-dubbing and editing.

In fact, the second side of their first album on Polydor was recorded entirely live in their own studio a converted school-house in the countryside between Hamburg and Bremen, and this is how they prefer to work.

Everything they have issued so far, including the remarkable 48p LP of tapes from their own archives which launches their move to Virgin records, was recorded in that make-shift studio.

The band really began as the outcome of a dispute between two branches of the vast Polydor combine in Germany. The International wanted to show the native German Polydor company the chances it was missing. In the great flowering of German rock which has made names like Can, Neu and Amon Düül familiar to British listeners.

Polydor International asked Uwe Nettlebeck to get a group together. He was a former radical journalist who’d had to move into films and sounds when he found no magazine would publish his views on the political trials that followed the student disorders of 1968.

“I knew this guy at Polydor International who asked me whether I knew some people to put a band together which would be a bit significant,” recalled Nettlebeck.

“That was the beginning, in February 1971; but it was also the end because the national company got so upset that they started to fight us from the very first day. That is why we are unknown in Germany. That’s not a very nice situation in your own country you’re just not available in a record shop.

We are better known in France than Germany, and better known in England than in France just because people like journalists and John Peel took us up.

However, when we started Polydor gave us all this old equipment, none of which would work, and we tried to make it work. It was very hard because often we would have to work for several hours getting it ready and by the time we there ready to record we were all tired and upset, but we continued to work on our concept, which was to have a band which is not featuring anyone in particular but has a combined sort of sound, just like one instrument, playing in a very wide range of sounds and styles.

For instance, even now it is hard to identify who is doing what, except the drummer or the guitarist. But if they are more into electronic stuff you wouldn't be able to figure out who is playing what if you saw them standing there.

And we definitely won't have a stage act in which somebody is in the spotlight. Actually it should be the equipment which should be in the spotlight. Sometimes Joachim Sosna (sic) plays a guitar solo, not a straight one because he plays very peculiar guitar, but he is not behaving like a guy who plays guitar solos. And we had the idea later, if we can do it, to project a film next to him on stage which shows him playing a guitar solo but he's standing still and not doing it.

The only thing we have, really, in the act is in these generators which can work by themselves. If you switch them on they can infect each other and do a sort of electronic percussion thing, completely on their own, and that's a solo. And you can leave the stage and let them do it for five minutes and you have a solo which actually the equipment is doing.

Basically, Faust is a machine, but everybody is sitting on the machine and trying to get freedom out of it we don't want to get into a formula where you have to deliver industrial product to big companies which try to make money out of it.

I have a huge collection of tapes which we have made over the two years, made on an ordinary stereo recorder without any eight-track or multi-track. When we left the studio, I took two or three weeks to go through them and collect pieces out of them and cut it together, not in chronological order but to sound right. I prefer the second side, actually. The first side is a bit hard to listen to.

I had the idea that it wouldn't be fair to sell it to the public for the price of an ordinary album because it didn't cost anything. It would be a nice gesture to put it out really cheaply. It should be less than 48p, because we are not taking anything at all out of it".

By now the session is over. The technical problems are over and already the band is talking about its first experience, starting the next day at the Manor, of recording in a commercial studio with all the facilities most bands take for granted. I see Faust's engineer at the BBC eight-track deck, wiping the tapes of music that they've rejected. "We have to avoid bootlegs," he said with a smile. For a band that's started its period with a new company by producing its own bootleg, that struck me as funny somehow.

HAVING A SMASHING TIME

by Andy Gill, Mojo Magazine, Apr 1997

Deconstructing the nuts, bolts and girders of rock - or simply having a smashing time?

A day or two after the Queen Elizabeth Hall concert, my ears are still ringing when I go to interview Jean-Hervé Péron, one of the founder-members of Faust, at a flat on the Hornsey-Tottenham borders.

Jean-Hervé is the bassist who had asked the Sheffield audience whether they were going to let the hall manager adjudicate their listening taste, the same barefoot bassist whose string had snapped at the QEH show. He's wearing jeans, a scruffy T-shirt and the kind of big industrial boots that have never featured in fashion spreads. Jean-Hervé spent the later part of the '60's on the road, busking Dylan songs in French, and remembers the May '68 revolution as a deeply radicalising time.

"The relationships between children and parents were changed radically," he recalls. "It was the beginning of the anti-authority education, there was a big revolution in France, De Gaulle had to go, and also we were not happy being a deluded echo of what went on in the music scenes of England and the States: groups like Amon Düül and Kraftwerk and Faust and others sprang up in every town, especially in Germany, and I think we did manage to find our own identity. We were the mirrors of this social and political upheaval."

In Faust's case, the mirror was put in place by Uwe Nettelbeck, a noted German journalist who was connected with various left-wing factions, and served at one time as co-editor of the journal *Konkret*, revolutionary mouthpiece for the likes of Ulrike Meinhof. Indeed, Nettelbeck holds the distinction of being denounced by the futurist terrorist leader for transforming the magazine into, quote, an instrument of the counter-revolution, unquote: "Too late, however," Meinhof announced in a Frankfurt newspaper in April 1969, "did we come to recognise the solidarity declarations of Uwe Nettelbeck for what they were: attempts to ingratiate himself."

Nettelbeck declined to be interviewed for this piece, which is a shame, as he was clearly a central figure in the birth of Krautrock. What appears to have happened was that, while head of a satirical-critical magazine called *Pardon*, Nettelbeck was contacted by Polydor Records with the aim of finding an underground band with which to leaven the label's MOR-mainstream output. Stretching his brief somewhat, Nettelbeck put together Faust, designed their startling album sleeves, and managed to convince Polydor to release the group's albums on its distinguished classical outlet, Deutsche Grammophon. They remain the only rock band thus honoured.

"It started in late '68," recalls Jean-Hervé Péron. "The history of Faust is basically of two little German groups playing Hamburg, and one man - Uwe Nettelbeck - and a social situation, Europe in 1968. There was a nucleus of people doing music for underground filmmakers like Helmut Costa and Hans Hemminghaus, people that are now sort of established. One day Uwe arrived, and he and Helmut Costa got together and said they were looking for a new group, for something new on the music scene.

"Helmut was a neighbour of mine, and he put Uwe in touch with us. Uwe liked what we were doing, but thought we should have more drums and keyboards; so we contacted the other group

and told them we needed a drummer. That was the foundation of Faust. Rudolf Sosna, Gunther Wüsthoff and myself being in this first group, and Werner 'Zappi' Diermaier, Joachim Irmeler and Arnulf Meifert being in the other group. We got together in the studio for half a day and re-did our demo. Uwe said, 'Yes, that's it, I'll take it to Polydor.'

In the spirit of the age, the fledgling Faust acquired a house in the country, in which to work on their music and try and find, as Jean-Hervé puts it, something new. "Which meant just going deeper into what we were already doing - putting guitars into radios, using machines, and making quite absurd but nevertheless critical texts. At the end of '69 we had managed to do the first LP, Faust Clear; after that we got more pressure from Polydor, who wanted to invest more money. They put at our disposition an old school at Wümme, which we transformed into a recording studio." Central to the group's recorded sound was engineer Kurt Graupner, whom Péron describes as a genius, while each member brought different skills to the band's sound. Meifert and Diermaier shared percussive duties, Péron brought his enigmatic melodic sense to bass and guitar, Sosna played piano and wrote some of their arrangements, Irmeler played keyboards and synthesizers, and Wüsthoff was largely responsible for the intricately-layered and spliced collages of the debut album, which constitute one of rock music's breakthrough 'texts', the closest European equivalent to the montage work of Frank Zappa.

Life at Wümme was unusual, to put it mildly. Peter Blegvad, student of the arcane, one-time member of Slapp Happy and Henry Cow - and, for a tour, Faust - and latterly the enigmatic cartoonist for the Independent On Sunday, lived at the commune for awhile, having been enticed over by his friend Anthony Moore, who was part of the avantgarde soundtrack circle which Péron mentioned earlier. Moore specialised in non-melodic, alternative music for non-narrative, alternative films (one such LP featured wooden sticks being dropped onto different surfaces - wood, plastic, glass, metal - for three quarters of an hour), and he had been impressed that Uwe Nettelbeck had managed to get Polydor to release one of his LPs, a record called "Secrets Of The Blue Bag" (worth upwards of a ton these days, record investors). Perhaps, Moore suggested, Polydor might also be interested in the kind of semi-satirical pop songs he and his old school chum could make? At the time, Blegvad was in the slough of student despond at Exeter University, and jumped at the offer. Together with Moore, Dagmar Krause, and a backing band made up of various Faust members, he recorded two Slapp Happy albums at Wümme.

"We used their extraordinary engineer, Kurt Graupner, who was a pivotal figure in Faust, also responsible for their secret weapons, these mysterious boxes of synthesized sounds. He had a huge moustache that covered half his face, and he zoomed around in a Porsche. There was a lot of driving on autobahns between Wümme and Hamburg, at enormously high speeds: they all drove these terribly fast cars. It was all very technical - I was a poor hippy student, straight from a rotting Exeter bedsit with cold water, and Uwe Nettelbeck lived in this hi-tech, utopian architect's dream in northern Germany, and his car had quadrophonic sound - all this stuff was brand-new to me. And instead of taking the dubious drugs we made do in Exeter, he had real LSD-25 from Swiss chemistry labs!"

None of the band, according to Blegvad, was exactly a virtuoso instrumentalist, but this hardly mattered. "In a way, their technical limitations were an irrelevance; their interest, and their value, was more in using the studio as an instrument in itself, and at that they were extraordinary. And I daresay that if they were more accomplished musically, they might not have focused on alternative strategies to make the music as radical as it was. They weren't really interested in doing flashy solos, or getting a pure tone - on the contrary, whenever there was a pure tone recorded, they would feed it through some machine that would shred it."

"We were quite privileged," believes Jean-Hervé Péron in retrospect. "We were like in a monastery. We went for months without TV or radio, and only Joachim would listen to other music. It's pretty hard, too: you're always together, you love each other, you hate each other, you can't escape - but when you left, you couldn't wait to get back to Wümme."

For Blegvad it was another world entirely, both sonically and socially. "It was like a commune - we all lived together and caught the crabs off each other, the way you're supposed to," he recalls with fondness. "Jean walked around stark naked all the time, indoors and out. Werner seemed to spend most of his time in bed, as did most of the others - but that was OK, because the microphone cables stretched from the control-room out of the studio, into the house, up the stairs and into the

bedrooms. Very often they recorded in bed, lying there with headphones on. I thought that was very civilised.

“In the evenings, they would repair to the local town, to a seedy discotheque which played oompah music, and occasionally they would bring back drunken townspeople and jam - but these people were seldom musicians, so the results would be drunken harangues over rock’n’roll. I remember a tape we were all impressed by featured the local Elvis impersonator - not so much a profession, as a delusion by which he would be gripped after sufficient quantities of alcohol - who one night recorded the entire Presley oeuvre. He was shouting, with a thick German accent, all those famous words, with Faust backing him. It was a very radical record; I hope it’s made available some day. Deconstructionist, before the term was invented.”

The air was thick with art, and talk of art. “We often talked about ambient noise and such stuff, sitting around the table in Wümme,” says Blegvad. “And John Cage - things like, ‘If it’s boring after 20 minutes, try it after 40’: that was an adage that was much touted about, as was, ‘I have nothing to say, but I am saying it, and that is poetry’ - you couldn’t get away with that today, but in the ’60s, that had the ring of truth about it!”

Performance artists like Kurt Schren and Dieter Meier, later of Yello, would drop by to chat, or work on projects. “Dieter spent a couple of days in the studio at Wümme making up this story about an ice-hockey goalie who drinks too much the night before the match,” Blegvad recalls. “I can still hear him screaming over and over in his Swiss-German accent, the hookline ‘Ref! Ref! I cannot see the puck!’ while we were playing the blues behind him. It was heart-rending, beautiful!”

Other visitors were less artistically inclined, however. German communes at the time were considerably more politically-motivated than their Anglo-American equivalents, and possibly through Nettelbeck’s left-wing connections, members of the Baader-Meinhof Gang would sometimes hide out on the premises. They would, of necessity, keep a very low-key presence; Blegvad knew they were around (“In the cellar or somewhere”), but admits he never saw them personally, though Jean-Hervé Péron recalls being woken early one morning to find himself staring down the barrel of a policeman’s gun, as the forces of Laura Norda closed in on the fugitive terrorists. “There is no doubt about the connection between Uwe and the RAF (Red Army Faction) people,” he affirms. “I vaguely remember very strange characters that had nothing to do with music coming in and out, so there may have been some connection there. One time we woke up to find Wümme surrounded by heavily-armed, nasty-looking policemen, with dogs and cars everywhere. I had a gun right at my forehead and told not to move. I thought it was a joke at first, but they weren’t kidding. It was real scary. It was like a bad movie which you can’t stop.” It was a serious time to be a musician.

“You don’t have to look far to understand that perhaps the Germans felt a need for a radical exorcism of their recent past, which American and English people could be a little more complacent about,” explains Blegvad. “You had to be black in America, I think, to consider actually shooting people to make a political point, but in Germany you could be bourgeois and consider it, because most of the people you were dealing with were Nazis and murderers who had gotten away with it: the rhetoric had a much more frightening edge of gravity to it. Their feeling was that their lives had just started from scratch - there was no history that they wanted to acknowledge as theirs.”

“When the Germans do something, they don’t fuck around,” adds Péron. “They either don’t do it, or they do it properly. So if they’re talking about fighting for freedom, they get guns and fight for it.”

Under pressure to record a less abstract second album, Faust delivered *So Far*, a much simpler, more direct record than its predecessor, to the point of including real songs. It didn’t, however, meet their label’s expectations.

“Shortly after that, we got into trouble with Polydor, who realised they had put an awful lot of money into it, and when there was a change of head at the company, they said it either had to be more commercial, or they would call a halt to it,” says Péron. “At that time we were absolutely unprepared to make any compromise, so we stopped.”

By that time, however, the cultural climate outside Germany had shifted sufficiently to give the band more room to move. In Britain, a mail-order retailer, Virgin, was considering moving into the recording business, and had noted the burgeoning popularity with this new German music.

“There was a very strong customer relationship with the mail-order company,” says Simon Draper, who started the label with Richard Branson. “People would write to us, and we started getting these requests for all these German records by people we’d never heard of. So we contacted Ohr Records in Germany and got a batch of about 30 different titles, and spent a weekend listening to them. Some of it was utter rubbish, but it was quite clear that, of all of them, Tangerine Dream were far and away the most interesting - and the level of interest in them was huge, too. We must have sold 15,000 Tangerine Dream albums on mail order, just importing finished product from Ohr and selling them on. So when I started the record label, I thought about what would make the label special, and thinking again of the mail-order response, I went for Gong, Robert Wyatt, and all this German stuff.”

Faust were the first band signed to the new label, Draper negotiating an unusual deal with Uwe Nettelbeck, who had accumulated the various bits and pieces of music Faust had been working on since *So Far*. “He wanted to do something different, so he said, ‘I’ll give you all these tapes for nothing, no advance, but you put the record out for nothing, effectively’. We had to guarantee we’d make no money out of it, and so we priced it as low as possible: we sold *The Faust Tapes* for the price of a single, 49 pence.”

The strategy was such a remarkable success it has since entered into music-biz legend. 100,000 copies of the album were sold in a matter of weeks. “Afterwards,” recalls Draper, “Richard was always convinced that all you had to do to break a new group was sell their records cheaply. But the trouble with the Faust album was that 90 per cent of the people that bought it hated it! Then later we put out *Faust IV*, which didn’t sell too bad, but nowhere near the same figures.”

The new contract, however, merely served to bring to a head the tense relations within the band. When Virgin wanted to bring the group over to England for a tour, Joachim Irmeler and Rudolf Sosna apparently refused to cross the water unless they received an impossibly enormous advance, estimated by Blegvad at around half a million pounds. “Part of the Faust thing,” he explains, “was that it was a kind of act, but lifted to this level where it was all so outrageous that you had to take them very seriously: it was like that with the music, and with the negotiations with the record company - very impressive, really. I guess Uwe must have been the conceptual brains at the beginning, but they happily ran with it.”

At any rate, only Gunther Wüsthoff, Jean-Hervé Péron and Zappi Diermaier came over, so Blegvad found himself recruited as guitar player for Faust’s first English tour. “We would arrive in these northern towns, and the first job Ruud Bosmer would be dispatched to perform would be to find a road crew and hire the pneumatic drill!” he recalls. Faust in Covent Garden, London, 1972: Jean, Peter Blegvad, Zappi, Gunther, Uli Trepte” Somewhere there’s a picture of me with hair down to here, wearing my wife’s very feminine cardigan and bell-bottoms, playing this hydraulic drill. We left these beautiful Victorian polished parquet stages just chewed up! We played in pitch blackness, deafeningly loud, no melodies - there was no relief. If you were bored playing, band members were encouraged to drop their instruments and play pinball instead.”

The group’s sonic armoury for these shows included a series of big black boxes, designed by Joachim Irmeler and built by Kurt Graupner, through which the members applied such effects as fuzz, wah-wah, echo and synthesizer distortion. “By today’s standards they’re probably woefully primitive, but at the time they were totally radical, amazing,” recalls Blegvad. “Every musician in the band had one - and you were in no contact with the others, you’d be doing your own thing in pitch blackness, stabbing at these little buttons. That’s practically all the audience saw: the glow of the TV’s, the pinball machine, and all these little red dots of light on the black boxes.”

To Blegvad’s amazement, the audiences were very sympathetic. “I remember thinking, This is the worst music I have ever heard in my life, and I’m as miserable as I’ve ever been in my life playing it - it was so loud I had nosebleeds occasionally! - and then, to my horror, looking down at the edge of the stage, noticing that one young man was smashing his head in time to the drumbeat against these enormous speaker bins we’d rented from The Who or somebody. He wanted it louder and more physical! I realised I was probably not best cut out for that job, and I didn’t stick it long.”

Back in Germany, the band stumbled into further trouble when they tried to record the follow-up to *Faust IV* in Munich, at a studio previously patronised by The Rolling Stones. Still pushing the envelope of social acceptability, the booked the studio and a posh hotel some way beyond their

means, and proceeded to record in leisurely fashion. “We said, ‘It’s all right, we’re with Virgin’,” chuckles Péron. “We worked hard there, but when we left the hotel, we had to leave like thieves! I remember driving away, smashing through a post that blocked our way. Joachim and Rudolf got caught and jailed, and their parents had to bail them out - we are still in debt with them! The bill was 30,000DM! But we did some good music, in very nice conditions. After that, we dispersed across Europe and went back to our old conditions.”

This might have been the full-stop for Faust had not Chris Cutler - former Henry Cow drummer and Recommended Records’ founder - picked up the baton and run with it through the ’80s, reissuing the early albums in all their conceptual glory and securing a release for some of the München material. When, visiting Cutler, Péron saw how much royalties had accrued, he realised there was still a substantial audience out there for Faust, and the group decided to re-form, first for obscure, tiny shows in Germany, then wider afield, playing the Marquee and even touring America, where the ‘Table Of Elements’ label reissued the Faust/Tony Conrad album “Outside The Dream Syndicate” and put out another Faust LP, Rien.

Since then, their profile has risen sharply, with the aforementioned pre-Christmas shows at London’s Garage packed to the rafters. A further tickle of releases including Untitled and the new album, you know faUSt, has found a new, expanding market for the band, which now numbers just Péron, Diermaier and Irmeler. They no longer live in a commune but, judging by their performances, they’ve lost none of their instinct for the unusual. For one US event in Death Valley, the band members were placed miles apart on different hills; at The Garage shows, they brought in farm and building equipment, and hired an artist who, with welding equipment and grinder, built a metal sculpture as they played. Who knows what they’ll be up to in 25 years’ time?

INTERVIEW WITH JOCHEN IRMLER

by Andy Wilson, The Faust Pages, 19 Oct 1998

Here Jochen talks about Julian Cope's Krautrock sampler

AW: Julian Cope's book has the story of Faust...

JI: I think some points are not following the correct history, but... **AW:** ...he says that Uwe (Nettlebeck - early Faust producer) got an advance from Polydor to form a Krautrock supergroup, that Faust were the creation of Polydor.

JI: It was opposite. Uwe was not a slave of Polydor. That's what makes me a little unhappy. Uwe was very close to myself and a group of friends, and in this early Jochen period we were thinking how to get into these things. We thought there's no way to do it right because you know, there's not really - we didn't know any very important person, nothing, you know, so we thought there would be a man or a woman who knows a lot of people who's into us that could do that. That would be for sure ...

AW: Were you already playing concerts?

JI: Not really. We jammed a lot and Zappi met a girlfriend of Jean's, and that is how these two groups came together and we all just jammed a few times but then we said 'that sounds good', because it was a good mixture you know, the other half of the group really were into songs and Zappi and me were very involved in sound.

AW: Another thing about the Julian Cope book, one of the things he says is that Krautrock was really all about being far out, a lot of people taking acid, which is probably partly true. What he never mentions is 1968 and the student movement. The Faust manifesto refers to that, and says there was a kind of "moment of freedom" opened up in the late 60's and that Faust music is partly about that, it's a political thing as well. I wanted to know what you thought of that. Also, on the website there's been a big argument about whether there was such a thing at all as a German 'scene'. Was Faust about this 'German thing' or did it have other references, like the Velvet Underground?

JI: I think you can't make music without being political. Always in what you're doing you have to remember that it is a political act that you're doing. So for sure we lived in a special, shall we say 'gang'. These people were really interested in politics but not too heavily involved in it. Basically in Hamburg some of us went there to study and you couldn't stay away from what happened on the street, and so for sure it's influenced by what happened all over the world and what was happening in Europe - it's a small world.

AW: There's this Faust mythology. I started buying Faust records 20 years ago and it's only recently that I worked out who anybody was in the group, or even that that came forward. Part of the myth concerns Faust's politics, that Uwe had worked with Ulrike Meinhof on a Social Democratic newspaper, and this is somehow part of the group's roots. Is that true, about these connections?

JI: Yes, we were all connected. Some of us refused to know and meanwhile we had other things to do. We became very busy with the dogs - that sounds like a joke! We were shaped by things, but we were not a really political group. There had been a German called ??? who were really great

in a political way, but I for myself refused to go that way. The politics influenced much more the lyrics and the poems, not the music, and I was much more into music.

AW: I have to ask about Jean Péron. He's not in Faust now. The last time I saw Faust he was. A lot of people said that Faust are playing again, but an important part of a Faust gig was always his poems and readings, the whole theatrical thing. What's the situation? Has he definitely left? We also heard that he may be coming back.

JJ: It doesn't look like it. It was his own decision to leave mostly it happened for musical differences.

AW: You said that even really early on there was a side of the group that was lyrical while another side way really interested in music. And you can see that in the concerts, so people worried what they would be like without Jean.

JJ: Well, you know Faust should be a group, the way he moved us was much more to a cult, you know, which was no good for me anymore because there should not be a leader or anything like that. So, I would say no, Jean is definitely not coming back.

AW: In Hamburg Jean he said he was just taking a break. . .

JJ: Okay, lets just say something like that. You know it's not wrong or anything like that. In the 70's we said it was possible to stay away. Sometimes you could really find yourself alone. But I don't know really what's the matter. It's hard to say it but I think it's like it is now, you have to accept it. It's ok.

AW: I've been reading all the old reviews of Faust while putting them on the website, and all the early reviews, it's like they're reviewing a circus. That's the way they describe it - they hardly mention the music. They're describing a freak show.

JJ: Yes, yes.

AW: That must have changed a lot because the way that people listen to music has changed so much over the last 20 years. Do you notice a big difference in the way that ZappiFaust are heard? There are tracks on the early Faust albums that sound like what other people were only beginning to do 10 or 15 years later. . .

JJ: Yes, that was the problem for us, being first. At the beginning it was like 'ok, maybe it will last for about half a year, then they will understand'. Then I thought 'let's wait two years' (laughs). . . and then it was about 5 years, something like that. I began to think 'what's the matter with you?'

AW: It's a big difference. The last two times I saw Faust I bought lots of tickets, and gave them to friends, saying they ought to come along and see this group, Faust. And everybody, both times, they really enjoyed it a lot.

JJ: That's good. For us this is important. In my early days, when I was 20, I didn't like to perform, I liked to stay in the studio. Now, I like it. I can't do it very often because it's too heavy. But now I can face people, I'm able to draw on the audiences reaction. I like that very much.

AFTER THE DELUGE - INTERVIEW WITH JEAN-HERVÉ PÉRON

by Freqzine, 29th May 2000, <http://www.freqzine.net>

Jean-Hervé Péron is best known as the former de facto front man for Faust, a group he sometimes seemed to embody the group's chaotic lunacy for in his onstage antics with chainsaws and naked painting sessions. Following his traumatic personal split with the band after their early Nineties re-emergence, Peron spends his time raising horses and children on his small farm near Hamburg.

For years there were rumours that he would return with a rival group, an Anti-Faust to seal the rancour; instead, his first London show as a live performer took place in May 2000 at The South Bank Centre as a surprise performer in the Ninth Annual Festival of Experimental Music put on by the London Musicians Collective. Before the gig, Jean-Hervé took time to talk to Freq about his musical career, before, during and after the legendary Faust years.

FREQ: Where did you start out, in France or in Germany?

J-HP: I was raised in France so that's where my musical heritage lies. My father was a musician, he played violin and I sat on his lap - isn't it romantic? But it's true - so I grew up in a musical family, and my parents forced me to learn music. So I did, for six seven years. I was a young young kid, seven or eight years old, and I had to go to a music school where I didn't touch an instrument for years - I just learned about music. how to read music, how to write music and all this. Then my first instrument was a cornet, and I played in a marching band. We were three or four youngsters in the back of the marching band, playing a few blue notes. You know Miles Davis was already there! It was very exciting! We played Dixieland, New Orleans type of thing. Then I went to the States, I had an scholarship, they chose me to go to represent france in the States for one year. There I was confronted with Bob Dylan, this type of thing. So when I came back, I think I stayed two months in my home, before going on the road.

FREQ: Which school was that you got sent to?

J-HP: Mount Pleasant High Scool in Schenectady in upstate New York. If I had to choose people that influenced me, that I though were great musicians, I would quote you Bob Dylan, Incredible String Band, Kevin Ayers, people like this. But as I told you, I was the centre of the world; I said (to myself), I would be inspired by them, yes I think they're great, but I'll do my thing, I'll write my songs, do my music. Even now, I still have this spirit. I listen to other people, but I do my thing.

FREQ: How did you come to join Faust?

J-HP: I didn't join Faust - I was Faust. It all started around, say about '68-69, and we were a nucleus of three freaks that started to plug guitars into radios, and building our own wah-wahs, fuzz and things like this. And at around this nucleus there were lots of younger people, and that's how Faust started; this nucleus met another nucleus - also the same story, three people, and with

the atoms circling, whtttttt, they came together and this was Faust. So I didn't join Faust, I was Faust.

FREQ: What was the role of Uwe Nettelbeck?

J-HP: Well, Uwe developed his first role was to give the two nuclei the opportunity to meet, to create Faust, and then he also was the link between the crazy music and the record business. So he was first a businessman and a friend who gave us a great opportunity. With the first LP, the clear one, he was a friend, he was one of Faust, also the sound engineer Kurt Graupner was a very important man. There was no producer, no sound engineer, we were everything, everything. It was the vibes at the time, liberation, all this. After that it developed so that Uwe had to become a producer because the pressure of the record industry was stronger and stronger, and they wanted to have, I wouldn't say commercial, but more accessible sound. So we had to have a producer, and this culminated at the point, and this was not with Polydor, this was with Virgin for the last LP (for them), Faust IV, that we recorded, he was so much the producer that he was becoming too heavy on our music. He was starting to say "This is not good; you should do this". He didn't mean anything bad, but it couldn't work with us. We had decided once and for all that we didn't take any orders, we didn't make any compromises. When I say we didn't care about anything, I don't mean we didn't give a shit, but we did not respect anything. When we are talking about our music, and if you like it, take it, if you don't we don't care.

FREQ: Was that why you took the decision to just stop Faust at that point, as far as releasing records and dealing with labels and all that goes?

J-HP: I understand your question, but I would say that there was no decision to stop Faust, because Faust never stopped, even now. The spirit of Faust is still there. We've been through hard times, good times, hard times even within the group - I'm talking about the musicians now. We've had loving periods, and we have had hatred within us, ups and downs, but Faust was never stopped, and the time you are talking about, with Virgin, no Faust was not stopped. We even went to Munich and recorded there.

FREQ: Was this the recording of Munich and Elsewhere?

J-HP: Yes, we booked a hotel, we booked a big studio understanding that Virgin were going to pay for it. We were actually kicked out of Virgin. So we went to jail for that.

FREQ: You actually went to jail for that? For how long?

J-HP: Oh yes, just three days, because our mothers said they would pay the bail. It's funny, one of our roadies, he took the truck, and we put all the equipment and the tapes inside it because we felt everyone was getting nervous at the hotel and we told him "Whatever happens, you go through" and he went bang! through a closing gate, like in a movie. It was great. We were too stoned to react, and just waited for whatever happens. It was funny, a good time. After that, Faust didn't even stoop. We didn't live or play together, but the spirit was still there. We even did a few gigs, like nowhere places, but we did them. I think in '90 or '91, we did the Prinzenbar gig.

FREQ: The one in Hamburg on the seven inch from Forced Exposure magazine?

J-HP: There was also the CD released, one of the two brown ones put out by Jeff Hunt on Table Of The Elements.

FREQ: There was the London CD as well, of the Marquee show...

J-HP: Yes, so we did a few separate shows, and Jeff Hunt called us from the States, and we talked

about things, Tony Conrad and this and that. Our relationship developed, and then it ended up that we decided to do a tour in the US of A, which worked fine, and this was a new impulse. We are not responsible for it, but at the time there was a revival of the “Kraut” thing. I don’t know how this happened, this energy getting together.

FREQ: From how it seemed in Britain at the time, and I don’t know how it happened either, in the early Nineties that music came back not into the mainstream, but into a more general consciousness, it rose up and it was everywhere. Part of that process, at least in the UK, was to do with Faust reforming at the Marquee. It sparked a lot of people off, because I remember coming along to the show, and it was amazing to see Faust on stage there, with the chainsaws cutting “Rien” into the backdrop, the amps blowing up, it was phenomenal.

J-HP: That’s true, I had big flames coming out of my amp.

FREQ: That’s part of the Faust experience as well!

J-HP: Yes, absolutely. I was so scared! It was funny, we got to The Marquee to set up our equipment, and went outside and said there must be something happening here, there’s this huge queue outside, and I didn’t realise, I couldn’t even think, that they were coming for us. So I said, there’s many people outside, and I wished they were coming to see us, and went backstage again. Then the gig starts, and we get on stage and I see that the place is crammed full! I was so scared.

FREQ: Did you think it would just be a one-off show?

J-HP: Absolutely. I know in England we had a community of fans, of people that appreciated us. I do love to be in London, I feel confident, I feel carried, even tonight, I know people that are going there, they accept me. But what a shock! One thing I liked, I realise now that this name “Krautrock”, in the first place, I’m talking about the Seventies now, it was definitely a nickname, you know, “the Krauts” meaning the Germans (in a bad way). After that, it was an academic, musical movement, they called it Krautrock, you know like you could say in a salon. It was fine to say, so I must say I felt OK, I felt proud, and I felt that we’ve done something. Not only Faust, it was lots of groups all over the world, but strongly in Germany it’s true. We’re talking about Amon Düül, Kraftwerk, Can, all of those, we took part in creating a new musical movement, and I’m glad to see what other people are doing with it. Talking about Stereolab, they took this movement and pushed it even further, turned parts of something rough (into something new) - it’s like we just threw about ideas, like we had the feeling that we had to get it all out. I like Stereolab.

FREQ: You played with them didn’t you, with Foetus as well?

J-HP: I can’t remember, I think it was in Belgium and Holland, and it makes you feel good you know, with all those famous stars, because they are famous, sort of coming at us and bending down (laughs).

FREQ: How did that go with the ego at the time though - was it a big boost?

J-HP: Of course it helped carry it on, to keep on going. But no, I’m away from this now. I take inspiration from young people; I took inspiration from somebody else, they take inspiration from somebody. I’m one of those somebodies, but there’s no big deal about it. I listened to a CD of AMM, it’s a yellow CD, (AMMusic) and I didn’t look at the date, I just put it on and listened to it and thought “Shit, those guys are very inspired by Faust!” Some ideas, not stolen, but very alike. Then I went back, took the cover, looked at the CD date and it was ’65,’66! I said (to myself) “OK now Jean, you’ve learned a lesson of humility there.” AMM were doing this way before us, and I like AMM, we played together, and I’m very proud that I carried all their gear onstage here at the

Queen Elizabeth Hall.

FREQ: There's a lot of similarities to be heard in the way AMM play barrels and the instruments taken to pieces and reassembled and so on to the way Faust sound, definitely.

J-HP: Well, you must put it right - Faust is similar to AMM, because AMM were doing their things years ago.

FREQ: It's one of those things, isn't it, you come into a kind of music, hearing about a group by Faust, find a record like the first LP and think, that's an amazing sleeve, with the record transparent all the way through. Someone coming into Faust that way can get their ears opened, and then get into something like AMM, then go backwards and discover that they were doing it in '65 or whenever, and it doesn't matter in the end who did it first. Who does it best doesn't even matter very much, who does it well matters.

J-HP: Yes, exactly.

FREQ: Once the impetus of the Krautrock revival brought all this energy for Faust to tour again, you brought out three albums in that period, the first of which was Rien. Tell us about this...

J-HP: Rien was the result of working with Jeff, and Jim O'Rourke. Now something happened there, and I will tell you this, because this is a good occasion to put this straight. I am very disappointed by Jim O'Rourke. I'm not talking about his musical qualities, and I am not talking about the great job that he did putting this Rien album together. I am talking about the way he reacted afterwards towards the press. There is a possible joke in this - we called this album Rien, and at the end we say, "C'est rien du Faust - It's nothing from Faust". You can interpret it this way or another way. It came to my ears a long time afterwards that he said, that he certainly did insist, that it's nothing from Faust, it's all Jim. I was heavily disappointed, and I will have to talk to him whenever I get the chance, I will say on the one hand I am very grateful that Jim absolutely understood the spirit of Faust because he even recreated a beat that we had forgotten, it's on "Listen To The Fish", so if you listen to the fish, you will notice that there's loop. It's hard to notice, but it's a beat that's Faust, but that we had forgotten, and he found it again. So I am very thankful for that. We just threw tapes at him that we recorded live on the US tour, so we had all these tapes, and we also did a couple of (studio) recordings, and he did a great job, there's no question about it. It's just the way he acted before, you know? Even if he did a lot of re-creation, he could only do it because of the spirit, and of course the material. You could say that he could take any material, but it's the spirit. How to put bits and pieces of this together, this is something he had forgotten too quickly. Maybe it's the impulsiveness of young people. That (episode) was not good.

FREQ: Do you see a similarity between the trend for something that's remixed and edited out of a series of samples and loops of other people's material into music, into dance music especially, is original? For example, Steven Stapleton from Nurse With Wound did that with Stereolab on the Blue Crumb Duck 10? and turned tracks of theirs into something like Faust on a track called "A Wonderful Wooden Reason" - have you heard that? He also said that this isn't a Stereolab track, this is a joint Nurse With Wound and Sterolab piece.

J-HP: No, I haven't heard it, but great! This is legitimate; any type of music is legitimate, it's OK to do it. Either it comes from your fingers, or tapes, or samples, digital, analogue whatever...

FREQ: What if someone takes someone else's music and fixes it up their own way, like Jim O'Rourke saying it's not Faust, it's me; that happens all the time in the digital world?

J-HP: I'm not sure if I want to answer this question - I have no opinion as it can depend on so many things. If the guy who does it has what I call a keen heart, a pure heart, that's fine. But

if he's got a wicked mind, it's not good. If he does it because it's Faust and he makes it sound like Stereolab because everybody knows Stereolab this is wicked. But if he says I'll take Stereolab because it's nice material and take the spirit of Faust and put it together and it's my music, it would stand (on its own merits) that's fine, he's got a pure heart.

FREQ: It seems like Stapleton just wanted to share the credit for making the track what it was, and Stereolab got the credit too.

J-HP: As a general thing, I am more analogue, I am not digital. We have made with the band, and with the other band (Faust), we have grown up with analogue, so we stick to it. And we think, all this digital, it goes too fast, there is no sweat - it doesn't smell you see! That's what puts me off digital. One thing great thing I like about digital is when you have recorded something analogue, you put it through the computer and then you can work on it, like you can do microsurgery, which was such a drag before. It was fun, but such a drag - you had to splice, cut tapes and when you do the wrong cut, it's gone. Now with the digital, (it's easy)...

FREQ: Do you use digital for editing?

J-HP: For mastering, for doing the final version.

FREQ: But you're talking for timesaving and polishing, not for creating?

J-HP: Oh, not for creating, no.

FREQ: Sometimes it's different to tell the difference; people can get so far away from feeling, from sweating, with sampled music. . .

J-HP: Yesterday I listened to the people playing in the QEH, and there was one guy playing the drums on his own, Charles Hayward, and I liked him! He is digital, because I know he puts pre-recorded material on the backing tapes, but then the lives you know? He sweats, there is saliva coming out of his mouth, and he looks ugly and beautiful at the same time and he is there.

FREQ: And he enjoys playing so much, which transmits to the audience.

J-HP: That gave me energy, I liked it very much.

FREQ: Would you like to play with Charles Hayward?

J-HP: Yes! That would be nice, I'd like to work with him, definitely.

FREQ: With the bass?

J-HP: Whatever. . . I like the way he works. The way he came on stage - it's a show, but it's real. He said something. It's easy to do something weird. Here I don't want to name names, but last night, someone was playing, doing a show, and there was no substance behind it, so I (yawns). I heard all these crazy sounds, and there was nothing there. I am getting away from all this electronics. Sometimes I even ask myself, "Did I do all this noise? Why, why, why?"

FREQ: Do you have any answer?

J-HP: No, have no answer. It feels good when you are on stage doing it and you do it, and obviously, there are a few people who feel good listening to it, but last night, apart for Charles' performance I didn't feel good at all I was there, so I was going to listen to it, this avant-garde

music - I've done my bit of the avant-garde thing, but you can't stay avant-garde all the time. it's for young people, or they don't have to be young, inspired people they take care of this avant-garde, but you must burn you must have a huge flame inside if you want to be avant-garde.

FREQ: People don't even realise you were that until after it's done...

J-HP: That's right! If you plan to do avant-garde, then shit, you've messed it up.

FREQ: Then it verges on being pretentious... or flat out is pretentious.

EDIT

FREQ: Do you know anything about the possible Faust remix album?

J-HP: No, tell me about it.

FREQ: All that we've heard is that it's going to go ahead at some point; but it would be interesting to know if it's old material or the new work or a mixture. There's a trend for it; did you ever hear the Can remixes a few years back?

J-HP: Yes, there was one which went really big, "DJ Bobo" or someone. I'm not good with names though, I don't follow the scene.

FREQ: How would you feel about a remix album?

J-HP: A remix of Faust? No, I don't see why we should remix it, I don't see any reason.

FREQ: What if someone else did it?

J-HP: I would say now, I don't care, they should go ahead with it. Maybe tomorrow I would say No, no way, only over my dead body (laughs). I feel strange about it as an overall idea

FREQ: If you don't mind me asking, how do you feel about the other members of Faust?

J-HP: I don't feel very happy. I have decided that I will not give any comment.

FREQ: Fair enough. What's does your future hold?

J-HP: My future begins tonight, so I will see if it goes well; it would certainly give me a good reason to do this again. Either solo, which is very nice to meet people and to do something. I am playing songs which I had written before because the offer from Ed Baxter (director of LMC) was very spontaneous and of course I do not have any new material so what I will do tonight is songs that everybody who knows Faust will recognize. There is nothing wrong with interpreting songs onstage live, it's OK because it is drawing that you've made in the past, taking the essence of it and show another version as a one-time thing, that's OK. I want to present songs tonight, I want to sing them the way I like to sing.

FREQ: It should be amazing - there's a lot of people out there who are so excited that you're

playing

J-HP: We'll see - I have been practising a little bit today, so it will be ok, it works.

FREQ: Will you record any of these songs?

J-HP: It will be recorded, but I do not plan to do anything with it unless Ed Baxter wants to do something with it. I have no plans. What I think could be is to take all the songs where I feel that they are my songs within Faust. We are departed from each other now, and I have certain songs I feel they are mine and I would like to put them together, with no new arrangement, just put them together to say this is me. But if this show works, I want to write songs again, it could give me a good reason to go on and write new material.

FREQ: How are your performances now?

J-HP: Tonight is the first gig I will do for two-three years. I haven't touched the guitar, I haven't touched the bass, for a long long time. The guitar I play when I fool around with the kids, from time to time, but I'm more into my horses - so you can imagine how nervous and tense I am. Also there is this feeling that a few people will come tonight and expect something from me, that they have a pre-conceived idea, they expect me to break glass, to destroy TVs, to go naked and paint like a maniac, do the chainsaw . . . And I'm not going to do it. I'm going to do songs, which I always wanted to do, which I did do when I was young, and with Faust. But this is how I started my independent music career, by playing guitar in the beatnik period. Playing guitar, with my sleeping bag, going all over Europe. This is how it started. I have a feeling that the big wheel over London here, it goes slowly, all the way over and it comes down - and you're back again.

FREQ: Do you write new songs now that you just aren't ready to deal with them yet?

J-HP: That's right. There is a routine if I go into the rehearsal room in my place, to plug the DAT in, put stereo microphone in the centre of the room and just go for a take, record. I practice, I play, and that's the way we did it with Faust too. Whatever happened we'd just record it, and listen to it, and say "this is crap, whhht!" Or here's an idea, save it, but I have forgotten this routine, and I'll do it again.

FREQ: How would you feel about if someone found all these recordings Faust made were put on CD and churned out as "a lost Faust record, the odds and ends of Faust"?

J-HP: Chris Cutler, he is a very important guy in the history of Faust. He does this - there are a few people that are obviously interested in the things that we have done, for some reason, it makes them vibrate. It's OK if someone finds material that they like, that's fine, and I'm very sure, I am positive about this, that Chris doesn't do it for money, it's because he has the feeling it should be done, that he has to do it. There is an audience for it, it's legitimate. I'd hate though to put out scraps just because it's Faust. Chris wouldn't do this, he's very critical.

FREQ: What makes me think of this is the way that you'll have an anthology of material that say The Beatles left on the editing room floor and it's fallen upon as the latest and greatest insight into their creative process. . .

J-HP: It's very nice of you to compare us to The Beatles! I don't think this is going to happen to us ever. No no no no no, maybe Can or one of these bands because they are internationally known. I realised that when we played in the US that Faust have a small audience, between 500 and at the most over a thousand which was a big audience for us. It's small, you know. Any normal Rock & Roll band, they have 1000, 2000 that's no big fuss. But those 300-400-500 people, they love us.

They'd go out of their way to see us

FREQ: But you're talking about someone who'd have a ten thousand seater auditorium, you can't stay with that over the years.

J-HP: It wouldn't work; we need this communication. I need the people. This festival is nice because it's organized by the LMC and to have this seated audience it makes me feel god. It's good not to go in the first row and have somebody talking! If you want to talk, go back to the bar, you know? I want to play music, I want to play quiet music and I don't have to fight you. If I want to play tiny sounds, if I don't want to say anything, everybody is going to stay put and listen to what's next. That's nice, but it's not as a general rule the kind of places where Faust would work. I used to be very intolerant; I thought I was the centre of the world, and except for me, everyone else was wrong, which was naïve in a way, arrogant on the other hand, but also gives you strength. When you go on stage, you are confident that I'm here, because I ought to be here and what I say is true and right. you've got to have this kind of strength, this kind of stupidity also or one-sided, short-sightedness. Now I am growing a bit older, and I want open up. I realised that you can also reach the same thing by being tolerant and open. I don't have to shout things to make them come over.

FREQ: How about when you played here at the QEJH with AMM and Tony Conrad though? It was incredible to see you play with Tony Conrad.

J-HP: I liked it; sometimes you really can get out of yourself and see as if it was not you concerned. I would have loved to be in the audience! The audience liked it too.

FREQ: How do you feel about the "Outside The Dream Syndicate" album?

J-HP: It's good. When I am nervous and I feel like time is more important, if i'm in a hurry and I feel like I have no time, I put Tony on. After a while, you have to relax. I always discover something new in it too.

FREQ: Would you like to do another performance of it if it was possible?

J-HP: With Tony? Yes, I would. But unfortunately, it would be difficult; I can only imagine playing with Zappi, because we don't have to say when we start, when we stop, we just feel. And I can't imagine that I would be able to do it with another drummer; but yes, I'd like to do it. It's fun; one note, seventy-one minutes, one note. It's good.

FREQ: You become taken out of the time the space and everything while listening to that piece. it's beyond words, and you don't need drugs, you become part of the subconscious, come back later - maybe. . .

J-HP: You certainly take off. You bend time for a while. If you put the CD in repeat of course you are in great danger! (Laughter all round)

FREQ: Is there anything else you feel people should know?

J-HP: I am now in[volved with] another thing and I am quite happy about it, with my horses, caring about horses on the farm, taking care of my kids. It gives another dimension which I really enjoy.

FREQ: Are you planning to put out any recordings - live or new studio material?

J-HP: No, I'm not planning on that, I'm just playing with the idea of it. The possibility of this

happening is just as good as the possibility that it's not going to happen; so let's not talk about it. I might think about it.

FAUST: KINGS OF THE STONE AGE

by David Keenan, *The Wire*, 22 Mar 2003

“One part of the Faust story is I simply got bored with all known sounds,” deadpans Werner ‘Zappi’ Diermaier, Faust’s gargantuan percussionist and ‘master of ceremonies’. He’s lying flat on his back on a sofa, still in the fatigues he pulled on for the photo shoot earlier in the evening. “Another part might be Germany itself,” Hans Joachim Irmeler, keyboardist, engineer and inventor, offers from the other side of the bed. “Because after this crazy war Germany was completely destroyed and in a way this was a blessing in disguise. Everything had to begin again from zero; industry, the arts, everything. There was nothing left for our generation and we refused to have anything to do with the generation that came before us. *The Wire*, March 2003 We invented artificial music, music that we created in the studio on our own, music that had little to do with western music in general. Later we called it ‘Krautrock’ because that consisted of the two things that we weren’t. When we went to England or the South of France people would talk about krauts, referring to the generation of Germans that had come before us. We wanted to distance ourselves from that completely, just as we refused to have anything to do with handed down rock forms. So Krautrock was ironic, it was everything that we weren’t, everything we stood against.”

Diermaier and Irmeler are the sole remaining members from the early years of the Faust project, when in 1971 six dropout musicians sealed themselves off in an old schoolhouse in Wümme, south of Hamburg, as part of a utopian social and musical experiment. They announced a moratorium on all new music, radios and record players were banned, the contents of group meals were arrived at by committee and everything was recorded - from the sounds of members using the bathroom and walking up and down the stairs through all-night jam sessions to original guitarist Rudolf Sosna’s early morning conversations with the telephone operator.

Their first self-titled album - meaning ‘Fist’ - was assembled from these recordings and came in a clear plastic sleeve with an X-ray of a clenched hand and a minimum of explicatory information. It still stands as a great futurist grunt that telescopes through a compacted history of popular music to reach the sound of ground zero via a clutch of alien jams that lumber more than they swing. Spliced together with the concrete logic of iconoclasts like Karlheinz Stockhausen, it cuts folk songs from the German mountains with the sound of rolling thunder, echoed by Irmeler’s self-made keyboards, while thuggish, minimal riffs demolish any notion of verse/chorus. “During this period our project to see if we could reduce what we were playing to a point where the listener would have to decide by themselves whether it was music or whether it was noise,” Irmeler recalls. “We were focussed on that narrow point between the two.” “Our idea was to create ‘standing waves’ in sound,” Diermaier adds, evocatively articulating the austere architectural beauty of those early sides. Faust sent out seismic ripples, alerting future key players on the international underground to this hermetic cell of resistance operating well beneath any cultural radar. But the ‘70’s Event’ that was Faust eventually effected a rapprochement with rock music, when they secreted themselves in the belly of the beast via record deals with Polydor and Virgin and hooked up with a whole new generation of similarly forward-thinking musicians, both in Germany and abroad. But rapprochement eventually sank them, with the remains of the original line-up splintering after relocating to England in 1973.

Since they resumed activities in the early 90s, Faust’s working strategies have changed accordingly. They’re now completely independent, running their own label, Klangbad, in association with Irm-

ler's wife, Cornelia Paul, and they've set up a studio in the basement of Irmeler and Paul's home on the edge of the tiny village of Bad Dürmentingen, in Germany's deep south. What's more, they have overcome their hermetic tendencies, opening out their music through a series of remixes by contemporary tinkerers like Kreidler, The Residents and Surgeon, while releasing on Klangbad work by such fellow spirits as Finnish metal-minimalists Circle, Industrial HipHop crew Dälek (a collaborative album is due later in the year in a joint venture between Klangbad and Staubgold) and female electro conceptualists Nista Nije Nista, who are in residence in the studio at the time of my visit. Faust have also reinvented themselves as a ferocious live group, which is definitely one area where they've improved on the original incarnation. In all, Faust's music remains as challenging, perverse and powerful as it did when they first shook schoolhouse walls. As if to underline this continuity through upheaval, the group have just released *Patchwork*, an exaggerated and distorted look into the past that conflates key Faust tracks from their first heroic era with newer material that incorporates Stooges punk, serrated drone work and the noise of manhandled power tools. Further, it has been programmed with segues and cross-fades in the style of their most notorious calling card, *The Faust Tapes*, the collage of Wümme-era jams that first seeded the British public imagination, thanks to Virgin's decision to release it at the pocket money price of 49p.

Indeed, *Patchwork* sounds like *The Faust Tapes* after a plunderphonics upgrade. A track like *Stretch Over All Times* smears 30 years of temporally displaced recordings into a cacophony of tectonic movement that eventually coheres into an out of phase lift from *It's A Rainy Day*, *Sunshine Girl*, a Stone Age pop song from their second album, 1972's *So Far*. Other pieces point more towards the future, such as the gobbiest Faust track yet called *Nervous*, a three-chord rocker based on an idea that one of the group's newest members, Lars Paukstat, came up with at a soundcheck. Coming from a background in various German punk and Metal groups, Paukstat started out as the group's roadie. He became a full member in 1997, since when his presence has fully adrenalised the Faust sound, while exposure to their working practices has effectively opened his ears. Exactly what they bring to each other is laid out on the first *Lars & Faust* album due later this year that draws as much inspiration from Bowery punk haunt CBGBs as it does from Kosmiche music. Besides Paukstat, the current Faust line-up is bolstered by the American guitarist Steven Wray Lobdell who also leads his own psych group, *Davis Redford Triad*, and bassist Michael Stoll, who replaced Jean-Hervé Péron when he split in May 97. Lobdell's lead guitar gives their music a psychedelic depth beyond the reach of early Faust records, while Stoll's bass exerts much the same kind of magnetic force as Péron's.

"*Patchwork* originally started out as the idea of giving ourselves a birthday gift, celebrating 30 years of Faust," Irmeler relates. "Then Markus Detmer who runs the Staubgold label appeared, and he was very interested in older material. It's always a bit complicated when you use old stuff - it can look like you've run out of ideas. So we thought that if Markus picked the tracks, then it would save us from making difficult value judgements and he could also be a lot more frank about the music. We're just too close to it to be able to do that. In a way it's also a remix album, our own remix, and of course we were aware that we were putting together another *Faust Tapes*, only one this was a career-spanning selection, as opposed to just covering three years. We also wanted to demonstrate different aspects of Faust that people might not know, things that we did behind closed doors in Wümme, and show that this is still what's happening."

Indeed, the scene in Dürmentingen feels like an extension of the Wümme ethos. The various members of Faust - minus guitarist Lobdell - lie sprawled over a set of sofa beds in the living room, while Nista Nije Nista wander through in a daze. There's a non-stop conveyor belt of beer, wine and smokes, capped off on the first evening with Diermaier's legendary cocktails made with buckets of fresh oranges. In the evenings everyone gathers for a communal meal, while Irmeler films virtually everything with a digital camera. Looking out from the first floor balcony over barren fields unfolding in ululating curves towards the horizon, it feels like we're out on the edge of the world. Coming in from the airport, we had passed through countless tiny, seemingly uninhabited villages, while Irmeler spun a cassette of his upcoming solo album, *Lifelike*, an eerie, atmospheric combination of subtle electronics and wide-open field recordings. Its static quality perfectly matched the ghostly terrain. "Everyone is working," Irmeler explains, back in real time. "That's all everyone does around here, to be able to afford to build their own house. The work ethos is everything." Faust are clearly as much out of place here as they were in Wümme.

Faust were originally birthed in Hamburg in 1969 from two almost antithetical groups: Campylognathus Zitelli, that featured Diermaier, Irmmler and drummer Arnulf Meifurt, and Nukleus, consisting of Rudolf Sosna, bassist/vocalist Jean-Hervé Péron and saxophonist and electronics operator Gunther Wüsthoff. Named after a dinosaur whose remains were first discovered near their home, Campylognathus Zitelli played a freeform music while Péron's ensemble were wrestled with structural rudiments. "We had our own rehearsal room so we invited Péron's trio to come over and we just jammed," Irmmler recalls. "They used words, whereas we never used words, so we were very happy to meet guys who were working in a different area from us. The initial sessions went really well and soon we began thinking a bit more seriously about pushing the project along. We wanted to work things out so that we would arrive on the scene with a bang. We didn't want to hang around playing clubs and cutting our teeth. The idea was that we would arrive fully formed, like we had been deep frozen at the point of our birth and suddenly exploded from the ice." "In Hamburg the music scene was very tight," Diermaier continues. "Most of the bands stuck together and knew each other and we found that if you're around that kind of scene all the time, it distorts everything and all of your own ideas are eventually destroyed via conversations like 'I play it like, this, oh, no I play it like that...'" "The more we got into this idea," Irmmler resumes, "the more we began to focus on locking ourselves away from corrupting influences and becoming more involved with each other. We decided that we needed to try living together as a group for at least a year, where we would record everything that happened. So we needed equipment, we needed a place to stay and we needed a sponsor with music industry contacts. One of our friends in the Hamburg film-makers' commune, Hellmuth Costard, mentioned a journalist he knew called Uwe Nettlebeck who might be able to help." Nettlebeck was a gonzo journalist with a ferocious reputation who had somehow infiltrated West Germany's national press. On Costard's word, he dropped in to see Faust at their space and was immediately caught up in the creative hysteria. "Uwe thought it sounded like fun," Irmmler says. "He was determined to place us with a major label so we could reappropriate their funds, almost in the spirit of revenge. We thought our music had the potential to really cross over and become huge just because it was so new and so original." Against the odds Nettlebeck did manage to score Faust a major label deal with Polydor Germany, which back then was not much more than a clearinghouse for UK/US signings or human tranquilisers like James Last. The group landed a huge advance, and before they had even signed the contract they blew a stack of it on fully equipping the old schoolhouse they had found well out of town. "It was more than a musical experiment by that point," Irmmler relates. "We had no idea what would happen. There were big fights and as I was the youngest and a bit shy it was very difficult for me, especially relating musically to the others. I was preoccupied with all sorts of paralysing musical questions like, shall I play this? Is it worth playing? How can we come together, incorporating everyone without diluting anyone's ideas or tastes? That was the question that underlay everything." "To me it was not very complicated," counters Diermaier. "In my nature I'm very easygoing." "Zappi was always a very helpful to me," laughs Irmmler. "If I was a bit annoyed or whatever, I would tell him and he would tell me, 'Ah, don't worry'. Then he'd disappear off with one of his many girlfriends."

Inevitably Polydor began to get jittery about their new investment. None of the group had actually signed anything, the label had not heard a note, yet already Faust were massively in debt, splashing their advance on everything from equipment bills and rent to insuring Diermaier's dog. Polydor demanded to hear some demos. Faust obliged by assembling a now legendary cassette filled with what Irmmler describes as "pure blasts of noise, the sound of someone cleaning dishes and us all trying to impersonate a female choir." The tape was lost long ago, but one track, Lieber Herr Deutschland, turned up on *Münich & Elsewhere*, released in 1986 long after the event. "It didn't make any sense," Irmmler confesses. "Some parts were concrete music and others were made up of field recordings. Polydor had expected a work in progress, so they began to really push us. When we finally signed the contract we had been holed up in Wümme for most of 1971. Uwe told us that he couldn't hold the label off any longer, that they'd lost their patience. We said 'OK, let's start the album.'"

The group spent an age working on what they thought were the perfect track titles, with the result that the deadline for delivery of their debut album was almost upon them before the tapes had even started rolling. "So we tripped and took LSD and we had to make the record in one night," Diermaier grins. Whether it was the effects of the acid or the psychotic hothouse atmosphere the

sextet were working in, the sessions gained much of their impetus from a conceptual conceit that cast the first Faust album as the next, irrefutable step in the evolution of contemporary music. “We had the idea that there should be special arrangements for each of the tracks,” says Irmeler, “and we drew very intricate pictures trying to visualise their form when we suddenly realised that the first side should really be a report of the contemporary situation, of how things sounded in 1971. So that’s why at the start of the record there are bursts of Satisfaction and All You Need Is Love, followed by blocks of noise. Then we said, ‘OK, this is the opener to give the people an idea and then we go back and show where we’re coming from.’ So the piano comes in and what sounds like big band music, that was like James Last or something, and then we sped forward, going through to rock music. It’s like a compressed history of music and the idea behind it was that we would show that all this was good once, The Beatles, etc, but it was over, it was no longer enough, we demanded a complete severance with it. Now comes the noise, the new thing. That’s what the track Miss Fortune was: a live jam from the vaults that said we are the new thing.” “Near the beginning of the record you can hear Rudolf Sosna say, “I mean, the point is I’m waiting”,” Diermaier adds. “Then - boom! We come charging in.”

In West Germany in the early 70s, Faust weren’t the only illicit underground network operating to usurp the tyranny of the status quo and undermine any attempts to rebuild cultural and state apparatus on the bones of the past. In the summer of 1971 the West German authorities had posted millions of wanted posters featuring mugshots of 19 members of the Baader-Meinhof group/Red Army Faction (RAF), the terrorist cell that had come to prominence via a series of police shoot-outs and department store bombings. In a contemporary poll, one in five Germans under 30 admitted “certain sympathies” with the RAF while one in ten said they would willingly shelter RAF members for the night. The uncomprehending German state responded with a crackdown on anyone who appeared to have countercultural affiliations, prompting disaffected Germans to affix bumper stickers to their cars that read “I Do Not Belong To The Baader-Meinhof Group.” The Faust commune inevitably came to the attention of the authorities.

“I am the specialist on life at Wümme,” Diermaier declares. “I had a big dog and most days I would go for long walks through the surrounding swamps. I’d wear this long black Count Dracula cloak, and as I was very big and the landscape in North Germany was very flat I probably drew a lot attention. One morning I was sleeping and suddenly the door was kicked in and there was a man with a machine gun. He screamed at me to stand up and put my hands against the wall. Out of the window I could see loads of armed policemen, all training their guns on the schoolhouse. What had happened was that I had been driving with my girlfriend who happened to look a lot like Gudrun Ensslin from Baader-Meinhof. We had stopped for petrol in a garage and the owner had called the police.”

“It shows how hysteric those times were,” Irmeler nods. “Its true that the RAF did a lot of heavy things and shot down many people they shouldn’t have, but the police shot more people dead by being too badly prepared for situations like that. They’d haphazardly stop traffic on the autobahn and they were so out of control that if someone became nervous or panicked, he ran the risk of being gunned down. It was a heavy time and we certainly attracted a lot of attention. If Zappi had looked normal, like the RAF themselves actually did, then he wouldn’t have had so much trouble. Instead he was a wild thing.”

In the wake of their first album, Faust set about planning their live debut. But, increasingly unhappy with the group’s lack of a public profile, Polydor once more forced their hand, resulting in a disastrous concert at Hamburg’s Musikhalle. “Faust always wanted to go new ways,” Irmeler states. “That included finding new technical set-ups. Live we wanted to work with multiple speakers, an early version of surround sound where we could precisely project the sound, like a focussed little ball. The idea was to involve the whole audience in the sound. A month ago I visited our engineer at the time, Kurt Graupner, and we talked about this. He said he wished that Polydor had given us three more months to prepare our live set-up. If they had he was sure there would have been a revolution.”

On the night, the concert took on the air of a Fluxus event. First, the audience were asked to come back later in the evening when the group were ready. Still unable to make anything work, Faust turned a bank of colour TVs to let the audience watch the news, while Diermaier toppled a tower of empty tin cans that he had painstakingly put together for the planned finale. The German press

leapt at the chance to beat them down, with headlines like “Faust’s Rock Damnation”. Arnulf Meifurt, the eldest member of the group, had had enough. When their aftershow party turned into a near riot, Meifurt felt that Faust’s pranksterish tactics were getting in the way of the real goal of the project, with the result that Nettlebeck forced him out. Since this interview, however, he has resumed contact with Irmeler, and the two have announced their intention to collaborate on a new project, tentatively called Two Fists For A Hallelujah.

Faust’s second album, *So Far* (1972), makes a little more sense than the first. It’s opening track, *It’s A Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl*, mainlines the same kind of kinetic street energy that fuels early Velvet Underground tracks like *I’m Waiting For My Man* and *Heroin*, combining avant garde aesthetics with primitive, nasty rhythms and a cooing vocal. “Just look at him,” Irmeler points at Diermaier by way of explanation. “Zappi was always important to the sound. He is his own invention and that’s why his drumming is such a major part of Faust, it’s rhythmic but it’s also sonically important, those noises of his are always going on behind the melody.”

That Velvets connection became much more explicit after Nettlebeck flashed on the idea of setting up a collaboration between New York minimalist and LaMonte Young/early Velvets associate Tony Conrad and the Faust rhythm section of Diermaier and Péron, augmented by Sosna and a still uncredited Irmeler on organ. Conrad had been introduced to Faust’s activities by another member of the Hamburg Filmmakers Commune. Keen to find any musicians that were willing to record his still undocumented music, he hooked up with Nettlebeck at Polydor and the two drove out to Wümme. It was an inspired pairing. Conrad’s pulsating drone work fits perfectly with Faust’s concept of standing waves, with Diermaier’s slow, chain-gang drumming provided a resuscitating cast-iron heartbeat that helps suspend Conrad’s singing violin strings in mid-air, effectively pulling his music free of all of the speculative detritus that had built up over the years. “It was very exhausting,” Diermaier remembers. “Conrad played six violin overdubs. After 20 minutes he said ‘I made a mistake with my violin - we have to play it again’. Awww... this took three or four days, eight hours each, it was a really heavy session.”

The record was eventually released as *Outside The Dream Syndicate* on the Virgin subsidiary Caroline. In 1994, 22 years later, it was re-released by US label Table Of The Elements, and both parties took up where they left off when the reformed Faust teamed up with Conrad at a ToTE showcase at New York’s Knitting Factory. *Outside The Dream Syndicate* signalled a new open door policy at Wümme, where Faust cut some dazzling records with Anthony Moore and his group Slapp Happy. Also, they began allowing local groups like *Tomorrow’s Gift* to use the studio. But their honeymoon period was abruptly ended with the final deterioration of their relationship with Polydor.

“Polydor were a huge company, only interested in money,” Irmeler relates. “One day they just refused to pay any more. Initially we wanted to stay in Wümme but we were unclear as to whether we owned it outright or whether Polydor did. As it turns out we’re still paying for it today but at the time we decided to move on in order to look for new atmospheres and we decided to leave Polydor as well.” Momentarily directionless, Faust splintered for a while, reconvening for a series of A&R showcases that led to Simon Draper signing them to the newly minted Virgin. With a new deal in place, the group decided to relocate to England, stopping over for a series of French shows on the way. “We already had what would become *The Faust Tapes* in our luggage,” Irmeler recalls. “We took the actual tape from Wümme because we wanted to have something with us we could release in case things didn’t work out for us in England and we were unable to put together a new album.”

Released in 1973, *The Faust Tapes* is a masterpiece of editing, an audio diary of their time in Wümme held together with molten electronics that throbs with an immaculate internal logic. Hidden in its grooves are some of Faust’s most straightforwardly gorgeous songs. The original release also looked fantastic, packaged like a bootleg with typewritten reviews glued all over one side and a Op art Bridget Riley print called *Crest*, another manifestation of Faust’s fascination with standing waves, on the other. “There was also a political aspect behind us making it available for only 49p,” Irmeler insists. “We wanted to show how you need to have money to get into the charts and how companies back then regularly bought copies of their own record in bulk to ensure it made it in. Initially we were going to get Virgin to do that for us to expose it but then we thought why don’t we give people a gift while we’re at it?” Faust’s gamble paid off: *The Faust*

Tapes sold a staggering 100, 000 copies and lodged itself in the consciousness of freethinking heads across the UK. For many of its buyers, it was their first exposure to experimental music.

The group's English sojourn also marked the beginning of Faust's Industrial phase, a scrapyard methodology that still informs their current incarnation. "I remember we were in Birmingham for a show and near the concert hall I saw a man using a huge jackhammer in a construction site," recalls Diermaier. "I thought it was a fantastic musical instrument and so I asked him to play in the concert with us that night. I wanted him to come in his working overalls but he turns up in a really smart three-piece suit with his entire family. We had a big stone on the stage and we covered it with tarpaulin so he wouldn't spray shards over the audience. He started the machine right on cue but then he lost control and just kept playing until the concert was over. At the end he was just grinning, he looked so pleased with himself. After that we began to use a lot of construction tools on stage and later other German groups like Einstürzende Neubauten took that on. We rented equipment in every town we played, anything that made a sound, cement mixers, sanders, sheets of metal. We were also using pinball machines that triggered sounds and incorporating live TV broadcasts into our sets."

Sadly, the original group's final album, *Faust IV*, recorded at Virgin's Manor Studios back to back with Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* in 1973, barely hints at the group's now tumultuous live sound. Apart from the opening Krautrock, a colossal melange of computer distress codes and oscillating UFO rhythms, the bulk of it consists of slight pop songs and distressing reggae workouts, with some Wümme material tacked on for good measure. "It was weird recording *Faust IV*," Irmeler admits. "We had to use different types of [tape] machines there. Normally we would use Studer machines in Wümme and now we had to work with Ampegs. It's something like a Rolls Royce compared to a Beetle, so Kurt had a lot of problems with that. Also the Manor's in-house engineers weren't very helpful, they became a bit annoyed because we brought in our own people and they weren't involved enough. Wümme was ostensibly made out of crap but it was very well put together crap and worked perfectly for us whereas The Manor didn't at all. It was designed for rock bands. It was immediately clear to us that Branson wanted to become fat and oily and he really wanted to change a lot of things about us, to make us more palatable to American audiences, just as he did with *Tangerine Dream*. But what really finished us with Virgin - and with Uwe - was when Branson got Uwe to do the final edit on *Faust IV* behind our backs. We already had the running order but we weren't happy with it and we also felt that we didn't have enough songs. Uwe edited in *It's a Bit of a Pain*, a song that we had recorded in Wümme as the B-side to the "So Far" single. It's an OK track but the fact that he did that was the final straw for me. I wasn't too polite a guy then, I told everyone else, this is really against everything we stand for. I couldn't accept it so I left, and that was the end of my career with Richard Branson."

A few days later Rudolf Sosna also quit, forcing the remaining members to recruit Peter Blegvad of *Slapp Happy* on guitar and ex-Guru Guru bassist Uli Trepte on "astral radio" for a series of upcoming shows. Although Sosna and Irmeler were eventually enticed back to finish the tour, things were never the same again. After returning to Munich the original Faust regrouped one more time and, working nights at Giorgio Moroder's Musicland Studio in Munich, they recorded a still unreleased album, provisionally entitled *Faust Five And A Half* because, according to Irmeler, "it had more weight than a normal number could carry." The group planned to license it to Virgin but the label didn't bite with the result that most of the tracks have languished in the vaults ever since. However, two tracks, *Munic/Yesterday* and *Knochentanz*, were eventually included on the compilation, *71 Minutes Of...* Thoroughly demoralised, the group members drifted off to their own individual lives. It seemed a sad end for such an inspiring episode.

"Faust is a project, not a rock band," Irmeler ripostes. "A part of the rule we had was that any combination of us could be Faust," Diermaier adds. "But you have to trust in Faust and to believe in it totally." In the late 70s Diermaier and Irmeler recruited a big name guitarist in an attempt to reanimate the group but the spirit was weak and the Gestalt failed to materialise.

It wasn't until 1988 that the two once more felt the sleeper stirring. "By about 1988 Zappi was a very famous producer of parties and happenings," Irmeler says. "He would have these surreal events where he would hang from a crucifix in the middle of a room with this really bitter expression on his face, covered in ketchup. Or he would have a peepshow or present an underwater saxophonist. The idea of Faust was raising its head once more with these parties and small musical events,

and by the end of the Eighties we felt that the time was right because musically everything was so boring. In 1988 we played a show at an old swimming pool during a party that Zappi had organised. It went great and we became hungry to do stuff again.” The duo immediately got in touch with Péron who was also keen to resolve unfinished business. Unfortunately the rest of the original line-up had dropped off the map. Gunther Wüsthoff was last heard of working as a courier for a film company, while Rudolf Sosna, according to Diermaier, “was going through two bottles of gin a day”.

Faust’s second coming took place on a Hamburg stage in 1990 and was preserved by Table Of The Elements on a limited edition CD, Faust Concerts Vol 1. Here the group were focussed more on the kind of lysergic folk songs that lined the cracks in The Faust Tapes, occasionally topped off by Péron’s goofy vocalising. “It was Faust,” Diermaier shrugs. Irmmler agrees: “We knew the years had all changed us as people but this only made us more sure that we were right. If we sounded just exactly the way we did in the 70s that would have been really bad.” What’s more, the group finally had the time and resources to fully realise their vision of creating a total environment for their live shows. “In Berlin we built scaffolding five meters high and perched on the top we had this really big tenor singer just belting away,” Diermaier marvels. “I was playing drums and metal but now my percussion arsenal was even bigger than before. I used a lot of metal plates and tools and I play two toms alongside them; the combination is important. I also use a huge oil drum that’s unbelievably difficult to transport but sounds amazing. I play it with a big hammer and it doesn’t even dent. We called the instrument Ocean because it sounded like being submerged in waves. Irmmler’s organ sound is unique because he always made the electronics himself and so the typical Faust sound that comes from the organ is still there, still bolstering the sound.”

The Table Of The Elements connection opened up new samizdat channels, establishing links with fellow seditionaries such as Michael Morley of Gate and The Dead C, Steven Wray Lobdell and Keiji Haino. “We played with Haino in the US, at a concert in Death Valley,” Diermaier says. “It was a very simple idea, we all stood on various peaks and signalled to each other with metal, didgeridoo and voices. Haino was absolutely possessed, just screaming and jerking. He always insists on wearing his sunglasses, even in the dark, but there in the desert, with the sun beating down, he took them off. He’s very small and I accidentally smacked him on the head with one of my metal poles.”

The Desolation Canyon performance, called Long Distance Calls In The Desert, eventually turned up on the reinvigorated Faust’s first studio album, 1994’s *Rien*, a brickbat assemblage of live recordings, studio miniatures and full on psychedelic rock spliced together with exacting precision by Jim O’Rourke, with contributions from Haino, Morley and Lobdell. It stands as one of Faust’s greatest discs, with Diermaier and Irmmler functioning as the lungs of the group, umbilically linked to Péron’s pulsing bass and maniacal vocal. The album’s most remarkable track is the closing *Eroberung Der Stille, Teil 2*, a mesmerising and emotionally devastating take on Górecki’s masterpiece of epic melancholy, *Symphony No 3*. It feels like a requiem for all of Europe’s dead, as the sound of collapsing buildings, helicopter blades and immolating guitar noise gives way to huge, sighing strings undercut by Haino’s despairing epiglottal convulsions. “It sounds like the ruins of Europe,” Irmmler agrees. “The title translates as Conqueror Of The Silence and at the time we made that track we wanted to see if we could work out a new silence and if we could somehow brand that silence. We did a whole show based around that theme where we played an incredibly noisy set that gradually got more and more quiet before dropping completely into silence. We used Górecki because there was a special kind of sadness in that music.”

Just as in the wake of the Second World War artists searched for a new language that could express more fully the horror of the Holocaust, Faust demanded a new silence, forever pregnant with the turmoil of the past. In the fall out of Faust live, it often feels like they’ve permanently scrambled the composition of the air. “Ever since the early days we often tried to create something like the atmosphere after a thunder storm,” Irmmler states. “The sky opens, particles disperse and a new atmosphere comes in. We would like to express this and be able to control it.”

Live, Faust’s conjuring of the elements is abetted by an armoury of threshing machines, wind cannons, old showerheads and vats of gunpowder, all strategically deployed in an attempt to dissolve the venue walls. “The smell is important too,” Irmmler adds. “Zappi really pays close attention when he’s mixing the materials that will get blown through the wind machine. He’s

always after a particular smell and after the show is over the air should smell totally different. Small things like that impact on your perception and you hear the music anew and focus on different aspects of it.” “I remember once we wanted to fire hay out of the machine,” Diermaier recalls. “It wasn’t allowed because of fire regulations so we put all our catering in the machine, all our food, and shot it over the audience.” During a two night run at The Garage in London in 1996 they almost burnt the place to the ground. “We have to keep the contents of our gigs a secret because no one will ever really allow us to get away with it, especially in England where bringing fireworks through is always difficult,” Irmeler confesses. “As far as we know we were the first people to use fireworks and incendiary devices in the Royal Festival Hall and it was only after very long conversations where we didn’t even mention everything that we had planned. We had to admit some of what we do in order to get them to switch the smoke detectors off but even we don’t know what’s going to happen once we’re onstage.”

Some of Faust’s strongest material is spread across the series of live discs they’ve released on their own label, especially the monstrous Edinburgh 1997, marking the debut of the current line-up. Relations had soured between Péron and the duo of Diermaier and Irmeler over what the pair saw as Péron’s increasing intractability, feeling that Faust were edging towards becoming Péron’s backing group. Things came to a head when Péron announced he wouldn’t be attending a couple of gigs scheduled in France. “We had been having big problems with him leading up to that,” Irmeler sighs. “I felt that he was testing the water in a way, to see how we would react. We decided we wouldn’t beg him to change his mind and we went ahead and did the show on our own. There’s nothing to regret in Péron leaving. To be frank, it was a blast of fresh air.”

The first studio album to feature the new frontline, *Ravvivando*, feels like a real step outside. The classic Faust elements - dizzying carousel rhythms, bone percussion and power tools - are in place, and though the music has lost some its unyielding quality, it has gained a cinematic depth of field, much more faithfully orbiting Faust’s spectacular live show. The fidelity to vague song structure that also marked Péron’s tenure was effectively out the window. “To me *Ravvivando* sounds like a listenable movie,” Paukstat says. “It’s beyond straight songs, it’s structured more like a radio play.” “We really recorded an unbelievable amount of stuff for that album,” Irmeler adds. “We tried recording every track under a series of different conditions - inside in the studio, outside in the garden - just to understand how it functioned. That helped us to understand the space the album was coming from.” The title of the album is illuminating. ‘*Ravvivando*’ is a musical term that indicates a revival of previously developed subjects and themes, a process that’s made most overt in the alpha and omega of *Patchwork*. “The cover of *Ravvivando* is also important to me,” Irmeler asserts. “It’s a picture that was taken where the Barcelona Olympics were held. They tried to bulldoze the landscape and flatten everything out but the bulldozers weren’t successful and within a few years these amazing malformed trees had grown out of the soil. For me it feels like a lot of the seeds we first scattered back in the 70s are finally growing... and in a way we could never have imagined back then.”

FAUST - 30 JAHRE MUSIK ZWISCHEN BOHRMASCHINE UND ORGEL

Ein Feature Manuskript - gesendet im Bayerischen Rundfunk (2004?)

by Radio Goethe, 2009

Der Begriff Krautrock steht für eine wilde, schräge und experimentelle Musikszene Deutschlands. Bands wie Can, Kraftwerk, Amon Düül 2 und Neu werden hier immer wieder genannt. Jene Gruppen, die Anfang der 70er Jahre Kritikern und Fans die Ohren öffneten. Doch eine Band wird bei diesen Auflistungen meist vergessen, obwohl sie im Ausland als eine der einflußreichsten Formationen überhaupt gilt. Die Rede ist von Faust, jener Gruppe, die bewußt die musikalischen und klanglichen Möglichkeiten immer wieder aufs Neue testete. Faust werden in England, in Japan und in den USA ehrfürchtig als jene Musikpioniere genannt, die nachweislich dem Musikzirkus ihren Stempel aufgedrückt haben. Nichts ist diesen Klangbastlern heilig, die aus Alltagsgegenständen jene Sounds kitzeln, die sie für ihre Musik und ihre Visionen benötigen. Und dabei nehmen sich Faust nicht bierernst. Die Gruppe um Hans Joachim Irmeler und Zappi Diermaier ist heute noch aktiv.

Vor 30 Jahren trafen sich in Hamburg eine Handvoll Musiker, die auf der einen Seite experimentell und auf der anderen Seite in Songstrukturen arbeiten wollten. Heraus kam eine Mischung, die lange Zeit ihres gleichen suchte. Faust haben in Deutschland nie richtig die Anerkennung bekommen, die sie eigentlich für ihre musikalische Pionierarbeit verdienten. In den USA, in England und in Japan erkannte man schon früh die Weitsicht dieser ungewöhnlichen deutschen Formation. Faust gaben sich nie mit dem Herkömmlichen zufrieden. Sie testeten und provozierten, spielten und visionierten. Publikum, Plattenbosse und Kritiker wurden immer wieder aufs neue auf die Probe gestellt. Nach dreißig Jahren sind von der Urbesetzung noch der in der Nähe von Ulm lebende Hans Joachim Irmeler und Werner „Zappi“ Diermaier mit dabei. Beide gehen auch weiterhin unbeirrt ihren musikalischen Weg. OT: Sound einspielen

OT: Übergang zum Chor

(Raummikro) H.J. Irmeler: Das zum Beispiel ist der Chor von der ersten Platte. Der wurde dann natürlich rückwärts verwendet auf der ersten Platte. Das war zu schön. Na, dann gehen wir mal zu dem über, was Zappi geschickt hat, mit dem Beibrief: „Hallo Jochen, das Lied heißt, wie sonst auch, Bedienungsanleitungen.“ Das heißt, er ist zur Zeit schwer damit beschäftigt, Bedienungsanleitungen zu studieren. Und hat demzufolge natürlich alle Hände voll zu tun. Ich laß es jetzt einfach mal laufen...

OT: Zappi singt Bedienungsanleitung

Ja, da sind wir gleich mittendrin. Wir sind schon heimlich am Basteln von irgendwelchen neuen Geschichten. Und da haben wir uns diesmal im Zeitalter der Kommunikation vorgenommen - das machen wir eigentlich schon immer so, Bänder hin und her zu schicken, damit der Schock, wenn's soweit ist nicht zu groß ist.

OT: musikalisches Beispiel schon vorher einspielen und hochziehen

SPRECHER: Der im schwäbischen Dürmentingen lebende Hans Joachim Irmeler war einer der Gründer von Faust, jener legendären Krautrock Formation, die weltweit Musiker und Bands beeinflusst hat. Alles fing 1970 an. Die Legende besagt, dass der Journalist Uwe Nettelbeck für die

Gründung von Faust verantwortlich war.

OT-Irmler: Unabhängig davon, dass in Wirklichkeit der Journalist Nettelbeck vielleicht überhaupt kein Journalist war, sondern ein Headhunter, war das eben so, dass in Hamburg in den End 60ern, sagen wir mal 1970 rum, da zwei Formationen waren. Wobei die eine Formation so vier oder fünf Leute beinhaltete und die andere war mehr so, wie soll man sagen, eine Neuronenmasse. Da hatten wir drei Schlagzeuger, drei Gitarristen und weiß nicht was, Bläser und alles. Wir waren einfach richtig am experimentieren und rummachen, was toll klänge oder eine gute Kombination sein könnte. Wir hatten damals, also der Teil wo Zappi und ich drin waren, uns dann eben mit denen soweit angefreundet, dass wir gesagt haben „Mensch, was macht ihr denn?“. Die hatten eben so Songstrukturen sich erarbeitet, während wir mehr so auf der experimentellen Sound - und was gibt's neues in der Welt-Welle schwammen. Wir dachten eben, das müßte ganz gut sein, weil wir hatten eher so Mühe solche, aeh, ohne jetzt negativ zu sein, konservativen Strukturen zu erarbeiten, weil wir uns meisten schnell gelangweilt haben. Und so dachten wir natürlich, das müßte gut kommen. Weil die haben auch gesucht nach etwas, was ein bißchen anders war als Bob Dylan und Co KG.

OT-Song: „Why don't you eat carrots?“ einspielen

OT-Irmler: Wenn man sich dann das weiter ausdenkt, fällt einem natürlich alsbald ein, man braucht eigentlich Produktionsmittel, sprich, man muß also irgendwo räumliche Möglichkeiten haben, wo das ganze stattfindet, man müßte auch irgendwas haben, um das ganze zu dokumentieren, sprich Aufnahmegerät oder Bandmaschine. Das hat dazu geführt, dass wir ziemlich schnell größenwahnsinnig wurden, vielleicht aus heutiger Sicht betrachtet. Wir ham gesagt, wir brauchen eigentlich ein Studio, ein eigenes Studio. Man kann ja nicht von irgendjemand erwarten, dass man uns ein Zweimillionen Studio zur Verfügung stellt. Das wollten wir auch nicht unbedingt, aber so eines, wo man halt ein paar Mikrofone hat, ein Mischpult und so alles, was man so braucht. Und auch jeden Fall wäre es sinnvoll und wichtig, dass wir zusammen leben, um da diese interaktiven Geschichten besser zu dokumentieren und damit man das auch richtig ausleben kann. Das waren ganz unterschiedliche Typen, die da versammelt waren. Also, Bob Dylan Fan, ein Schauspieler, wichtige Tester, dann ein Lehrer, ich selber bin an die Kunsthochschule gegangen mit dem Gitarristen Rudolph Sosna zusammen. Also, bunte Mischung, unterschiedliche Charaktere, unterschiedliche Temperamente. Das war auch so, was uns fasziniert hat. Da war keiner ähnlich wie der andere, so richtig bizarr. Ich habe mich immer gefragt, was sind denn das für welche, um Gottes Willen. Und das war halt spannend, was sind das für Leute, was kommt dabei raus, wenn man diese Mischung miteinander konfrontiert und auch noch richtig fett miteinander konfrontiert. Das heißt, wenn man zusammen lebt kommen ja alsbald und sehr schnell, allerlei Konflikte zum Vorschein und die wollten wir eben auch ausleben und als Teil der Arbeit verstanden wissen.

OT: Gruppensingen

OT-Irmler: Wir ham ein bißchen auch damit spekuliert, dass die Grammophon, damals war gerade Jimi Hendrix gestorben, und da hatte sie gar nichts mehr außer James Last. James Last in Ehren, der Vorvater von Techno oder was weiß ich auch immer. Na, jedenfalls dachten wir, wenn die gar nichts haben, dann brauchen die Frischfleisch und warum sollen wir das nicht sein. „Leute ihr wißt doch noch, wie das war. Die Beatles mochtet ihr auch nicht, mit denen konntet ihr auch nichts anfangen“. Auf dieser Schiene gedachten wir zu reiten und die ham dann auch gedacht, sie kaufen etwas supertolles, was praktisch mit Alexandra vergleichbar war, nichts gegen Alexandra, schöner Baum. Dann hatten sie uns also und wir hatten sie und dann gings irgendwie los. Wir waren selber überrascht, wie schnell das gegangen ist, um ehrlich zu sein. Wir hatten ehrlich gedacht, na ja, da muß man sich etwas vorbereiten, aber nein, rucki-zucki, es war Frühjahr und wir hatten noch nicht mal einen Plan, wo wir hinsollten. Nur raus aus der Stadt.

OT: Windsound einspielen

OT-Irmler: Und so ist dann Wümme gefunden worden auf diese Art und mit diesen Prämissen. Das war eine Zwergschule, das war damals gar nicht mehr „in“ und man wollte damals, dass die Schüler 20-30 Kilometer mit den Bussen fahren und sich allgemein irgendwo treffen. So waren also diese Zwergschulen alsbald brachliegend und wurden in Hühnerställe oder in unserem Fall in ein Wohn und Studio ausgebaut. Man muß sich das wie ein „i“ vorstellen, die Gebäulichkeiten. Das heißt, oben war das Wohnteil, dann gab es einen Wirtschaftstrakt, der die beiden Teile, unten

das Studio, der Wirtschaftstrakt hat die beiden miteinander verbunden. Dann gab es noch ein bißchen Garage und einen ehemaligen Schweinestall und noch irgendwas am Rande. Und eben einen Steinwurf davon entfernt war eben besagte Wümme, was den Ort auch den Namen gab, nach gleichnamigen Bächlein. Sehr, sehr, sehr eisenhaltig, das war alles rostrot, das Ufer, das Wasser und eben auch das Wasser, das durch die Leitungen rauskam. Und mir wurde immer wieder glaubhaft versichert, das sei völlig ungefährlich, obwohl man sich kaum getraut hat in die Badewanne zu steigen. Doch jetzt kommen wir mal zur Musik. Das Studio, also da gab es so einen großen Schulraum, da gab es dann noch einen kleinen Kartenraum, einen Vorraum und noch so ein kleines Gelasse, ungefähr so groß wie das hier, vier Meter auf fünf Meter, und da war dann der Regieraum einzubauen. Wir fingen dann einfach mal an, vor uns hin zu produzieren, man hat da alles genommen. Man hat dann natürlich überlegt, kann einer singen? Keiner kann singen, also haben wir erst mit Instrumenten angefangen. Arnulf war ein ordentlicher Schlagzeuger, Zappi war kein ordentlicher Schlagzeuger, ich war ein hundsmiserabler Tastenspieler, mit einer Bildung eben, die Idee von Tasteninstrumenten war stark konservativ geprägt, wie das klingen muß, aber ich war nicht imstande, das auch so zu spielen. Da gabs noch Rudolf mit der Gitarre, der konnte auch gut Piano spielen und Jean, der konnte Gitarre, Baß und Trompete spielen. Ja, und Gunther mit dem Saxophon.

OT: Saxophon Sound einspielen

Immer wenn es etwas kniffliges zu tun gab, war das Gunthers Aufgabe, das zu realisieren. So zum Beispiel gibt es auf der ersten Platte so ein Schnipselwerk, da ist eine Journalistin drauf verewigt, das ist Florentine Papst, und meistens Arnulf Meifurt. Arnulf war etwas konservativer in seinen Einstellungen, auch weil er älter war, gediegener war als wir Youngsters, ich war der jüngste in der ganzen Konterbande. Da haben wir gedacht, den wollen wir mal ein bißchen ärgern und haben so ein richtig obzönes Gespräch. . . .Das war eine ganz normale Unterhaltung, sie hat ihn gefragt und da kamen eben so ein bißchen Versatzstücke drin vor und die haben wir alle rausgepickt und so ein bißchen ein obzönes Gespräch draus gemacht. Und u.a. fragt dann die Florentine ihn „Willst Du runtersteigen?“ und lauter solche Anzüglichkeiten kommen darin vor, was natürlich sehr den Unwillen bei den beiden ausgelöst hat und das sollte gar nicht veröffentlicht werden. Wir fanden das natürlich klasse, so Aufstand gegen die Älteren gewissermaßen.

OT-Song: „Why don't you eat carrots?“ (Ende mit besagtem Wortschnipsel) einspielen.

OT-Irmiler: Dann fingen wir eben an uns hinzuproduzieren und dann kamen natürlich logischerweise die beiden Systeme, die wurden miteinander konfrontiert. Die Songfraktion hat ordentliche Songs gemacht, war aber mit den Songs genauso wenig zufrieden wie wir, die andere Fraktion, die nur Geräusche hin produziert hat. Und es war ein ziemlich mühsamer Weg, vielleicht hat Uwe Recht, wenn er sagt, wenn ich da nicht die Peitsche angesetzt hätte, wär da nie etwas ernsthaft draus geworden. Auf jeden Fall hat dann die Polydor irgendwann gesagt, was machen die da denn? Tun die überhaupt was? Die Frage war eigentlich im Nachhinein gesehen schon berechtigt, also man kann nicht die ganze Zeit im Studio hocken. Und dann haben wir eben gesagt, ok, den werden wir es aber zeigen. Und dann haben wir denen jede Woche Bänder geschickt. Das tut mir bis heute leid, dass diese Bänder bis heute nirgends sind, weil da war nur absurdes Zeugs drauf. Eine Woche lang Etüden, die nächste Woche kam irgendwie ein bayerisches Blasorchester. Eine Geschichte war, wir versuchten „An der schönen blauen Donau“, bekannt als der Donauwalzer zu spielen, aber jeder an einem Instrument, dass er nicht spielen konnte. Und so ging das, und dann elektronische Musik und nur konkrete Musik, Töpfe klappern und was weiß ich was. Jedenfalls kann man sich vorstellen, dass die nach kürzester Zeit, ich denke es hat nicht mehr als drei Wochen gedauert, bis die völlig aus dem Häuschen waren „Ja, was ist denn das zum Teufel noch mal?“. Die Unruhe wuchs im Hause Polydor daraufhin.

OT: Trommeln einspielen

OT-Song: Meadow Meal einspielen, hochziehen und im Hintergrund stehen lassen

OT-Irmiler: Und es endete damit, dass wir halt irgendwie klar gesagt kriegten, ihr müßt jetzt irgendwie 'ne Platte machen und ein Konzert machen. Und ich war also ganz dagegen gegen Konzerte, das wollte ich schon gar nicht. Die Ideen waren noch gar nicht ausgegoren genug. Zum frühen Herbst hin '71 wars dann soweit, dass wir dann ran sollten und mußten und dann haben wir gesagt, ja gut, dann machen wir das halt. Wir haben dann auch sehr schnell eine Konzeption

für die erste Seite gefunden. Also man hat sich da so eine Entwicklungsgeschichte ausgedacht, wo kommen wir her, wo sind wir gerade vielmehr. Na ja, Beatles, Rolling Stones, was ham wir überall und was haben sie nicht „Satisfaction“ und „Liebe“ oder „Love“ und „Befriedigung“. Also das war der Ausgangspunkt der ganzen Platte und dann haben wir gedacht, dann zeigen wir, wo wir eigentlich herkommen. Also das ist Bach und Gehämmere und Geklopfe und James Last kommt dann auch noch vor. Dann natürlich, ich hatte damals eine sehr große Liebe zum Hamburger Hafen und seinen Sirenen entwickelt, dieses „WUUUP-WUUUP“, diese Nebelhörner. Und das alles zusammen, ergab schon mal den größten Teil von der ersten Seite. Und dann sind wir da abgetaucht in einen Teil, der heißt Fisch Dinner, das heißt, wir hatten da eine Technik entwickelt, den ganzen Raum so hochsensibel, ich meine das Studio mit Raum, so hochsensibel zu machen, dass man da eh nur mit geschlossenen Kopfhörern mithören konnte. Also alles war direkt abgenommen, kein Lautsprecher im Studio selber. Also erstmal nur mit Socken oder barfuß und das sogar nur quasi schwebend bewegen, weil das war so unglaublich laut, wenn du da irgendwo dagegen gestoßen bist oder auch nur aufgetreten bist. So hochsensibel war der ganze Raum eingestellt. Und das war unsere Unterwasserwelt, „Fisch Dinner“ deswegen.

OT-Song: Meadow Meal hochziehen

SPRECHER: Das erste Album von Faust war alles andere als das, was die Plattenfirma erhofft hatte. Mit einem Live-Auftritt sollte Faust jedoch der Presse als wegweisende Formation vorgestellt werden. Doch das Konzert mit allerhand kniffligen, technischen Ansprüchen endete im Chaos. Aus dem geplanten „Surround Sound“-Spektakel wurde ein einmaliges Debakel.

OT-Irmiler: Das war von vornherein klar, dass das eine ziemlich heftige Sache würde, es hat nicht funktioniert, so wie wir uns das vorgestellt haben. Es endete irgendwie damit, dass wir sagten, wir singen einfach alles, was wir spielen wollten. Und so mit irgendwelchen sehr abenteuerlichen Konstruktionen und Improvisationen, so habe ich es in Erinnerung, ist das Stück, dieser denkwürdige Abend zu Ende gegangen, indem der Hausmeister ordnungsgemäß um ein Uhr auf die Bühne kam und gesagt hat „Schluß jetzt, ich muß nach Hause. Aus. Aus. Abbrechen“. Ja, das war dieses bis zum heutigen Tage immer wieder gerne zitierte erste Konzert und auch einzige Konzert in Deutschland bis 1997 (lacht). Also die Presse daraufhin war natürlich sehr zurückhaltend, kann man sich vorstellen. Also, ich weiß noch eine positive Presse die lautete „Fausts rockende Verdammnis“. Das habe ich bis zum heutigen Tage behalten, das hat irgendein Burkhardt in der Zeit glaube ich geschrieben. Das war auch eine positive Meldung zu diesem Ereignis. Also man hat eben sowas erwartet wie Led Zeppelin. Aber ich meine, selbst wenn es geklappt hätte, technisch gesehen, das wäre es sowieso nie geworden. Ich meine, egal wie auch immer, die wären enttäuscht gewesen (lacht). Weil wir natürlich eines auf keinen Fall wollten, ihre Erwartungen erfüllen, das war sowieso klar. Dank der damals noch rückständigen Technik, die Idee war ja diesen Sound so rum, das gab es damals noch nicht. Heute weiß jedes kleine Kind, was ein Joystick ist, aber wir mußten die Joysticks bauen. D.h. da hat die (lacht), noch mal vielen Dank an die tapferen Leute von der Deutschen Grammophon in Hannover, die haben da wirklich im gnadenlosen Nachteinsatz so Metallstäbe in der Mitte auseinander gesägt, was ausgefräst, noch einen anderen Stift da rein, also alles Handarbeit. Aus Plexiglas so einen Rührteig oben rum gemacht, so dass da zwei Potentiometer, die im 90 Grad Winkel aufeinander saßen, damit man das Signal da durch die Gegend eiern lassen konnte. Also super, super, super, schade, dass es nicht funktioniert hat, auf der einen Seite. Aber war eine grandiose Idee und man sieht eben gut Ding will Weile haben (lacht).

OT-Song: „So far“ einspielen im Hintergrund stehen lassen

OT-Irmiler: Das war Anfang '72. Und da ist aber dennoch ungeachtet der Verwicklungen bereits die Forderung nach einer weiteren Plattenproduktion lag da schon auf dem Tisch. Das haben wir dann auch angegangen. Da sind dann, sehr erstaunlicherweise, auch Ideen auf den Tisch gekommen eine Single zu machen. Die haben wir dann auch zuerst gleich gemacht, das war eben „So far“ und das ist auch der Titel der zweiten Platte geworden, passenderweise (lacht). Und da haben wir uns ausgedacht, dass wir für die Singleversion von „So far“ eine andere Version des Stückes aufnehmen als für die Platte. Also die eine Version ist in Moll und die andere in Dur, das war der Clou der Geschichte (lacht). So kann sich jeder aussuchen, also bis heute hat das auch noch keiner so richtig rausgekriegt, welche die Moll und welche die Dur Version ist, bloß ich könnte es sagen, doch ich verrate es jetzt auch nicht.

OT-Song: „So far“ hochziehen

Blende

„It's a rainy day, sunshine girl“ einspielen und im Hintergrund stehen lassen.

OT-Irmeler: Also, wir haben dann ganz ernsthaft an einem Songkonzept gearbeitet und haben da auch düstere Visionen reingearbeitet unserer Meinung nach. Das erste Stück ist „Rainy Day“, das ist ein ganz monoton, penetrant getrommeltes, immer im gleichen Beat Bumm-Bumm-Bumm-Bumm. Und ganz minimalistisch reduzierte sogenannte Soli. Zum Beispiel fängt es dann irgendwie an mit Mundharmonika, ist auch nicht besonders melodiös, dann habe ich da so ein Windrauschen reingearbeitet. Ich durfte nur ganz wenige Register von der Orgel spielen. Wenn ich schon mehrere Töne, dann aber nur Terzen drücken. Und immer unterbrochen von diesem Wind, der alles wegweht. Und nur zum Schluß war dann so ein schräges Saxophon-Solo von Gunther gespielt, das war noch das vitalste meiner Meinung nach. Und das sollte so düstere Visionen, Zukunftsvisionen werfen, was wohl in ein paar Jahren für Musik auf dem Markt sein wird. Und das hat sich ja noch bewahrheitet, mehr (lacht) als wir damals visioniert haben. Also was dann später gekommen ist, da war das ja weiß der Geier wie melodiös (lacht) und wie abwechslungsreich.

OT-Song: „It's a rainy day, sunshine girl“ hochziehen

OT-Irmeler: Ja, aber das hat halt selbst nicht in die Alternative Szene von 1972 in Deutschland gepaßt. Ich glaube, die haben uns auch nicht gemocht, kann man sagen. Also es war suspekt. Wir waren nicht heiter, wir waren sehr ironisch. Man wußte auch nicht, wollen wir erfolgreich werden oder nicht. Das war alles sehr schwer verständlich, denke ich. Und so sind wir auch die Einzelkinder geblieben, die wir doch am Anfang sein wollten und lebten da mehr oder weniger glücklich in der Isolation in Wümme.

SPRECHER: Der Bruch mit der Plattenfirma Polydor war unumgänglich. Mit dem damals noch im Aufbau befindlichen britischen Label „Virgin Records“ wurde man sich jedoch schnell einig. Faust hatten sich bereits mit ihren zwei ersten Alben einen guten Namen auf der Insel erspielt.

OT-Irmeler: Na ja, wir haben uns gedacht, wenn man so einsteigen will, und das war eine arme Firma, in unserer Meinung. Was natürlich im Nachhinein sich ganz anders dargestellt hat. Der Branson war alles andere als arm (lacht), wie man ja heute sieht hat er gut gespart in seinen eigenen Taschen. Wir hatten gesagt, wir bringen was mit, aber wir müssen einen guten Einstieg in England haben. Und da haben wir lange überlegt, wie kann man das hinkriegen. Der Branson hat uns versprochen, wir können quasi das selbe, was wir in Deutschland hatten, nämlich dieses Studio in Wümme, können wir bei ihm in England auch kriegen, das Manor nämlich, das hatte er da. Ok, dann haben wir gesagt, wir bringen dann eben als Gastgeschenk, dass es ihm keine müde Pusteratze kostet, schon die nächste Platte mit, das waren die Tapes. Nur die Bedingung war, nachdem er Hechel-Hechel Money-Dollar-Pfund gesehen hat, das kleine trübe Gastgeschenk, die Bedingung war, sie muß umsonst sein (lacht). „Wie umsonst?“. „Ja, die soll einfach so verschenkt werden“. „Das geht nicht“. Wir haben uns dann zum Schluß, nachdem Branson tagelang gerechnet hat, hat er gesagt „Ok, für 49 Pence kann ich es machen, aber das müssen die Leute zahlen“. Und so ist es dann auch geschehen. Wir haben die Bedingung gestellt, es sollen nur 100 000 Stück gepreßt werden von den Tapes und danach ist die Sache beendet. Wir sind natürlich mit diesen einhunderttausend gepreßten Exemplaren, die wurden natürlich auch verkauft. Aus zuverlässiger Quelle heute weiß man sogar, dass Jim Carr von Simple Minds 49 Pence übrig hatte (lacht) eine Tapes zu kaufen. Auch wenn er heute behauptet, er hätte damit Frisbee gespielt. Aber egal, gekauft hat er sie und damit sind wir natürlich auch in die Charts gekommen (lacht). Ich weiß nicht, ob wir unter Platz 10 kamen, aber Platz 11 waren wir auf jeden Fall. Wir wollten einfach klar machen, wie einfach es ist, in den Charts zu landen und das ist ja nach wie vor so.

OT-Song: „Untitled - Song 20“ einspielen

OT-Irmeler: Ich glaube, es war Birmingham, da sind wir beim Reinfahren, am Wegesrand war so eine Baukolonne, die gearbeitet haben. Das war so eine relativ schmale Straße und da mußten wir halten. Und da haben wir gesagt, mensch, das ist auch gut, was die da machen. Das hat einen guten Beat, da waren eben so Bauarbeiter mit Preßluftschlämmern und so zugange. Und ich glaube Zappi hat dann gesagt, der könnte doch bei uns hier spielen. Und ist spontan rausgerannt aus dem Bus und hat den angequatscht und der hat natürlich völlig gaga der Mann. Und dann hat Zappi geschrien „Wo spielen wir heute Abend nochmal?“ Ich glaube, es war Birmingham City Hall oder Town Hall. Er hat ihm die Adresse gegeben und das Versprechen abgenommen, dass er

bestimmt und so wie er ist in normalen Arbeiterklamotten, nicht waschen sollte er das, so kommen und diesen Preßlufthammer mitbringen. In etwa ist das so auch an dem Abend geschehen. Was wir nicht wußten und was uns eigentlich auch egal war, war natürlich, dass diese Stadthalle ein Renommee hatte, der hat natürlich gesagt, ich kann doch nicht in meinen Arbeitsklamotten dahin kommen. Den Preßlufthammer hat er aber mitgebracht. Das war schon irgendwie völlig skuril, im Sonntagsdress ist der dann also auf der Bühne gewesen (lacht) und hat da diesen Steinbrocken entzwei gehackt. Das war so das erste Mal, dass wir das so richtig forciert eingesetzt haben.

OT: Wind in Halle und Peitschenknallen

OT-Irmler: Diese Vorurteile zwischen Deutschen und England, die waren noch deutlich spürbar, logischerweise. Von unserer Seite, wir wußten nicht, was für ein Volk das wirklich ist. So hatten wir da die Idee, das so ein bißchen zu verbalisieren, die Problematik, die da ist, war doch Schnee von vorgestern. Also, wir nennen uns jetzt in aller Öffentlichkeit „Krauts“, wir stehen jetzt dazu. Wir sind „Krauts“. Aber da wir eigentlich keine sind, insofern war das eben ironisch gedacht. Und wir auch keine Rockmusik machen, nennen wir dieses Stück jetzt „Krautrock“. Und so entstand eben diese Geschichte bis zum heutigen Tag wirkenden Begriff, ob der nun wirklich passend ist oder nicht, sei mal dahingestellt.

OT-Song: Krautrock vorher einspielen und hochziehen

OT-Irmler: Der Branson hat versucht auf uns Einfluß zu nehmen. Hat uns also wirklich fett Asche versucht zu versprechen und hat gesagt „ihr kriegt 'ne Million, wenn ihr ein bißchen mich da machen laßt und macht doch ein bißchen mehr so. Bißchen tütütata da und dann kriegt ihr dafür richtig fettes Geld.“ Aber das war gegen das Prinzip, das wir uns erhoben hatten. Ich konnte wenig sagen, nur eine Entscheidung für mich selber treffen. Für mich war klar, ich kann das nicht machen. Ich wär auch, ganz mal abgesehen davon, gar nicht fähig gewesen, mich nach Vorgaben zu richten.

SPRECHER: 1975 verschwanden Faust von der musikalischen Bildfläche. Allerdings hatten sie sich mit ihren wenigen Platten einen Kultstatus in Großbritannien, den USA und Japan erspielt. Faust wurden mit ihrer experimentellen Arbeit zu einer Inspiration für kommende Musikergenerationen. Anfang der 80er Jahre fanden sich einige Mitglieder wieder zusammen, darunter auch Hans Joachim Irmler. Faust gaben zunächst an skurilen Orten wie in Tunnels und in Höhlen Konzerte. Und schließlich folgten wieder Plattenaufnahmen, wie die jüngste Studio-Veröffentlichung „Ravvivando“.

OT-Song: Dr Hansl

OT-Irmler: Jetzt im Rückblick finde ich, dass unsere Musik als Gegenreaktion auf Pop und Rockmusik, eigentlich als zeitgenössische Musik einzuordnen ist. Wir haben versucht, außerhalb des damals gültigen Musikgeschmacks, also Rock, Beat und Jazz, irgendwie das lustvolle Experimentieren mit rein zu bringen, auszuleben. Wir haben da ziemliche Probleme wahrscheinlich erzeugt für uns und für Musiker. Nicht nur in Deutschland, selbst in England hat das zu einigen Irritationen unter Kollegen geführt. Beschäftigt haben wir uns eigentlich nur damit, dass wir Stimmen und Stimmungen versucht haben reinzubringen, uns damit auseinander setzen. Wir haben Klänge, Sounds, außergewöhnlicher Art versucht zu erarbeiten. Also sei es, dass man ganz alltägliche Dinge nimmt und die dann so lange verfremdet, bis man sie nicht mehr wieder erkennen kann oder, dass man einen ganz alltäglichen Klang nimmt und einfach in einen ungewöhnlichen Kontext setzt. Bis hin, dass man eben das Studio an sich als Instrument ansieht und das in einer eigenen Art und Weise mißbraucht. Aber nichtsdestotrotz die Hauptgeschichte war und ist bis zum heutigen Tag so, für uns ist der Mensch als solches, ohne dass der artifiziell wird, man muß kein Popstar werden und sich umändern. Sondern so wie er ist. Dass man das so frei fühlen kann und das auslebt. Im Moment, wenn man auf der Bühne ist oder auch nur eine Aufnahme entsteht. Das ist das Hauptanliegen von Faust.

OT-Song: t-electronique

HANS JOACHIM IRMLER: „‘WIR WOLLTEN DIE HIPPIES MAL RICHTIG ERSCHRECKEN‘“

Interview von Daniel Straub

Faust zählen neben Can, Neu! und Kraftwerk zu den Urgesteinen deutscher Rockmusik. Findige Journalisten versahen die wummernden Sounds in den 70er Jahren mit dem Label Krautrock; ein Etikett, das bis heute haften geblieben ist. weiterlesen

Natürlich waren auch wir anfangs ungläubig. Die Wurzeln des Krautrocks sollen in der oberschwäbischen Provinz liegen? Gleich neben unserer Haustür? Doch die Promoterin versicherte uns, nicht zu schwindeln, und als Faust-Chef Hans Joachim Irmeler schließlich in der Redaktion anrief, um in breitem schwäbisch den Termin zu bestätigen, wurde die Sache konkreter. Wenige Tage später besuchten wir Irmeler in seinem idyllisch gelegenen Zuhause.

Dort wurden wir sogleich von der offenerzigen Gastfreundschaft eingenommen, so dass sich das Interview schnell in einen munteren Kaffee-Plausch über Krautrock und das Musikbiz im allgemeinen entwickelte, wozu aus der Irmelerschen Küche beständig neue Köstlichkeiten gereicht wurden. Am Ende verließen wir sein Heim mit drei vollen Minidiscs à 76 Minuten und halten somit den Rekord für das längste Interview der LAUT-Geschichte. Im folgenden haben wir so gut es geht versucht, die interessantesten Facts für euch heraus zu filtern.

Zum Release eures Remix-Albums „Freispiel“ wurde wieder heftig die Werbetrommel gerührt. Wo hat dich die Promotour überall hingeführt? In die europäischen Hauptstädte?

Das ist ganz unterschiedlich. In Deutschland gibts sowieso nur drei Hauptstädte, wenn man München mal als Ausland betrachtet. (lacht) Und das ist Hamburg, Berlin und Köln. Aber wir müssen auch noch ins Ausland, denn im Grunde sind wir eine Auslandsband. Machen wir uns nix vor, das ist halt so. Von Anfang an eigentlich. Wir haben ja 1971 ein einziges Konzert in Hamburg gegeben. Das war mit sehr üblen Altlasten belastet, von vornherein. Der Journalist Uwe Nettelbeck, der unser Mentor war und der überhaupt unsere Idee realisiert hat, war ziemlich übel beleumundet von seinen Kollegen. Der hat immer Kollegenschelte gekriegt, weil er eben gesagt hat: „Ihr seid alle Arschlöcher!“ Und da hat er auch recht gehabt, muss ich sagen (lacht). Der war eben ziemlich far out.

Und wir waren damals die erste Band, die zur Plattenfirma gesagt hat: Erst die Kohle, dann die Arbeit. Dass wir sowas durchgesetzt haben, hat viel Neid herauf beschworen. Und noch 1975 hat im „Sounds“ so eine üble Zunge ganz fies über uns hergezogen.

Erstaunt es dich, dass ihr in Deutschland nie so groß rausgekommen seid, wo euch ja gerade die Engländer als eine urdeutsche Formation schätzen gelernt haben. Kannst du dir vorstellen, was die Engländer an euch so typisch deutsch fanden?

Ja, unser Sound war eben anders. Es war ja folgende Situation: Ende '68, wir alle im Beatmusikrausch. Das war auch ein sehr enger Markt, ich bin mir nicht einmal sicher ob es überhaupt hundert Bands gab. Alles war sehr überschaubar und jeder Stones-Song, der rauskam, war gleich ein Hit. Jedes Beach Boys-Lied ab in die Charts, logo. Small Faces in die Charts, klar. Von den Beatles will ich nicht reden, die mochte ich nie, erst jetzt im hohen Alter. Aber damals waren mir die einfach zu lasch. Sonst mochte ich die Liedchen alle. In der Teenagerzeit hat man sowieso

immer so seine Assoziationen, wenn man bei einem bestimmten Lied durchs Fenster gefallen ist oder was weiß ich was ... Das begleitet einen natürlich.

Irgendwann hat sich in mir auch was geregt und ich wollte auch so was machen. Aber ich fragte mich: Warum soll ich dasselbe machen? Soll ich sein wie die Small Faces? Die waren ja schon da und haben das gut gemacht und besser kann ich es ja gar nicht machen. Also was eigenes. Das war auch Zeitgeist-mäßig. Warum weiß ich auch nicht, aber drei, vier Bands haben da halt diesen Drang gehabt. Dass das heute unter Krautrock fungiert ... Das hat ja nix mit Krautrock zu tun.

Was ist Krautrock?

Wir nannten 1973 auf der „Faust IV“ einen Song „Krautrock“. Das war ironisch gemeint. Für die Engländer waren die Deutschen ja immer noch die „Krauts“. Doch wir identifizierten uns gar nicht mit diesem Bild. Das, was wir musikalisch gemacht haben, hat ja mit Rock soviel zu tun, wie wir mit dem Begriff „Krauts“. Deshalb haben wir diese gegensätzlichen Begriffe zusammen gebracht. Aber ich weiß jetzt nicht, ob wir den Begriff kreiert haben oder die Journalisten. Die Idee der Musik ist jedenfalls entstanden, da die Sachen, die wir früher gehört haben, immer im unpassendsten Moment einen Taktwechsel hatten: „Ding, jetzt bin ich dran!“. Scheiße. (lacht)

In der Rockmusik gab es ja auch diese endlos langen Soli, die sind ja auch aus diesem unbefriedigten „Warum nach dem achten Takt abgeben müssen?“ entstanden. Wir haben im Gegensatz dazu gesagt: „Warum soll man überhaupt rausgehen?“ Wir haben einen schönen Groove an sich und den variiert man um ganz kleine Sequenzen und dann kommt noch ein kleines Tüpfelchen drauf, das machen wir dann gelb und dann wird es allmählich orange. Das ist Krautrock, dass es immer durchgroovt und immer wieder kleine Changierungen gibt. Wir wollten Welten gestalten. Das ist was vollständig eigenständiges, das sich heute überall durchgesetzt hat.

Verstehen wir uns da richtig: Heute hängt da ein Tross von Leuten dran, die alle sagen: Wir sind Krautrock. Das ist natürlich Käse, nur weil sie 1970 auch Musik gemacht haben. Die meisten haben genau das gleiche gemacht wie heute: Sie haben versucht zu imitieren. Die haben damals alle englischen und amerikanischen Coverversionen gespielt und wollten noch toller sein als Led Zeppelin. Birth Control sind auch so eine Band, die sich unter Krautrock einreihet, wo ich aber sage: „Liebe Leute, das ist ja gut und schön, aber es stimmt einfach nicht.“

Wie würdest du die Entwicklung von Krautrock sehen: Gab es damals so etwas wie eine Krautrock-Bewegung oder waren da eher voneinander isolierte Musiker am Werk?

Will man eine Triade nennen, dann sind das eben Can, Neu! und Faust meinethalben. Man kann auch die Ursprünge sehr leicht nachverfolgen. Can zum Beispiel sind noch stark dem anglo-amerikanischen Blueschema verhaftet. Das hörst du. Es rollt und groovt zwar alles, aber es fußt eben auf dem Blues. Während wir einen riesigen Melt gemacht, alles in einen Topf geworfen haben, einzelne Fragmente stehen gelassen ... Das ist ja sowieso alles Irrsinn. Und Neu! haben ungefähr das gemacht, womit Can angefangen hatten, aber viel viel losgelöster von irgendwelchen Roots. Die haben einfach einen sehr hypnotischen Sound gemacht. Das ist auch das eigentliche Grundelement von Krautrock. Aber um 1970 wusste man nichts voneinander. Nur Klaus Schulz lernten wir damals kennen. Uwe brachte ihn mal vorbei und meinte: „Hier, das sind auch so'n paar Spinner, die solche Musik machen“. (lacht)

Ist es nicht erstaunlich, dass ausgerechnet die englische Musikpresse den Krautrock entdeckte?

Die waren eben die ersten, die das Potential erkannt haben. Und in Deutschland hat sich sowieso niemand um uns gekümmert. Aber die großen Idole waren auch alle im Ausland.

Ihr wart also auch nicht traurig, dass Deutschland mehr so eine Art Nebenschauplatz geblieben ist?

Nein, wir haben zwei ernüchternde Erfahrungen gemacht. Erstens: Unsere Arbeit wurde hier überhaupt nicht geschätzt. Oder noch schlimmer: erst gar nicht wahrgenommen. Die Bands, die groß rausgekommen sind haben im Prinzip genauso dilettantisch gespielt wie wir. Die zweite wichtige Erfahrung, die wir gemacht haben war, dass wir nicht Zeitgeist-synchron waren. Wir hätten gedacht, dass unsere Musik vielleicht ein halbes Jahr später erfassbar wird. So naiv waren wir eben bei der ersten Platte. Wir haben ja einfach ins Blaue hinein produziert. Machen wir ja heute noch, weil es eben am schönsten ist. Aber irgendwann merkten wir: „OK, wir sind vielleicht fünf Jahre

zu früh dran mit der Musik.“

Kann man das so genau realisieren?

Ja, das war mir sofort klar. Wir sind über das Ziel hinausgeschossen. So far out, dass es eigentlich niemand kaufen konnte.

Es gab ja auch Vorbilder aus den USA wie Velvet Underground. Hast du die Band damals gekannt? War es schwierig an solche Platten zu kommen.

Ja, gekannt habe ich die. Aber in meiner Jugend hier in Oberschwaben an Platten von Velvet Underground zu kommen war schlicht unmöglich.

Wie fing das damals bei euch an?

Faust sind ursprünglich zwei Bands gewesen, die sich nicht gekannt haben. Zwei von uns haben damals Kunst studiert an der Kunsthochschule in Hamburg. Die anderen waren Lehrer oder Gammler, also einfach alles, was es als Berufsbild gab. Ich war mit Zappi Diermaier, der auch heute noch bei Faust trommelt, in einer Band, was an sich schon eine ziemlich schöne Geschichte ist. Wir hatten von Zappi das Schlagzeug ausgeliehen und als unser Drummer beschlossen hat, nur noch zu singen, haben wir uns natürlich gefragt: Wer trommelt denn jetzt? Wem gehört eigentlich das Schlagzeug? Ist doch egal wer spielt. Und so kam dann der Zappi zu uns.

Das war eine total irrsinnige Mischung aus verschiedenen Leuten. Wir haben, glaube ich, zu zwölf gespielt mit drei Schlagzeug-Sets und drei Gitarren. Das war ca. 1969 und wir haben in dieser Zeit nur Experimente gemacht, wie man sich das bei so einer Bandbesetzung auch leicht vorstellen kann. Es war unglaublich schwierig, nur zwei Schlagzeuger in einen Rhythmus einzubauen und bei drei ist das fast unmöglich. Aber bis wir das bemerkten, haben wir schon ziemlich viel geübt. Und es kamen ziemlich flippige Sounds dabei raus. Zwei Schlagzeuger zusammen können noch so eine Art Elefantenbeat spielen, aber der dritte muss ausflippen.

Wir hatten damals ein großes Interesse an Sounds, Klangteppiche basteln und so. Wir konnten allerdings noch keine Songs machen, weil aus den zwölf Leuten auch mal wieder acht wurden und sich das ständig änderte. Wir hätten auch gerne einen richtigen Song gemacht, aber das konnte niemand. Wenn wir ab und zu auf Rockerfestivals auftraten, waren die echt begeistert, weil es so was wie unseren Sound wahrscheinlich nirgends gegeben hat. Das war eben völlig durchgeknallt. Nicht dass wir ein gutes Timing oder so was gehabt hätten. Das war nicht wichtig.

Faust wurde also nicht im sagenumwobenen Ort Wümmen losgetreten?

Nein, das kam später. Wir übten zuerst in einem Bunker in Hamburg, einem Luftschutzbunker, der eigentlich nur ein Tunnel war. Der war so lang, dass wir es nie ans andere Ende geschafft haben. Gar nie! Das ist alles in Dunkelheit abgelaufen. Vorne hatten wir noch ein bisschen Licht, aber nach hinten hin wurde alles modrig und muffelig. Wir dachten ständig, dass da irgendwo noch eine Leiche liegt. (lacht)

Jedenfalls haben wir der anderen Band gesagt: „Wir haben einen Übungsraum, kommt einfach mal vorbei.“ Die haben sich dann wunderbar in unser wirres Gefüge eingepasst und so wurde eine Band daraus: Faust. Als nächstes sollte jeder seine Vorlieben aufschreiben. Mich hat damals elektronische Musik interessiert, zum Beispiel die Frage: Kann man Naturgeräusche durch ein Instrumentarium nachbauen? Ein großer Traum von mir war schon immer, ein Gewitter nachzuspielen.

Aus solchen Überlegungen ist die Idee entstanden, dass wir irgendwo zusammen arbeiten müssen, wo wir am besten auch gleichzeitig wohnen, damit wir uns besser kennenlernen. Wir dachten wir finden vielleicht einen Mäzen oder die Musikindustrie will etwas zuschießen. (lacht) So naiv waren wir damals. Kein Mensch glaubt heute mehr, dass sich die Musikindustrie für ein Produkt interessiert, das noch nicht einmal hörbar ist. Ein völlig aberwitziges Ansinnen. Die Industrie ist daran interessiert, Musik zu verkaufen.

Unglaublich, dass Polydor euch unter Vertrag genommen hat. Warum eigentlich?

Das wüsste ich auch gerne. (lacht) Ich kann es euch nur so erklären: Wir waren damals total besessen von unserer Idee und das war eben ansteckend. Unser Traum war: Technik. Minimum Hi-Fi. Es gab weltweit sowieso nur zwei Presswerke, wo ich eine Platte hätte veröffentlichen wollen: eines in Japan und eines in Hannover, die Deutsche Grammophon. Alles andere war in meinen

Augen Schrott. Wir überlegten also: Was können wir denen bieten? Nix. Nur eine Idee. Aber wir wussten, dass die Grammophoner mal zwei Monate lang die Beatles hatten, bevor sie den Vertrag mit denen aufkündigten, weil sie sagten: „Was is denn das für 'ne Scheiße?“ (lacht)

Also gingen wir mit unserem Mentor Uwe, der sehr eloquent war, zu denen hin und sagten: „Wenn ihr uns nicht nehmt, passiert euch genau dasselbe wie damals bei den Beatles.“ Außerdem bräuchten wir dringend ein eigenes Studio um unsere Vision zu realisieren. Und das haben die mitgemacht. Ohne je ein Demo gehört zu haben.

Nicht zu fassen.

Wir hatten eine Liste mit provokanten Fragen dabei. Eine ging an den Polydor-Chef: Ob er bereit wäre, mit einer aktiven 17-jährigen Unkeuschheit zu treiben. (Gelächter) Die waren vielleicht geplättet!

Sie haben euch aber trotzdem ein Studio bezahlt?

Ja, das war in Wümme. Wir wollten raus aus Hamburg und aus diesen Eifersüchteleien in Musikkreisen. Raus aufs Land. Nur wir sechs von der Band. Also machten wir es und hatten auch ein Vierteljahr keinen Kontakt nach außen. Da flogen ganz schön die Fetzen, aber das war gut.

Irgendwann wollte Polydor bestimmt mal ein Demo von euch hören, oder?

Ja, logisch. Darüber sind sie auch verrückt geworden. Wir haben denen wöchentlich Tapes geschickt, auf denen wir lauter Geräusche aufgenommen hatten: auf Kacheln schaben, singen, einfach alles. Mit Cembalo, Spinett, Flügel. Einfach nur so herum experimentieren. Einmal haben wir „Auf der schönen blauen Donau“ aufgenommen, aber keiner durfte mit dem Instrument das spielen, was er von dem Lied kannte. (lacht)

Das führte natürlich dazu, dass sich bei Polydor große Unruhe breit machte, die hatten ja alle 'ne ganz andere Wetterlage als wir. Und unser Projekt war mit 500.000 Mark für damalige Verhältnisse wahnsinnig teuer. Das wären heute sicher ein paar Millionen.

Und wie kam euer Debut-Album an?

Irgendwann hatten wir sämtliche Sound-Collagen und Sessions zusammen geschnitten und bei Polydor abgegeben. Und das erschien dann auch genau so. Aber die konnten mit unserem Sound halt nichts anfangen. Nach unserer zweiten Platte war Polydors Interesse am Ende. Und unseres ja auch. Ein Konzert in Hamburg und ein Interview mit dem Stern, mehr Marketing bekamen wir von denen nicht.

Wieviele Platten eures Debuts wurden gepresst?

Die Erstauflage in durchsichtigem Vinyl waren 20.000 Stück, wovon fünf nach Ägypten verkauft wurden. Das vergesse ich nie. (lacht)

Zeitsprung: Wie darf man sich einen Faust-Auftritt heute vorstellen?

Vor ein paar Jahren sind wir auf dem Herzberg Festival aufgetreten. Ihr werdet das wahrscheinlich nicht kennen, weil es in der Nähe von Fulda ist. Ein völlig verblüffendes Ding. Ich habe mich schon gewundert dass wir eingeladen wurden. Als wir ankamen standen da tatsächlich Hippies am Straßenrand. Und ich dachte nur: die hat der Kalle bestimmt für mich hingestellt. (lacht) Das kann ja nicht sein, dass es heute noch solche Typen gibt. (Gelächter)

Das wurden dann aber immer mehr, bis zu 30.000 Leute. Vollkommen irre! Kein Mensch wusste was davon. Das war so eine richtige Art von Verschwörung. Das Festival liegt in den Bergen, in der Röhn, einer verwunschenen Landschaft. Und da irgendwo, am Fuße einer Burg sammeln die sich Jahr für Jahr. Völlig irre, wirklich!

Wie ist euer Sound bei den Hippies angekommen?

Wir sind mit Faust ja nur hingefahren, um ein paar Hippies mal richtig zu erschrecken. Wir haben uns das so schön ausgemalt, wie die da vollgedröhnt irgendwo hocken und dann lassen wir es mal so richtig krachen. Und genau so war's auch. Die sind richtig zusammengezuckt und haben sich automatisch in zwei Hälften gespalten. Hier 10.000 und da 10.000. Die einen haben geschrien: Hilfe, mein ganzer Turn ist am Arsch. (lacht)

Wir haben zwei Mal da gespielt, so weit ich mich erinnere. Den Donnerstag hatten wir für uns und

haben den Nosferatu gemacht, die Vertonung von Friedrich Wilhelm Murnaus Stummfilm. Das war sehr schön, weil auch gerade Vollmond war. Als der Mond dann so schön von hinten hoch kam, habe ich eigentlich nur noch auf den Mond statt auf die Leinwand geschaut. (lacht)

Zum Schluss haben wir dann einige Kilo Nebel hochgelassen. Naja, eher Rauch. Das ist dann alles hochgestiegen in dem kleinen Talkessel. Oben waren kalte und warme Luftschichten und da hat sich das so langsam ... Hat jemand den Film „Die zehn Gebote Gottes“ gesehen? Nicht? Schade. Da kommt das nämlich auch vor. Bei den zehn Plagen, wenn sich der Himmel verdunkelt. Genauso war das. Das ganze Tal wurde eingenebelt. Überall Nebel, Nebel, Nebel. Irrsinnig, fantastisch, da träume ich heute noch davon. Was will man mehr? Das andere Mal haben wir am Schluss gespielt, denn nach Faust kann man natürlich schwer wieder mit Lala-Musik weitermachen. Das geht nicht so richtig ab. Sonst spielen da eben Birth Control und solche Sachen.

Vielen Dank für das Gespräch und das exzellente Essen.

CAN: THEY HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU LISTEN...

by Ian McDonald, NME, Nov. 9th 1974

One night in November 1969 the phone rang in Irmin Schmidt's Cologne home. Schmidt got out of bed to answer it and found himself talking to a guard on the Swiss-German frontier at Basle.

"We have a crazy black guy in our cells here," said the policeman. "He tried to crash through our checkpoint and then started a fist-fight. We've had him here four hours and he won't talk. Just sits there crying. We found a scrap of paper on him with your number, and we were hoping you'd come down and take him off our hands..."

Schmidt got dressed and drove the three hundred miles round-trip without a murmur. He was used to it.

The "crazy black guy" was Malcolm "Desse" Mooney, the singer with his band, The Can - and "Desse" you made allowances for.

It was the weekend and "Desse's" girlfriend had gone down to Zurich to visit some people. A couple of hours after she'd gone, he'd decided that he had to see her at once - so he'd grabbed the group's ancient V.W. (no number plates, no road test) and headed off down the autobahn (no licence, no passport) in hot pursuit.

"When he ran into trouble at the border," explains Schmidt, "he behaved exactly like a child. When he couldn't get his way, he got violent - and, when that didn't work, he just curled up and burst into tears. Like a child..."

"Desse is unique. We all loved him. We still do."

Malcolm "Desse" Mooney left the group in December and returned to his native America. He'd spent just over a year with Can and, in that time, played a major part in laying the foundations for the extraordinary - and unparalleled - music they play today.

But the real history of Can starts in 1965 in Darmstadt where Irmin Schmidt met Holger Czukay while they were both studying under Karlheinz Stockhausen, erstwhile enfant terrible of the the mid-Sixties classical mainstream.

Schmidt, then 25, was an intellectual wild man. He was into Fluxus, Cage, Lamonte Young (all of whom Stockhausen detested) and was well-set on course towards becoming a legitimate conductor, leading large conventional orchestras through a wide range of scores from Mozart to Hindemith - with a personal speciality in the music of Busotti, Cage, and the relatively obscure Polish composer Gorecki.

Czukay, on the other hand, found Stockhausen's then-rigid serial theories fascinating and studied the master very seriously, writing pieces in his style and teaching small classes of his own.

When, in mid '68, Schmidt teamed up with American flautist and avant-garde composer David Johnson - "to do something new, we didn't know what" - it seemed only natural to drop Holger Czukay a line and ask if he'd like to join in.

The three talked it over and decided that they wanted to get into a cross between New Thing jazz and "beat-music" - the same principles upon which The Soft Machine had been founded, quite

coincidentally, a couple of years earlier. This, in turn, reminded Czukay of a young law-student to whom he'd taught some guitar in 1966 - one Michael Karoli, who was now living in Lausanne on the shore of Lake Geneva, playing bass in a pop group which worked the Swiss disco circuit.

Holger phoned him, Karoli arrived the next day.

Now all they needed was a drummer.

Schmidt vaguely knew a guy who played with the currently eminent Manfred Schoof Group. His name was Jaki Liebezeit and he was into free-form jazz, so he was out of the running - but maybe he knew somebody who'd dig getting into something weird?

"Yeah," said Liebezeit, on the phone from Hamburg. "I know somebody."

"Who is it?"

Thoughtful pause. "I know somebody. He'll be round tomorrow."

The next day, the group were testing their equipment at the rehearsal room in Cologne when Liebezeit walked in and began setting up his kit. They tuned up, got a sound-balance, and looked at each other, dubiously.

"What we gonna do?" Liebezeit enquired.

"Play," suggested Schmidt.

The only track issued from this period (so far) is "E.F.S.7". It isn't jazz, and it certainly isn't rock.

It took Malcolm Mooney to get the group into rock and, by the time that had happened, David Johnson had left. He doesn't appear on any of Can's records. In the light of what followed, it's not difficult to see why.

Schloss Norvenich is a castle in Cologne which, until it was bought by a local art-dealer and gallery-owner, had acted as a cinema; Its cine-projection facilities remain, but in July 1968, the owner rented it out permanently to Irmin Schmidt and company to turn it into a recording studio for the film soundtracks they wished to create.

As Inner Space Productions (no J. G. Ballard allusion intended), the original five-piece settled down to "play themselves in" and experiment with such recording equipment as they could purchase or build themselves.

Czukay was the technical whizz and in October '68, while the studio was temporarily out of commission to facilitate his improvement work, Schmidt slipped off to Paris to visit Serge Tcherepnin, son of the Soviet composer (and now working with Stevie Wonder's producer on electronic devices in California).

They'd run into each other at Darmstadt and were going over old times when in dropped Malcolm Mooney, an artist friend of Tcherepnin, on his way back from a pilgrimage to India. Schmidt was struck by Mooney's humour, bulging imagination, and extravagant verbal capacity and invited him to come back to Cologne to try out singing with his band.

Though he'd never sung a note in his life, Mooney agreed at once and, arriving at Schloss Norvenich, strode into the studio, grabbed a mike, and led the band into their first real performance. Everyone knew immediately that this was the clincher.

They did a second take. The number was "Father Cannot Yell" and this version is the one that kicks off Can's debut album *Monster Movie*.

There can be few bands so magically attuned that the first thing they ever play can go straight onto an album. "Father Cannot Yell" is simply one of the most urgent, explosive, and majestic ad-libs a rock group has ever laid down.

Karoli, who until then had been Inner Space's singer, gladly relinquished the mike. Mooney announced that the group's new name was to be *The Can* - the artifact, not the verb - and they began to play as a band, instead of a bunch of soundtrack-makers. (They'd done two films already.)

Johnson left at Christmas and, in January 1969, *The Can* recorded "Mother Upduff" and "The Empress And The Ukraine King", plus two other tracks so far unreleased.

Previously the group had been slightly divided as to what direction to take. Schmidt and Karoli liked The Velvet Underground and wanted to get into rock; Liebezeit hated the Velvets; Czukay couldn't make up his mind.

Mooney tipped the balance and the group's uniquely ferocious sound of the time evolved very quickly.

By July they had enough for an album, but the record companies thought the tapes a little too freaky for comfort. Can pressed 500 of their own copies, sold them in a fortnight, and United Artists gravely signed them up.

The album was recorded primitively. Equipment consisted of the band's instruments, a two-track tape-machine with a pair of mikes, two small J. B. Lansing speakers, and a couple of malfunctioning Pioneer amps, one of which blew up during the session for the twenty-minute "You Doo Right", which takes up all of Side Two.

Mostly, the formats were simple - a riff or a sequence, lyrics straight off the top of "Desse's head (different in every performance), and: BANG! - straight into it. The only exception was "Outside My Door", featuring the Lennoxesque harmonica of Karoli, which took some working out - and which the utterly spontaneous Mooney hated bothering with.

Mooney's whole personality was orientated to the instantaneous and the never-to-be repeated - although sometimes he would seize on something and reiterate it over and over for hours, like a human tape-loop.

On one occasion, Can were giving a private performance for the art community of the city in Schloss Norvenich - the group in the enormous main studio, sound-proofed with thousands of army-surplus mattresses, and the audience outside on the stairs, listening through the open door.

Mooney arrived late, walked to the mike, took one look at the listeners jammed in rows on the ascending steps, and began to sing "upstairs, downstairs, upstairs, downstairs" in a bizarre incantation. After an hour, the rest of the group took a ten-minute break. Mooney remained at the mike, still screaming "upstairs, downstairs, upstairs, downstairs!"

Following a further two hours, he finally collapsed exhausted and frothing at the mouth, still muttering "upstairs, downstairs" under his breath. The event achieved legendary status.

But his piece-de-resistance occurred in November '69 at a local exhibition of the French sculptor Armand.

During a staid and business like reception on the opening night, Mooney took it into his head to shake things up a little and, clambering onto a stack of expensive "multiples", began loudly to auction the items off at 50 marks each.

In the consequent chaos dealers, critics, and sundry socialites ran amok, throwing Mooney the few coins he was asking and trying to get out of the building with their prizes. The sculptor watched open-mouthed, before breaking down completely.

As the police began to arrive, Hildegaard, Schmidt's wife, hustled Mooney (who, by now, had his pockets full of loose change) out of a side-entrance and got him away in her husband's car.

The next day the scandal had made the pages of Der Spiegel.

Mooney subsequently sent the gallery's proprietor a telegram of apology, returning the money, and thanking him for the opportunity to perform in his hall.

But the good times were rapidly drawing to a close.

Mooney was cracking up under the strain of his own extraordinary personality. His telepathic streak, always prominent, began to get truly frightening, with him replying verbally to complicated thoughts other people imagined were safe inside their heads.

The next step was acute paranoia.

In December, a year after David Johnson had quit, a psychiatrist advised Irmin Schmidt to send Mooney back to New York before his mind disintegrated completely.

He now teaches art to children in Harlem, but is under the care of a local shrink.

“He has the impracticality of a child,” says Schmidt. “He needs a mother around constantly to make sure he doesn’t land in prison.”

Definitely a kind of genius in the Syd Barrett genre, Mooney seemed irreplaceable when he left. U.A. released a single of his last tracks with the group (the agonised “Soul Desert”, for Roger Fritz’s movie *Madchen mit Gewalt*, coupled with “She Brings The Rain”, from the soundtrack of Thomas Schamoni’s *Bottom*) - and Can sat back to rethink.

A solution seemed to be to get out and play some concerts, and it was while they were playing a four-night engagement as interlude musicians for a play in Munich that Liebezeit and Czukay, sitting outside a sidewalk cafe, heard someone singing lustily just around the corner.

Presently, a diminutive Japanese with a mass of straggling hair came into view - and was immediately enrolled in the band. A hitch-hiking street-musician, his name was Kenji “Damo” Suzuki; he’d been all over the world, and hardly spoke a word of German.

He turned up at the concert that evening and was an instant hit with the audience. It took him rather longer to become convinced that Can were any good.

Back in the studio at Cologne (since Mooney’s exit, they’d done little except “Musette”, qv. Limited Edition), the project was a theme-song for a film by Leonidas Capitanos called *Cream* - an enterprise which started out with high intentions, but pretty soon degenerated into a straightforward skin-flick.

The song was “Don’t Turn the Light On, Leave Me Alone” and Damo let it be known that he was distinctly pissed off at having to submit to the discipline the recording involved.

However, the next operation was cutting the epic “Mother Sky” for Jerzy Skolimovsky’s *Deep End*, during which Damo quietened down and became relatively interested - and, by the time the group were into the material for Roland Klick’s *Deadlock*, Damo was fully committed (as can be heard in his performance on “Tango Whiskyman” from those sessions).

Towards the autumn of 1970 the band began sessions for their second album proper. Named after a rock Jaki Liebezeit had seen while on holiday in Ibiza, *Tago Mago* was worked on spasmodically through the winter - the group playing the odd concert here and there - until the communal feeling was that they’d got what they were after.

It was a long, introverted process and the result was Can’s most distant recording. Times were dark and oppressive - fall of what Irmin Schmidt in a rare, but evocative, disconnection with the English language, describes as “witchy surprisings” - the air thick with ESP and what Can like to call “magic”.

The storm-centre of this mood is the long, free-form excursion “Aumgn”, recorded while Schmidt was tripping. As music, it’s rather too personal to mean very much to the detached listener outside a kind of doom-laden re-run of “Return of the Son of Monster Magnet” - but, as a structure, it discloses much about the way Can like to work.

Based on a “ground-tape” recorded by Schmidt and Liebezeit, the “event” which “Aumgn” really consists of overlaid tapes from other numbers the band had been playing about with - the combination being mixed down and then edited into final form.

At one point Schmidt is heard hammering a wooden chair to pieces with a pair of heavy-gauge drum sticks; at another the little boy from upstairs comes in and shouts along, thinking it’s a party; at yet another - referred to by the group as “The Appearance of the Black Dog” - a canine musician enters, freaks out, and starts howling and barking.

In the ensuing chaos, Czukay runs hither and thither righting fallen mike-stands and adjusting the levels to accommodate Schmidt’s basso-profundo chants of the track’s title (later slowed down to make them all the more frightening).

It takes a strong nerve to listen to the results alone in the dark.

But “Aumgn” is an exception to the Can sound and, if you flip on the other record in this double-set and listen to the atomic Ragarock that is “Oh Yeah”, you’ll be in the presence of the quintessential Can sound: organ chords creeping ever-upward to the accompaniment of cranking, blinding guitar, the whole thing pitched over a bass/drum pattern so imperturbably, effortlessly menacing that, if

it weren't for the occasional grim caesura, the tension set up would surely snap the record in half. Can originally intended to release only the first disc of the Tago Mago set, but Hildegaard Schmidt persuaded them to collate a sample of the freakier stuff - including "Aumgn" - to go out as a second album.

It was this move - and possibly the resounding lack of commercial potential inherent in the set as a whole - that led to Hildegaard's takeover of the managership of the band from Abi Ofarim, who had picked them up after hearing "Monster Movie" (and if you can get your head next to that, you're a better man than me, son).

Ofarim immediately invoked court-proceedings and began to lay injunctions on anything coming out of Inner Space Studios. Despite this - and the equipment van burning down one night - Can bore up and played their first British tour under Hildegaard's guidance.

This was a healthy financial change since, previously, they'd been forced to play single gigs for sums around 1,000 marks in the face of expenses averaging 800 marks a night. And, in December, they got an even bigger break.

They were selected to do the theme music for a Francis Durbridge thriller to be screened on German national TV. Now Durbridge may not mean that much over here anymore, but in Germany he's a cult, gets forty-million-plus viewing figures, and totally clears the streets during the three successive evenings on which one of his serials runs.

"Spoon", the number Can came up with for the occasion, became the unlikeliest No. 1 you could hope to find and sold 50,000. Suddenly the band were a national name.

They followed up by playing a free concert at the vast Cologne Sportshalle in February 1972, drawing 10,000 and filming the proceedings.

Then they nipped into the studio, cut "I'm Too Leise", "LH702", "I'm So Green", and "Vitamin C" (the last for another TV play directed by Samuel Fuller of Shock Corridor), and re-toured the U.K.

Now it was time for another album and - bearing in mind Can's creative susceptibility to the prevailing climatic conditions - all at a rather unpropitious juncture.

The summer of '72 in Germany was rainy, dreary, and depressing. U.A. gave the band a deadline and, one day before its expiry, they'd only managed to finish three tracks - "Pinch", "Sing Swan Song", and "One More Night". Not much of what they had lying around - including "TV Spot" from the Tago Mago out-takes - seemed really to fit, so they tried for one track (intended to run through Side Two) on the evening before they were due to turn the tapes in.

This was "Soup" - and it wasn't long enough. Glumly, they fished out the tapes of "Vitamin C", "I'm So Green", and "Spoon" and handed the lot over to the A&R men. Their doubt about the album's worth doesn't stop Ege Bamyasi being a fine achievement; even if everything else'd been rubbish, the record would have been justified by the marvellous suspended waltz "Sing Swan Song", one of the subtlest performances in the rock idiom.

But the rest was pretty good, too. And Abi Ofarim was hot to see that it didn't trot.

His inevitable injunction delayed the release of the album for three months in Germany and ruined its sales promotion schedule. Irmin Schmidt, in a mood of cold anger, began to study publishing law in order to fight Ofarim and - although the court-battle continues even now - it looks like his trouble paid off. Can are winning.

Ege Bamyasi, for the curious, is a brand of Turkish vegetable marketed by an Istanbul company called Can... in a can. If this wasn't enough of a click, "can" in Turkish also means "life".

The lucky coincidence didn't carry over into the band's affairs, however. Immediately after recording "Soup", Michael Karoli suffered a perforated ulcer which nearly killed him and put the group out of action for six months.

During this time, Czukay and Liebezeit devoted themselves to producing a singer called Alex for the Ariola label, Schmidt studied for eight hours a day, and Czukay put the final touches to a private project, the montage album Cannexis 5, which he'd started in the group's formative months.

Finally, Michael recovered in the spring of '73. The group wavering between uncertainty, determination, and bankruptcy, it was Hildegard to the rescue. With judicious bank-loans, she re-kitted them with equipment and sent them off on a 60-concert tour of Britain, France, and Germany - a tour which turned out to be their most successful yet, and which pulled Karoli back into the band.

Holiday-time arrived in the summer and Damo pulled the double weirdity of marrying the daughter of a couple of Jehovah's witnesses and deciding it was time to revisit the Land of the Rising Sun just before the sessions for Future Days. However, it turned out to be a profitable refreshment for him and, in light, mild, and airy weather, the band got down to it in good spirits.

Future Days took two months to make and is Can's most approachable album.

Bearing the hexagram "Ting: The Cauldron" on its sleeve, it's probably got more positive energy to the square centimetre than three barrels of brown rice, and Schmidt's discovery of a peculiar "string tone" on one of his keyboards gives it a particularly transcendental ambiance.

There were no sound-tracks on it this time (even though Irmin, a great De Mille fan and cineast in general, devoted his part of the extended suite "Bel Air" to Hedy Lamarr), and the effect was of complete purity of vision. A remarkable album, in other words.

Touring immediately recommenced in France - but, by now, the strain was beginning to tell on the Bible-bashing Damo, whose vocals and all-round appearance became increasingly ragged.

In December (it always happens in December with this band) there was a confrontation during sessions for another TV soundtrack - at the height of which Damo snatched up a mike and a pre amp shouting "That's mine!" and rushed out. He gave them back the next day, but never rejoined and nowadays works in a hotel, engrossed in religion and family life.

The day after Damo left, Malcolm Mooney, telepathic as ever, sent Irmin Schmidt a letter broaching the subject of getting back into music again. Schmidt wrote back three times before he got a reply - but it was a weird one, seemingly dictated by somebody else. Nothing has been heard from Mooney since.

In the last year Can have done another TV soundtrack (for Gomorrha, an avant-garde sci-fi excursion) and released Limited Edition - a collection of past out-takes some of which are mentioned above - and a new, very oddly-produced, but nonetheless exhilarating return to Tago Mago territory called Soon Over Babbaluma.

Fairly soon they're due to tour the States.

The first gig will be New York and one can't help but wonder - as the band obviously do themselves - whether a certain "crazy Black guy" might not leap up out of the audience, grab the mike, and begin singing the first things that come into his very strange mind.

Hm. . .

"Upstairs downstairs upstairs downstairs upstairs downstairs. . ."

Ian MacDonald

AN INTERVIEW WITH HOLGER CZUKAY

by Richie Unterberger (January 1997)

What were Can's main influences from the world of rock, as opposed to classical and avant-garde?

Everybody a little bit different. But mainly I would say the influence, for me, of [the] Beatles and Velvet Underground was most important. The Velvet Underground especially. They had something achieved which others didn't achieve. Even Jimi Hendrix didn't achieve that. One could have the opinion that this group is not able to play really properly right. They didn't get the right rhythm, they couldn't make a real tight rhythm. But the music was incredibly convincing. And this feeling made us encouraged, actually, to go on with rock music in general, instead of, let's say, making avant-garde academic music. Academic music was somehow finished by the audiences. Not by the musical idea itself. But we liked to do something without notation. We didn't want to read music off papers. We really tried to make instant compositions from the very beginning. This Can tradition actually achieved [this] very much when we played live.

How would you compare the group's sound live and in the studio?

Usually live is far more wired and little bit unpredictable. People of our generation, I think they were not influenced [by Can] at all. No, that's what I found out. When they attended to Can concerts, they thought maybe it was exciting, maybe it is this. But nobody of these people were ever thinking of "Hey man, this is something we should take as an ideal, we should take as a way people follow up." In Germany, actually, Can didn't [attain] such an image of being heroes. But younger people who attended our concerts, [the] next younger generation, especially in England, they became addicted, actually, to the way of how Can made music, and what I found out in the last year, especially in Russia for example, Can will be treated with young people sometimes [like] the Rolling Stones. The Russian people see a good way of making progressive music on their own without being forced to copy rock and roll.

How do you think Can has influenced the music of today?

Actually, I think they are not such a direct influence on these electronic people as was a group like Kraftwerk. For example, in Germany the DJs and the young people, their fathers was not Can, it was Kraftwerk. That has something to do [with the fact] that Can actually was a real band. But the new music is not based on the idea of forming a band. They make teams, they work in teams, that's what I can say. But as a real band of musicians, this idea is not so strong, especially in Europe. Therefore Can was probably not such an influence. But when it comes, let's say, of making a party or a live evening, making a big performance of nothing, then Can can become very important, because this was how Can was going on stage. Actually with an empty head, nothing pre-performed or nothing pre-whatever. We just went onstage, and who[ever] was throwing the first stone, we caught that and threw it back. And that was the beginning of the concert. ¿It had something to do, actually, with a lot of sports. I think this music Can made had something to do with football or with sports. That means, you can't really say in the next minute, where is that

ball going to? It is a team which is playing with such a ball [that] knows very well about those strategies and something like this. But actually you can't say, by definition, when is the ball in this or this area. It's the same with Can music. We know how to build up the whole thing, but the actual sound and the actual development of the thing was not foreseen, and was something which was given to us by whatever powers, by spiritual or whatever that is.

Each album was unpredictable.

It was like that. We had our studio. We had that from the very beginning, as we knew making records, as other groups were doing. That means pre-performing the whole thing, practicing songs and something like that, and then going to the studios and then just perform and produce it. And after a short time, you are getting out of it again. This was not our intention. As I said, we didn't have anything on our mind. We just had to stay together for a certain while. Such an album was taking about two or three months. And we just played together live in the studio as we would do it on stage, without audience.

Were there any directions you or the band wanted to explore that you wish you had?

First of all, we were bloody beginners altogether. Maybe except Jaki Liebezeit, the drummer. Jaki was a quite experienced drummer. He played one year with Chet Baker for example in Barcelona, in Spain, and was a real jazz drummer. He certainly has performed before with people he could take seriously. But the rest of Can was different. Who was I? I was just nothing. I just studied with Stockhausen, I didn't have any practical experience. I had some sort of weird ideas or something like that, but nothing in my hand I could prove who I am. Karoli, the guitar player, was my pupil, and of course he started to study law, and he had nothing in his hand too. We were all bloody new beginners, and tried somehow to grow out of our soil.

Irmin, he had some sort of experience being a conductor. But he was a beginner in playing in such a group. For example, counting until four. Keep counting until four, he had really sort of big problems in the very beginning. Every one of us.

Were there records you preferred more than others?

I regard the very first albums being the most important, as Can was most innocent at that time. If a group is new, young, and starting from the very beginning, actually you can't do anything wrong. You do something wrong when you try to learn, and when you get older, and getting experienced, this is [the] time when you can do mistakes and have some errors. It's quite normal. I think, for every group. That's the reason why I really love *Monster Movie*, *Tago Mago*, *Soundtracks* is a great album, especially *Can Delay*. All the pieces which were even recorded before *Monster Movie*, just delayed because no record company wanted to take us on. So we kept that, and still keep some of the material.

When Can hooked up with Virgin, was there any sort of pressure to go commercial?

That was one of the reasons what made problems in the group. In the beginning, we had, for example, we were a real group, an entire group. And that means we were recording straightaway on two tracks. Then we became successful, we had a hit in Germany, and we were able to afford a multi-track machine. From this moment on, you can say it was the beginning of the end of Can. In such a group, everybody has to criticize the other one about what he's doing wrong and so on. But at this moment, when the multi-track machine came out, it was "I want to hear guitar," or "I want to hear the bass," "Who made this wrong?" And the musician was getting a little bit afraid, and said "okay, okay, I do my part now and play it as good as I can," and the others shouldn't be in there because it makes him nervous. This was the beginning, where the group suddenly was not such a strong group again. Even if they were more sophisticated about production. This was the reason, for example, they thought the bass was not very good playing anymore. So Rosko Gee had to come up, and he wasn't such a great bass player.

And I was immediately inventing a new sort of instrument. That means I knew where the weak point of Can was. Because there was too much dealing just with themselves, and nothing which came from outside. So I looked out for radio and all these sort of devices, including telephone. Looking up for something from an outside work. That means that you suddenly get an information from outside, stop getting off from your routine, and getting fresh again from the very beginning. But in terms of becoming more commercial, maybe, the other members didn't like this idea very much, and so that was the reason why I got out and started on my own, towards the end of Can.

I wonder if you could compare the band as they were with Malcolm Mooney and as they were with Damo Suzuki.

With Malcolm Mooney, we were very fresh. Malcolm was a great rhythm talent. He was a locomotive. That was the right singer from the very beginning, as this was our weak point. Maybe we were creating rhythms, but you could say we were not very stable in ourselves in doing that. That means [we needed] someone who was pushing us into the rhythm, and giving us the feel that this is the right thing to do. This was Malcolm Mooney, and he got integrated very much into what all the other musicians did. I think he was the right singer in the right place at the right time. When he left because of psychological reasons, Damo came in. The group was far more experienced by that time. Damo is not such a pusher. He is a different sort of a singer, and therefore the group achieved such a stability. Again, Damo fitted perfectly into that. So you can say by the follow-up by the musicians who came in. Everything was really perfect.

The problem was, when Damo disappeared, Can was now without a singer. Suddenly we felt a hole in our music. Michael was singing, but he is not - a guitar player actually should not sing. Except like Jimi Hendrix or something like that. Actually, a guitar player should play guitar. That was our problem, suddenly, what we had. We tried out so many singers at that time. And nobody really fitted again into this group. It was somehow Can's fate, or tragedy, or whatever you call that, that it happened like it happened. But that's what was given to the group.

It seems you could call Malcolm and Damo joining the group inspired accidents.

Actually, you can say, if you're a religious person, they were given by God for starting something for mankind.

Does it come as a surprise to you or other people in Can to learn about the group's cult following in the U.S.?

Yes, you see this following came up by the years. It was suddenly, not from the very beginning. When we started in '68 with Malcolm Mooney, let's say into the beginning of the 1970s, I always thought if Can makes it, it will make it in America. I thought the way the rhythms were done, the way how we played live, it was a hell, actually, of rhythmic impact. I thought that would fit far more into America than into Europe. But in England, it was in [the] beginning, let's say, accepted with greatest enthusiasm. Then the French people reacted on that very strong in the beginning of the '70s. But from America, we didn't get really any reaction. We heard that we should come over and play, but somehow all this was so unstable and nothing was really confirmed in such a way that we could say, okay, let's do it, let's go over. It was just, some people think we should come over. It's no reason to go to such expenses, [to] bring the whole group over to America.

How have you drawn upon Can's influence in your solo career?

When I started my solo career, I only could do that because Can was such a good time for learning everything [that] you need to stand up on your own feet. Without Can, that would be completely impossible. I have learned to play all the other instruments. For the first time I could play, you know, whatever played. I could go back after more than 20 years to my guitar. And with Jaki I was always connected anyway very closely. And I could manage the studio. Everything technical. I didn't have any technical problems to get my ideas on tape and onto the final mix, actually. I

could do that all along. So this was something, Can was most important to learn that.

Have you been in contact with Malcolm at all?

No. Malcolm lives in New York, but he has a group here in San Francisco. And he's playing with this group. I heard a tape from him, what he was doing. I think he has musicians here around, and therefore I think he's playing sometimes. I don't know how professional they are, but I would think they are not unexperienced to that what I heard. It looks like Malcolm really tries to have a restart as a singer.

Are there plans to release any more unreleased material?

First of all, there will come out I think in March this Brian Eno, the Orb, Sonic Youth, A Guy Called Gerald, they all have made remixes. This will come out on Mute. And at the same time now, I think in February in Los Angeles, there was someone who made a Can tribute album. American groups or solo artists have performed Can pieces. I haven't heard that yet, but the album is finished, and I think it is about to be released in the next six weeks.

What happened to the soundtracks for Wim Wenders?

We don't know where the tapes are. I know only that Wim has taken them at the time. He was in the Can studio, and he somehow made us play a little bit as he wanted us to have. I think he got all the tapes, and I have no idea where they have disappeared, or if he still holds them. I have to ask [the] manager about that. You must ask Hildegard.

What I can say, for example, is that working with other people that I have done, with Jah wobble for example, or with David Sylvian, all this Can experience went into this collaboration with these people. For David Sylvian, it was completely new to have that style of working, actually. For him, it was the first experience. I think the Edge was interviewed half a year later, and he said it was the first time he was making a production out[side] of U2, and he thought that we are all going completely nuts! He didn't really understand what that was. He seemed to be very excited, but that was for him a completely new world.

This open-minded conception which Can established, I think is a good way to master the future. And I can see that now, working with other people, with the young people from the electronic scene. They understand me perfectly. They are able to interact right away. And I think actually this music now, with all these devices, is perfectly designed for the electronic world, it looks like. This is very living electronic music. Nothing is bad about that.

INTERVIEW WITH HOLGER CZUKAY

by Jason Gross (February 1997) for Perfect Sound Forever

What do you say about one of the masterminds behind one of the most influential, innovative bands ever? Even if you haven't actually heard of Can (how unhip can you get?), you know their music, at least through others unless you live on steady diet of Kenny G. and Michael Bolton: for some good background on the band, check out Paul Dickow's article. If this was Holger's only achievement, he would be a legend but luckily he has persevered after the break up of Can in the late '70's. Collobartions with Jah Wobble, the Edge, David Sylvian, Brian Eno and others as well as his own solo work have been keeping him busy. I had a chance to speak with him on the eve of his first U.S. tour, that he's taken along with chanteuse U-She and DJ Dr. Walker, about the past, present and future. Former Can singer Malcolm Mooney was at the New York concert (at THE KNITTING FACTORY) but declined to join the show. I'll tell you something: hearing Holger sing 'My Way' was a lot moresurprising than hearing it come out of Sid Vicious' mouth. It was even funnier than his stories of David Niven being one of Damo's first fans, intergalactic plumbing (George Clinton would be proud) and almost ending the Cold War with a couple of beers (ditto Bill Clinton).

How did you meet up with Dr. Walker

I was introduced through an electronics dealer who gave me his address. I met up with him and I knew something about his music. U-She made this connection also- she knew that this was the most exciting music scene anywhere. He lives in my neighborhood, about five minutes walking distance away. We started to have a spontaneous session in a multi-room party and that turned out very well. Then slowly we started to make another session at Liquid Sky in Cologne and we recorded it. It was an excellent recording, last summer. I edited that for a live CD (coming later this year). We thought that it was wonderful to go on with that.

You've done a lot of work with 'FOUND SOUNDS' over the years.

This is what I've usually done all the time. What is interesting is now is the fact that we can or cannot perform something like that live and we don't know what can we expect from such an event. For me, this is the most important question. It is interesting that he is somebody who understands me very well and he is able to react on that. We found out that this works out very well. It's become sort of a dance-techno or techno event. It's something which reminds me of the very first Can concerts. The concert yesterday that special quality and this is something completely different for a media. If you want to make a recording for an album or CD, this is a completely different way of working. This live performance is something different. It's changing all the time when we do the shows.

How do you compose yur work? Where do your ideas come from?

Just by logic. First of all, you must have a vision, even with the roughest idea where this could lead to. This is the way that I usually work. Others can't feel that and they may not understand

the way I work.

What kind of instruments are you using for your shows?

It is a very small keyboard that I use actually. You can use special samples with it. Usually samples are very short moments. But these are longer moments. With these, I can make it possible that the music, and this is usually the best quality live, is playing itself. You are in the position of conducting. If this happens, you are lucky. This happened in Can as well. In performances, you try to enforce the music, then you have a brave character to do that but actually you are not that lucky.

Jaki Liebezeit and Michael Karoli (both from CAN) appear on your 'MOVING PICTURES' CD. You're still close with them?

This was recorded three years ago. From time to time, I see Jaki- he's a great drummer. He doesn't live far from me. Michael I see less of because he lives in South France. Irmin (Schmidt) is very involved in his own music. Television music and writing operas. His wife is my manager so we're still in close contact.

On your own and with CAN you've done a lot of soundtrack music. Do you try to 'visualize' a lot of the music that you make?

Very strongly. Actually I'm not thinking visually. It happens that the music comes to me. This is one of the reasons why 'Moving Pictures' is based 'non-existent pictures.' To make film music, for me, is that film is getting shot and then at the end they say 'aha, everything's finished, let's get the film music.' Then they look for a composer and he looks at the film. This is the biggest mistake of all. I had a meeting with Ennio Morricone, talking about this. I also made a lot of film music with Can- we could have lived off of that. We were so lucky that Irmin was connected with theater and film. He talked to the director, he checked out the film, he went to the studio and told us the scenes but there is a difference if someone is telling you a scene or you are seeing it on a screen. When somebody tells me a story, your fantasy is so unlimited because you're not limited from what you see on a screen. With Can, the film music really became somehow extraordinary I must say. This is what Morricone said, that he was so lucky that he was a good friend with (director) Sergio Leone. Leone told him what his intention was and Morricone gave him an idea musically. In the beginning of the shooting, the music was somehow sketched. Then they started shooting. This is a very good way to do that. It doesn't have a strong separation between the shooting and the music then.

I was once involved in a video musical. I played the main role. It was for television. The way that it was produced was that I was working the light and the music and the cutting of the scenes were done all together. Cutting and performing the scenes was done exactly at the same time. It was at different studios but when the picture came out and I saw what I was doing, then the picture was re-edited again. Watch out for a film director who thinks this is a good idea! This is one of the reasons why I made 'Moving Pictures.' It has something to do with images and pictures. Maybe someone has made a film and he knows something about this music and it would fit perfectly. Then this is the best way to rely on music for the film and not the other way around.

I had working with radio also. I have something to do where I am trying to create an outside world. What has the man in the radio to do with me? He doesn't know I exist and I just listen to him. We don't know each other at all. If these two worlds work perfectly together, we are very lucky. It is very exciting as well, this sort of synchronicity. If I make this music and someone has made a film for his music, you have two worlds meeting together at the same point.

You studied under Stockhausen. What kind of influence was he on you?

I'd like to know myself as he is a very powerful character. He is one of the last classical composers

from the traditional side. He is writing music into scores but not performing it or he is performing it with electronic music. At that time when I studied with him, he was the church in the village. Everything, all the houses were built around this church. For me, he has nothing to do with rock music or pop music. But that doesn't matter to me. I came along with him and his music. It is my pleasure to look into different kinds of music and enjoy that.

What other kind of music influenced you when you were young?

I was first thinking of becoming a composer when I was a child. To a child, a composer is the manager of all of the music. He must create it. Then I went to a music school and they said 'you must be a wonder child and you must be finished by fifteen.' I was a year too late! So I thought 'OK, you can become a jazz musician now.' I played guitar in a band in 1958 (Holger Schuering Jazz Band) and went to a Jazz Music festival. We had to play in front of a jury and an audience. One of the judges said to us 'It's impossible for us to classify what you played but never mind. I'll take you on a radio show as something that can't be classified.' I was very proud of this fact because I didn't pass my A-level degree at school, in music I got the worst grade. But the next day I had my first performance on a radio show! It was wonderful. Then I thought 'I'm not a born jazz musician.' It wasn't my world. So who remained? It was only Stockhausen. He was the most fascinating figure. He invited all of these other composers like John Cage to come to Berlin to perform (winter, 1962). They were doing performances and speaking to people about their ideas. John Cage was incredible. It was a concentration of these world composers for a few months. I had an incredible impression about what these people were doing.

I moved to Berlin because I wanted to study classical music and the fact that he (Stockhausen) took me on after high school was a miracle. The Iron Wall was just established and I was looking for a flat. The cheapest flat was in an island that belonged to West Berlin but was in East Germany. You go to a corridor with petrol from the East Germans and you had to have a special visa. Inside on this island, I was guarded by three G.I.'s. Outside, I was protected by the East Germans. I just living with this barbed wire fence five meters away. It was great! It was fantastic! One day, I took my bicycle along the fence and saw these two East German soldiers standing in front on the other side and watching two G.I.'s- one was white and one was a black guy, very tall. They faced each other wordless. Then this black guy took out these big mirror glasses and one of the East German guys just lost his face and disappeared when he saw this. Then the next miracle happened. It was 1962. General Clay was the commander of American forces in West Berlin. He flew in with a helicopter. I saw him as I was riding my bicycle. He came out and said 'come on, I'm inviting you for our greatest holiday, Thanksgiving.' He was wonderful. The mayor came as well. He served turkey and for the first time in my life I got drunk. It was incredible.

I had to pass the check-points of the East Germans. The guards were especially selected because they were able to escape into West Berlin. One third were assholes, one third was in between and one third was in between, as usual. I brought them some stockings for their wives and something to drink. They liked me because of my car. It had holes in it and looked like someone was shooting at it with a machine gun. Three of the East German soldiers, I brought them with all of their weapons to the West Berlin check-point. The police there brought out some bottles of beer and we all drank. This was during this hot time (in the Cold War). Somehow I survived. What did Frank Sinatra sing? 'I did it my way.' So this is how I came to Stockhausen.

I actually met Stockhausen at the end of the fifties. Somehow he had invented electronic music. What I heard was so.... that I thought of flushing toilets in outer space. I was somehow effected. I really couldn't stop laughing because it was so new to me. One person in the audience said to him 'Hey, you do these weird sounds just to give us a shock and out of this shock you want to make a lot of money.' He said 'I can promise you that I do this only for musical reasons. I have just married a rich woman- I don't need the money.' I thought 'This man is right of you. You must get in contact with him.' The heckler caught up with him after the show and said 'Now we can talk frankly to each other. Was that true?' So Stockhausen said to his wife 'Hey Doris, come here. He doesn't believe I'm married to a rich woman.' I thought 'you must look for a rich woman too.' Then I studied with him. I really went out to look for a rich woman. So where do you find that? In Switzerland. There were these private schools for daughters of rich families and I tried to become

a teacher around Lake Geneva. It happened that they took me on. I found a very rich girl there and I was paid so high that I forgot about the rest! With this money, I saved a little bit and that was the beginning of Can. I wanted to make for one year holidays. So I thought 'Let's see what's going on in the world otherwise.' That's how Can was established. With this money, I bought a tape recorder and with this tape recorder, we made our first album.

So how did you meet up with Michael, Irmin and Jaki to form the band?

Michael was a pupil of mine. Irmin was a fellow student with me with Stockhausen. The rest was just the fact that Irmin knew Jaki. We were going to establish a new band that was somehow extraordinary and he asked Jaki to look out for a drummer and the next day Jaki came himself. Karoli left the school when I left the school. He studied in Switzerland and I got another job in Northern Germany. We were somehow always connected. So Irmin said to me 'Come on, let's form a band.' I said 'I have a guitar player, Karoli. I'll bring him with me.' This is how we got together. Then Malcolm Mooney came over from an exhibition in Paris. He just came by and just on holidays and didn't think of singing at all. He participated in the whole thing and Can was there.

When you started the band, did you have any ideas about what direction you wanted to take?

We didn't even know if we wanted to become rock-orientated or rhythm-orientated or what. It happened that there was an exhibition in a little castle in Cologne. All the gallery people made a big party there and there was a Picasso exhibition. We played there for the first time. We had never all met and had never practiced but we played there for the first time. That became somehow very exciting. Wild and sometimes unorganized but at least exciting. Then we thought 'maybe we should go into a rock direction- this is a good idea.' So we did it.

Eventually, a studio was built in the castle, schloss norvenich. did that help the band with creating music or with giving you more freedom?

Yes, this is what I was talking about. As we didn't have any money at the time, we were sponsored by the man who rented this castle. He gave us a room and in this room we established a studio with the most simple equipment you can imagine and went on recording straight away.

With the CAN records, you engineered and edited the music. had you been doing this before with your own music?

What I had done as a pupil, I was working in a radio and television shop to repair equipment. I was interested in electronics so I learned everything there. I made a little side money to put away for myself, just five dollars a week. When we designed our studio, I just picked up the whole logic about that and we were able to do that without an engineer. We are very proud of that.

How did the songs come together with the group? were they long jams that you edited?

Yes but the editing was really a minor step. It was not so extensive as it is today. All of Can's music was live recordings, played in this castle.

How were things different when malcolm left?

It was a problem for us. We suddenly felt quite left alone in a way. But three months later, I found Damo Suzuki in Munich on the street. He was praying to the sun with wild gestures. I was in a

cafe with Jaki and said to him 'See that guy there? He will become our next singer.'

He must have thought you were nuts.

Yeah, he said 'you're crazy!' So I went to him (Damo) and said 'We have a concert tonight in front of 5000 people. You want to sing?' He said 'Yeah, I have nothing else to do.' He did it. When he first started, without practicing or rehearsing, he was a calm and silent samuri. Like Japanese meditation. Suddenly, he became a very furious and wild warrior. Then all the audience left and disappeared. It was one of the wildest concerts I remember. But some people were left, about 30 Americans. And among these people was (actor) David Niven. He must have been fascinated by this whole thing. Only a very few people stayed there in this big hall. Most of the Americans were based in Munich.

How did the band become different when you were working with damo?

I think it was logical that think would change because we learned by that time. We learned to get along with our equipment much better. We knew how to produce the music until we started using a multi-track machine. Up to that point, we had been using a (2-track) stereo machine without mixing, without these multi-track facilities. I would take the tapes home at night and I would be editing a little bit.

This is a quote from Jaki: 'When we began it was great, everybody just had a few notes he could play so it stayed simple. But our technical abilities increased. Holger could play bass very fast. It began with Tago Mago and it really went off with future days. I think it became too symphonic.' would you agree with that?

I agree with what he says but I certainly judge about this in a certain way. I feel about this in a different way. Somehow this was the beginning of the end. With Can, everything seemed like the beginning of the end. So we went into different directions after a certain time. The fact that I played bass very fast didn't mean that I played this typical dance bass. I had a very different technique to do that. I had made that with 'Father Cannot Yell,' our first recorded piece, the way I found out how I can play bass. Where Can as a group really had problems was with the introduction of a multi-track machine. Until this point, we played together as group. We recorded together as a group. We did everything together as a group and felt responsible. One for all. Jaki was the one who especially criticized us all the time. If something was not good, he would say 'hey, you should play better.' But it wasn't too easily analyzed by recording this on a two-track machine. 'Who made this mistake that the music didn't become as good as it should have become?'

At the moment when we got the multi-track machine, 'now we can find out who makes these mistakes.' This person now got so afraid that they'd say 'OK, I want to record my things alone.' It was natural but this was the end of the group. It took some other years and Can still made some very good albums after that. The fact is that somehow there remains this point that if you get out of this common responsibility, something is going to get changed. When I was first working alone, of course I was working with multi-track machines in the beginning. Then the digital devices came out. I immediately stopped multi-tracking recording. All the albums like MOVING PICTURES are not multi-track recordings at all. I don't mix these days anymore. Can you imagine that? Really high produced music without mixing. The digital technique pushed me back 30 years into the sixties, before multi-track machines came into existence. At that time, the engineers had to immediately mix things, to make decisions on the sound and recorded then straight away. This is what I'm doing now. In the beginning I bought a digital machine, the Akai DD 1000. I found immediately out that this is an incredible device. You can do endless multi-tracking somehow but the tracks you couldn't hear together so they became virtual. Then I got I went to the Akai company and said 'hey, do you want to waste money?' I told them about how I had sent them my product and how they send me their machine. They were surprised about what I could really do with that. This remains until today. I'm very happy that even when I'm working alone I'm not relying on multi-track machines. I still have everything completely under control but the decisions

of sound and the vision to follow my vision, this is full in action. In the beginning when I record something this will be the point that this will somehow be the sound of the final thing.

Towards the end of CAN, you weren't playing bass but working on tapes and sound effects instead. How were things changing for the band?

Suddenly, Can tried more or less to become more commercial. This was based on the idea that a few people should be able to play their instruments perfectly right. Jaki thought especially that we needed a different sort of bass player so we got a black bass player (Rosco Gee). And I had to look out for another instrument. I said 'With Can, we got a problem. The musicians don't really listen to each other very much.' I thought that it happens because nothing from the outside is coming in. I looked for the devices to bring a different world into the group again and they had to react on that. That was the idea, working with a radio or working with tapes or working with a telephone. I even had this idea that with a transmitter, we could transmit and receive things back again. Or to call up people like today's radio shows where people call up or you call people. This sort of interaction I wanted to establish. But the group was not interested in this. So I finished with Can and went my own way. And here, I really followed this. I was working on that for a few years (with Can) but then I found it that it wasn't fun anymore. I continued alone then worked with other people.

Where you surprised when the punk movement came along and people like Johnny Lydon and The Buzzcocks said they were big fans of CAN?

I was more than surprised actually. I remember that in England I met Jah Wobble, of Public Image at that time, who had a six pack of beer. I didn't know what to think of him at the time but he said 'come on, I've booked a studio in Soho somewhere.' We recorded our first piece 'How Much Are They.' It was in a cellar of a chinese restaurant. Someone came in, it was two American girls who thought that this was a part of the restaurant. The engineer had an intercom microphone on to record this conversation. They were asking us these questions like 'how much are they?' This is the kind of interaction I like. When it comes up to this point with these spontaneous things, I think you're lucky when this happens. I should kiss the feet of these two girls.

A lot has been made of the whole 'Krautrock' phenomenon in the seventies. do you think that CAN was part of this movement or were you on your own?

I thought we were on our own. Faust didn't convince me that the time. I thought they were too intellectual and I missed the rhythm section. Can was very concentrated on getting along with genuine rhythms because of Jaki. Jaki was a very good drummer. He was a very good teacher for us. I must say that he really brought us to the point that we could really become a good band. When we played too many unnecessary things, there were too many ornaments in the music and they're not necessary. He took a lot of care that this didn't happen. But with the other bands, I thought first of all they were not that genuine from the rhythm point. They really didn't start from the very beginning. If you want to make something new, you shouldn't think too far outside. If you think 'I've reached a point and I have to think of something more' then you reach another point and you have to forget everything and start from the very beginning again. That means that you have to count until four, like that. And forget really everything. Like Amon Duul at that time, their heroes were the Grateful Dead, by their philosophy and their ideas and everything like that. They played a little bit like this and this didn't convince me personally. I must say that I liked the people of Amon Duul a lot. They were very nice people. With Faust, I didn't have any connection. The fact that they worked with different medias was something that interested me. The whole multi-media idea was quite good but I was looking for the music. Where was it? What happened was, we made several tours through England and suddenly it came up that the British press was aware of several of the other German bands and called it 'krautrock.' I asked an Englishman 'how can I understand this? What does kraut mean? Is it something positive or negative?' That was a good question because it was something in between. It was not something negative or positive. Maybe 'krauts' come from the Second World War. What was happening in England was that we

weren't regarded as 'krauts' anymore. We were more or less naturalized into England. How this happened was a miracle. We were Germans but we came there several times. The English audience felt that this was something new for them as well. I think it meant to be a good band, to play spontaneous, you must end up in a punk version somehow. You must be delighted about the trash idea. This is what happened here in New York when we played yesterday.

So you think of Can as an originator of the punk style?

Punk, what is punk? It's kicked-out people who had bad parents and never took care of the kids. They went out with their elbows (slam dancing) and tried to make their own way. I can very much understand this. This is happening with this underground electronic scene now. They're exactly the same people. But somehow they are the best people you can work with. I don't know why.

Other than with style, with the musical simplicity that CAN was doing, do you think there was a common thread that lead to these punk bands, using a minimal approach?

I could imagine that. Maybe. The minimalization was something that maybe Can had something to do with. Actually, this was the fruit of their own efforts. Me personally, I was fascinated by the idea that we could minimalize something. That was the greatest idea. That was a philosophy that I could really follow. Think small. I liked that idea.

What kind of plans do you have after this tour of the states?

I'm producing five CD's. One of the artists will be U-She. One CD will be cover versions and the other will be old material as well. I made another piece called "La Luna" that is 45 minutes long like a gamelean orchestra session on a very electronic basis. U-She said it's the best that I've ever done in my life. Another musician from Los Angeles heard it and loved it also. I also have an album with Dr. Walker that is finished.

The grand scheme would be the live idea because I haven't played live for 20 years and I've suddenly started concentrating on that and found out how we can record this. Interactive things maybe, if people came to me to do concerts for the internet. That interests me as well.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CAN-DISCOGRAPHY

by Holger Czukay (May 1997) for Perfect Sound Forever

CAN's first recording ever was made in June 1968 during our first concert for a modern art exhibition at Schloss Nörvenich near Cologne. It is called PREHISTORIC FUTURE and was released 1984 on the Tago Mago label in Paris as a limited number of mono-cassettes (2000 pressings). For the first time we recorded samples of the students' rebellion of 1968 in Paris and these became an important part of the concert. From there on we were lucky in obtaining the permission for building up our own studio in Schloss Nörvenich. This studio consisted of 2 stereo tape-deck machines and about 4 microphones. A musician's amplifier was used as our 'recording mixer'. We immediately started recording film music for a young German film director and through this experience we decided to become a rhythmically orientated 'heavy weight' group in combination with ethnological influences- sometimes at least. And as we were trying to imitate 'primitive sounds' CAN ended up with its Ethnological Forgery Serie and did not even stop at imitating a Japanese No spectacle. Of course we regarded these attempts more from the humorous than from a perfect performance side. The first regular CAN album was MONSTER MOVIE and the first piece we recorded was 'Father Cannot Yell.' We thought more of a collapsing building in slow motion pictures than becoming heroes on our instruments. Everything was spontaneously recorded by 'instant composition'. 'Yoo Doo Right' was an unusual long piece of music at that time with a rhythm which did not belong to the world of Rock 'n Roll. It seemed more to be played by an electric tribe band with adequate instruments of that time.

The album SOUNDTRACKS became more an in-between project, because it took CAN much more time in finishing the double album TAGO MAGO than we thought. Of course we could not live by our income from live gigs or record sales and so CAN was lucky in doing several film musics. The title tracks of the pictures were released as soundtracks on the SOUNDTRACK album. 'Don't Turn the Light on, Leave Me Alone' was Damo's first recording with CAN ever. This piece expresses Damo's mood at that time I think, after I found him singing or 'praying' loud in the streets of Munich. Jaki and me were sitting outside in a cafe when Damo came near. I said to Jaki: 'This will be our new singer.' Jaki: 'how can you say that, you don't even know him.' I got up from my seat, went to Damo and asked him if he is free for the evening. We were an experimental rock group and we were going to play a concert the night- sold out. Damo said he had nothing special to do, so why shouldn't he sing. The venue was packed that evening and Damo started murmuring like a meditating monk. All of a sudden he turned into a fighting samurai, the audience was shocked and almost everybody left the hall. About 30 Americans were left and got totally excited about what they heard. Among them was Hollywood actor David Niven who probably thought he was attending to some sort of nightmare happening.

TAGO MAGO was CAN's official second album and was an attempt in achieving a mystery musical world from light to darkness and return. The album consisted not only out of regularly recorded music, but for the first time we combined 'in-between-recordings', that means the musicians were secretly recorded in the pauses when a new microphone and recording set up was being established. In that time the rest of the group just played in order to make the time pass by instead of waiting till the technical problems were solved. And there was always one microphone and one recorder on standby position for such cases. Altogether certainly a psychedelic experience, and the studio

itself even turned into something new e. g. by changing dramatically the whole illumination.

At the end of 1971 CAN moved into another village with their studio equipment where we rented an old cinema which wasn't any longer used as such. The walls were covered by new walls out of 1500 military mattresses and the studio looked like an elephant from inside. We could achieve an excellent dry and ambient sound in there and the interior submitted a cozy landscape feeling with all possibilities of spontaneous recordings. EGE BAMYASI was the first album made in this new environment and reflects the group being in a lighter mood than it was in Schloss Nörvenich. 'Vitamin C' became the title track of the Hollywood movie 'Dead Pigeon' by Samuel Fuller and 'Spoon' was another title track of a TV-gangster series. Everytime about 30 million people switched their TV on, they heard this and so it didn't surprise when 'Spoon' became a top ten hit in Germany. And 'Spoon' was one of the first pieces banded on tape in combination of an electric drum machine and a drummer who was himself an *inhuman* machine.

As 'Spoon' was so successful CAN could afford having some summer holidays for the first time in its short history. And when everyone returned back to the Inner Space Studio, the music had this summer feeling too. A lot of editings and cuttings were involved during the production and for the first time I could concentrate myself only on bass playing and didn't function as CAN's recording engeneer at the same time. This became the job for our roadies now. Especially 'Bel Air' showed CAN in a state of being an electric symphony group performing a peaceful though sometimes dramatic landscape painting.

And it was the calm weather before the storm too. Damo got married to a German girl from the Jehovas' Witness religion and left CAN. For the rest of the group it was the feeling of a powerful fist strike into one's stomach. We tried out many other singers, but nobody suited to us anymore. So guitarist Michael Karoli and space organist Irmin Schmidt and sometimes me filled the gap. SOON OVER BABALUMA was the last album which was recorded straight onto stereo without a multi-tracking machine. An era came to an end. But it was also the birth of something new. 'Quantum Physics' became one of the first ambient music pieces with a sort of techno character thanks to Jaki's fabulous machine drumming and Irmin's prehistoric synthesizer 'alpha 77'.

In all these years from 1968 to 1974 a lot of unofficial in between recordings came to existence. This was somehow the other face of CAN. These recordings were first released as a LIMITED EDITION album and later got expanded to UNLIMITED EDITION. This double album witnesses the extraordinary mood of the Inner Space Studio and only in such a place these recordings had been possible. We have tested out other professional studios but none could equal our private home studio which put the musicians in such a special state of creativity.

In 1975, CAN obtained their first 16 track recorder and that gave a lot of change to the groups musical output. LANDED became the first CAN album which got a real mix- a professional mix so to speak. The ambient aspect had its successor in 'Unfinished' and for the first time a guest musician appeared on an CAN album: Olaf Kübler from Amon Düül played saxophone on 'Red Hot Indians'.

FLOW MOTION showed how CAN got influenced by reggae music, though no song of this album is actually reggae music. But I remember attending for the first time Bob Marley in concert and I was really impressed by the drums and bass and the reggae-designed guitar work. The very sinister 'Smoke' reminded me of CAN getting back into the sixties again and 'I Want More' took CAN into the U.K. charts, giving an impression of CAN's danceable power. One of my favourite pieces became 'Flow Motion' itself and this time it didn't matter that nobody was singing. It was the nucleus of the group performing this music as it had been from the very beginning since its existence.

The times were changing. During a TV-recording in England we met the musicians of TRAFFIC and two of them soon visited us at Inner Space. Rebob and Rosko Gee liked the way we were approaching music and so they got involved as the new temporary CAN members leading especially the rhythms into a fluent bombardment. It was the time when I invented a new instrumental scenario for myself which switched CAN to different medias like radio tuning, prepared samples of other ethno worlds, electronic treatments and a different instrumental line up as such. 'Animal Waves' of SAW DELIGHT became a journey into other countries and their musical cultures. All of this was synchronized by an activated morse key. Without our new members from TRAFFIC,

this intensive musical flow would have never been established.

And as everything comes once to an end, the CAN album showed a last time the glance of a vanishing star. 'All Gates Open' is synonymous for it. And we could take that title straight. All gates really came open for each member of the band going their own musical way which everyone had dreamed of - until 1987, when our first singer Malcolm Mooney wrote us a letter from the United States asking if we couldn't come together again. Since his departure from the group he got named as an artist without having made an attempt as a singer again. He wanted to know how it feels again standing with the band behind a microphone, which had made him so sick when he had left. We all came together in the beautiful landscape of South France and a new spirit came up with the first recordings. In the meantime the group became slowly matured still remaining the original CAN of the old days with an uptodate musical output. RITE TIME was born and especially 'In the Distance lies the Future' became one of my favourite CAN pieces of all time.

With such an amount of musical material recorded in around 10 years it became obvious that new combinations and shorted versions were finding its way into CANIBALISM I to III. The listener who gets in contact with CAN's music for the first time will get a concentrated impression on certain essential aspects. 'Animal Waves' on CANIBALISM II was never cutted so effectively to the point as it is on this album. And this is only one example.

One thing shouldn't been forgotten: when our first album entitled PREPARED TO MEET THY PNOOM was finished no record company wanted to get hold of that kind of music. So we decided to go on recording and try it again. This was leading to MONSTER MOVIE and we made a private pressing out of it, before a record company wanted to sign us. These very first recordings were later released as DELAY 1968. When I did the mastering in the beginning of the eighties the enigmatic German producer Conny Planck listened to it and got excited saying: 'As long as CAN playes 'Soul' they are unbeatable.' 'Little Star of Bethlehem' is one of the first recordings with inserted overdub parts of the whole group.

1997 becomes the year where other musicians show the timeless aspect of CAN's music in the new remix album SACRILEGE. And this is the Sound of CAN in the nineties.

D.A.M.O. INTERVIEW

by Archie Patterson, 2000, <http://www.eurock.com>

During the month of October Damo Suzuki and band made a short tour of the US in support of the excellent new album ODYSSEY. They played several dates along the West Coast. During their show in Portland on 10/07/00, Damo and I met up and arranged the following interview. It offers a glimpse into the past and current musical ideas of one of the original movers and shakers (literally) of "Krautrock". To see him live after all these years was a gas, and the fact that he has lost none of his energy or spontaneous creative juice was refreshing to say the least.

In the last few years we've seen a rebirth of your musical activity. For some time before nothing was heard - what did you do in the first years after Can?

D: I split from CAN in the autumn of 1973, and then I joined the Jehovah Witness religion. I got a normal job, at first working as a receptionist in a small business hotel.

Have you been making music all this time?

D: No, not at all. From this time onward for about 11 years I never made music and had nothing to do with music scene.

Your recent releases are all live recordings. Do you ever plan to do a studio album?

D: I'm not much interested in Studio works. I love to play live, meet people and also interact with audiences. At the moment I'm not thinking of recording in the studio. I like the concept of INSTANT COMPOSING; so recording live is the best way I think. Living things are positive and have energy, I like to live in the moment and enjoy this moment. In front of an audience I can be natural and I feel energy coming from the people. Also DAMO'S NETWORK is not only about making music, we create a space you can enjoy AT THAT MOMENT, because it's a living creation.

How does the overall vibe of the music scene today compare with the old days - in particular the concert atmosphere, business situation, etc.?

D: I can talk about this in terms of my own experiences at my shows because; I don't go to anyone else's concerts. I think the business situation has changed for the worse. But, I don't worry about this so much as there's always a place to play. How much money I get is not important. The important thing is that there are people who still like to hear and see me, even if sometimes the audience is not so large. I'm really happy to meet the people coming, everywhere in the world. And if possible, I speak with them before, or after the show. That's why I began with the NETWORK group idea...I don't mean NETWORK in the computer sense. My meaning of NETWORK is a back to the roots thing. If you see the T-shirts with my logo, it says, "The Beginning was smoke - Established since the Stone Age." The first communication between people began with smoke giving someone a signal, to people on another hill who answered with smoke. That was also the beginning of music (communication with others). It all happened in the Stone Age (I think I'm getting away from your question, sorry!)

What kind of audience do you get now - mostly old fans, or younger experimentalists?

D: Oh, it is different from city to city, country to country. Last weekend we played in a very

beautiful city called Schwerin, in the former GDR. There came older people, who were not able to see me in my time with CAN for political reasons. No, I cannot say they are only old...mostly I'm the oldest in this situation. In 1998 I played a show in London, I saw only younger people between ages 18 & 24. I was like their father.

You've played in many countries in the last years - which has had the biggest audiences and best reaction?

D: I like every concert. When everyone is in the same space and time it can be very harmonious. For me it is a really great moment, sometimes-even teardrops start falling because of my happiness. I feel very lucky to be in this moment with such an audience.

To me it seemed to be sort of a "golden age" back in the beginnings of experimental and progressive rock. Does the scene seem different to you today - less drugs, less political, less creative?

D: Fewer drugs would be not so bad. Less politics would also be OK, who can trust in politicians? On the other hand we're now living in a global family. Art should not mix with politics. I think today's generation is creative. They create in their own way. Also, it is impossible if you are living at the end of a year (now), to try and change for the better, things that have already happened earlier in the year (in the past).

Do you have any special projects planned for the future?

D: Yes, I have. But, I won't tell you now. I'm just working it out, and then you will see. I don't want to talk about things before they happen. You know what I mean?

Would you like to play again with the former members of Can and perhaps do a reunion concert or album?

D: Not really, maybe with Karoli? Reunion things are not for me. I'm not interested to see passed landscape again. I feel like I'm in a train traveling down the track... I'm anxious to get to the next station, and if this stop is not on map, it will be much more fun. I can paint with my music when I get there, as I like, a nice picture for the audience.

IRMIN SCHMIDT PORTRAIT

by j. poet, 1999, <http://beatpatrol.wordpress.com/category/music/krautrock/can/>

Thirty years ago a classically trained keyboard player and composer named Irmin Schmidt turned his back on the world of classical music and founded Can, the German band credited with creating the sound that became known as progressive rock. Today, their freeform improvisations are acknowledged as the template of jazz/rock, techno and today's jam bands.

Most aging rock stars are an embarrassment. Way past their prime, too proud and narcissistic to gracefully retire or admit they're washed up and join an oldies package tour, they recycle the music of their youth, sounds that were, in some cases, tired even when they were originally laid down. How refreshing it is then, to dig into *Masters of Confusion*, (Mute) Irmin Schmidt's new collaboration with techno wiz kid Kumo.

Schmidt, who is in his early 60s, has never sounded better. The clean, lean lead lines he plays on his acoustic grand piano, find a perfect compliment in the breaks and beats generated by Kumo, AKA Jono Podmore, a 30-year-old London-based engineer, producer and programmer who has also collaborated with the Shamen and Mr. C.

"Most older musicians don't make challenging music because they surround themselves with admirers," Schmidt said, from his home in France, via phone. "Admirers are boring, unless they're very rich or pretty young women. If you want to stay creative, you have to find younger musicians who can blow some fresh air into your mind. I'm always looking for people who have skills I don't have, so I can learn something.

"That was why I started Can. I had a promising career as a classical pianist. I gave some of the first concerts of [avant garde composer] John Cage's music in Germany, but the classical world looked down on other kinds of music. I wanted to find musicians who could push me in new directions. That's why I started working with Jaki Liebezeit, who was a jazz drummer, and Michael Karoli, a rock guitarist. I wanted to play music that had never been played."

That adventurous impulse is what led Schmidt to collaborate with Kumo. "I got together with Kumo to work with him on an opera I wrote based on *Gormenghast*, the great Gothic novel by Mervyn Peake. For the music I wanted to mix classical and rock with electronic effects, and I a sound engineer who knew classical and electronica and who was younger than me."

Gormenghast was a success and led to a continuing collaboration between Schmidt and Kumo. "For Can's 30th Birthday we wanted to do some concerts, but since we all hate the idea of a reunion, each of us - Jaki, Michael and me - played a set with our new projects. Kumo and I had assembled so many sounds and beats for *Gormenghast* that we went on stage and improvised together. It was so successful that we decided to do a record together."

Masters of Confusion is unlike anything you've ever heard before. Kumo's break beats and samples fit perfectly with the majestic classical melodies Schmidt plays, often improvising them on the spot. Schmidt's crisp minimalism and Kumo's percussive flurries have created something unique - call it Chamber Techno.

"The main problem with rock and jazz is that the basic drum sound forces you to stay within certain harmonic limits," Schmidt explained. "Even if your drummer is good enough to tune the

skins, the harmonics will clash if you go beyond a fairly narrow range. With electronics you can create rhythm patterns that are totally free from harmonic limitations. The drums always sound good and the piano can really blossom on top of it.”

CAN BIOGRAPHY

By Gary Smith, <http://www.spoonrecords.com/history.html>, 31.8.2003

June 2003 marked the 35th anniversary of the founding of Can when Holger Czukay (bass), David Johnson (flute), jazz drummer Jaki Liebezeit and beat guitar player Michael Karoli met in classical conductor and piano player Irmin Schmidt's Cologne apartment in 1968. Their first gig, a collage of rock music and tape samples, took place at Schloss Nörvenich (Castle Nörvenich, near Cologne). The show is documented on the audio cassette *Prehistoric Future*.

The nameless collective had established its first studio, Inner Space, at the castle when American sculptor Malcolm Mooney, visiting Irmin and Hildegard Schmidt, joined the band. His intuitive drive led the musicians toward a unique take on rock music and the track *Father Cannot Yell* originated from one of these early sessions. David Johnson, who by then had become the band's sound engineer, left at the end of 1968. Around this period, the lack of a name was solved by Mooney and Liebezeit who came up with *The Can*.

The first Can album, *Monster Movie* (1969), defined Can music. Played and recorded spontaneously and driven by repetitive rhythms, the album was recorded directly on to a 2-track machine and then extensively edited. Soundtracks featuring film scores from 1969 and 1970, was the next album. Just after the record was released, Malcolm Mooney left the band and returned to the U.S. The Mooney era is extensively documented on *Can - Delay*, released in 1982.

In May 1970, Japanese singer Kenji "Damo" Suzuki joined Can after being spotted by Holger Czukay and Jaki Liebezeit busking in Munich. The very same evening he performed with the band at the Blow Up club.

In December 1971, Can founded the Can Studio - known as Inner Space until 1978 when Can soundman René Tinner took over running the operation - in a former cinema in Weilerswist, close to Cologne. All subsequent Can albums were produced there except *Rite Time*. The studio has now been painstakingly disassembled and is being reconstructed to scale as a working exhibit at the German Rock'n'Pop Museum in Gronau, near the Dutch border.

The period 1970-2 was a breakthrough time for the band with *Tago Mago* (1971) impressing critics in England and France as well as Germany. *Ege Bamyasi*, released in 1972, featured the track *Spoon*, the theme tune for the crime thriller *Das Messer* and also the band's first chart success in Germany. The track, which was the first time that Can used an early version of a drum machine, led to a Goldene Europa TV award in recognition of Can's soundtrack work. *Ege Bamyasi* also included the music from another TV crime series in the form of *Vitamin C*.

The success of *Spoon* inspired the band to try to reach a wider audience which led to the *Can Free Concert*. The event was filmed by Martin Schäfer, Robbie Müller and Egon Mann for director Peter Przygodda at the Cologne Sporthalle on February 3rd, 1972. British music weekly *Melody Maker* wrote: "Can are without doubt the most talented and most consistent experimental rock band in Europe, England included." French magazine *Rock & Folk* portrayed Can's music as "one of the most impressive musical experiments offered by contemporary bands."

Future Days (1973) was the last Can album with Damo Suzuki. First Michael Karoli took over the vocal duties, followed by short interludes with a succession of singers, among them Tim Hardin. The

recording of *Soon Over Babaluma* that same year marked the end of the era of recording straight onto 2-track. *Landed* (1975), was the first Can LP to be produced using multi-track technology. The album led *Melody Maker* to call them “the most advanced rock unit on the planet.”

Double album *Unlimited Edition* (1976) was an extended version of a release that had quickly sold out as *Limited Edition* two years earlier. Among the tracks were the multi-faceted experiments known as the *Ethnological Forgery Series* (EFS). *Flow Motion*, also released in 1976, featured the disco hit *I Want More* and saw the band performing on UK primetime hitshow *Top Of The Pops*. The following year Can was augmented by ex-Traffic rhythm duo Rosko Gee (bass) and Reebop Kwaku Baah on percussion.

Holger Czukay had retired as a bass player and on *Saw Delight* was in charge of “special sounds”. His new instrument was a shortwave radio receiver; while his idea to create new impulses for the musical process via radio signals didn’t fit within the new Can structure, it became the basis for his first solo album, *Movies* (1979). The next Can album, *Out of Reach* (1978), was recorded without Czukay, who had left the band in May 1977, during the final Can tour. On the last show of the tour, in Lisbon at the end of May, Can performed in front of 10,000 fans. The double album *Cannibalism* (1978) was not just a “Best of ...” compilation, it was in fact, an early indication that Can’s reputation would continue to grow.

The British avant-garde and several punk acts were deeply inspired by Can. Speaking for many, Pete Shelley (*Buzzcocks*) is quoted on the *Cannibalism* cover: “I never would have played guitar if not for Marc Bolan and Michael Karoli of Can”. At the end of 1978 the band released Can. Meanwhile Michael Karoli built the *Outer Space Studio* studio in France, close to Nice. It was there in November 1986 that the original *Monster Movie* line-up got together again, with vocalist Malcolm Mooney to record *Rite Time*. The album was released in 1988. The band assembled again at the *Can Studio* with the same line-up minus Holger to record the track *Last Night Sleep* for Wim Wenders’ film *Until the End of the World*.

In May 1997, the remix CD *Sacrilege* provided further evidence of the durability of Can’s music. For this tribute, prominent representatives of the techno, dance and ambient scene reworked 15 classic Can tracks. Ironically, the importance of Can’s contribution to the wider musical pantheon was summed up by Andrew Weatherall who refused an offer to remix a Can track for *Sacrilege*: “I love to remix other people’s work. But Can? No way. You don’t touch music that perfect. There is nothing to add or take away.”

The band’s chosen means of celebrating its 30th anniversary in 1999 was characteristically original. Eschewing a reunion tour as too obvious, and, more importantly, as being against the spirit of the group, the *Can Box* and the *Can-Solo-Projects* tour were the ways in which the group marked the occasion. *Can Box* includes recordings from the period 1971-77, a tri-lingual book featuring a comprehensive group history, interviews, reviews and photos by Hildegard Schmidt and Wolf Kampmann plus a video with both the *Can Free Concert* film by Peter Przygodda, and the *Can Documentary* by DoRo-film.

The *Can-Solo-Projects* tour, which featured Holger Czukay & U-She, Jaki Liebezeit’s *Club Off Chaos*, Irmin Schmidt & Kumo plus Michael Karoli’s *Sofortkontakt!*, started on March 19th 1999 in Berlin at the *Columbia Halle*. The tour was so well received that a second leg was organised for September 1999. This went ahead without Holger Czukay who was obliged to pull out at the last minute due to unforeseen circumstances.

Can worked together for the last time in August 1999 at Irmin’s studio in Provence with Jono Podmore, to record a cover-version of *The Third Man* theme (from the film of the same name) for the *Pop 2000* compilation released on Herbert Grönemeyer’s label *Grönland/EMI*.

On November 17th, 2001, Michael Karoli died after a long fight against cancer.

In March 2003 Can received the most prestigious prize that the German music industry can offer: the *Echo* award for lifetime achievement was presented at an awards ceremony in Berlin. Herbert Grönemeyer, one of Germany’s most famous artists, made the official speech while Brian Eno sent in a short, witty film about the group. The prize was handed over by the *Red Hot Chili Peppers* whose guitarist John Frusciante also spoke of his appreciation and respect for Can’s music.

The remaining members of Can are all active as both solo artists and collaborators.

KRAUTS WIDER WILLEN

Von Dallach, Christoph, DER SPIEGEL 12/1999

Die Veteranen der Pionierband Can, neuerdings auch von jungen Fans umschwärmt, gehen gemeinsam auf Tour - doch auf der Bühne spielt jeder für sich.

Es ist nicht leicht, den Ruf einer Avantgardeband zu verwalten, wenn man das Vorruhestandsalter erreicht hat. Und deshalb hütet sich Irmin Schmidt, 61, vor allem Schwelgen in vergangenen Zeiten. „Nostalgie und Wehmut sind uns fremd“, sagt er entschieden.

Von Ehrfurchtsbezeugungen altgedienter Fans bleiben Schmidt und die anderen Musiker der Kölner Band Can in ihrem Alltagsleben ohnehin weitgehend verschont. Denn viel vehementer als in der Heimat feiern Kritiker und Fans in London, New York und Tokio Can als Pioniere des intelligenten Pop. Die Londoner „Times“ schwärmte zu Jahresbeginn: „Can waren ihrer Zeit weit voraus, und keiner hat mit ihnen jemals gleichziehen können.“

Den 30. Geburtstag der Band zelebrieren nun auch, ein wenig verspätet, die vier Kölner selbst: Vor ein paar Wochen erschien eine „Can Box“, deren zwei CDs unveröffentlichte Can-Werke aus früheren Jahren präsentieren - und dazu eine Biographie und eine Video-Dokumentation. Zudem sind die Musiker seit vergangener Woche unter dem Motto „Can - Solo Projects live“ auf einer kurzen Deutschland-Tournee. Dabei musizieren die Can-Veteranen jeweils solo und hintereinander weg; schon um zu vermeiden, daß doch irgendwer im Publikum sentimental wird.

Eine Reunion, die Wiederbelebung von Can im herkömmlichen Sinne, ist nicht geplant. „Das widerspräche dem Can-Geist. Wir reproduzieren nicht“, behauptet Schmidt. Trotzdem ist ein gemeinsames Musizieren auf der Konzertbühne keineswegs auszuschließen: Letztlich zeichnet der vielbeschworene Can-Geist sich vor allem durch Unberechenbarkeit aus. In den vergangenen 30 Jahren war es geradezu ein Prinzip des Viererbundes, daß keiner jeweils genau wußte, was die anderen gerade vorhatten.

„Wir passen eigentlich überhaupt nicht zusammen, das ist die Herausforderung“, sagt Schmidt, der mal Waldhorn und Klavier studierte, sich unter Ligeti und Stockhausen mit Neuer Musik befaßte, dann aber die Karriere in der sogenannten Hochkultur sausen ließ, weil er „mit dem klassischen Konzertpublikum nichts anfangen konnte“. Mit dem Stockhausen-Mitschüler und Bassisten Holger Czukay, dem Jazz-Schlagzeuger Jaki Liebezeit und dem Beat-Gitarristen Michael Karoli gründete Schmidt im Jahr 1968 Can. Dazu sang anfangs der Amerikaner Malcolm Mooney und nach dessen depressionsbedingtem Ausscheiden der Musiker Kenji „Damo“ Suzuki.

Die Band fand in einer Zeit zusammen, in der bundesdeutsche Pop- und Rock-Musiker sich meist darauf beschränkten, die Stars aus den britischen Top ten nachzuleiern. Genau das aber kam für Can nicht in Frage. Weil Rock'n'Roll in Deutschland keine Tradition besaß, beschlossen sie, bei Null anzufangen. Täglich trafen sie sich, um neue Klänge und Konzepte zu erarbeiten. Und kombinierten dabei ihre Kenntnisse und Vorlieben im Jazz, in der Neuen Musik, in Rock'n'Roll und Folklore.

Spannung sollte erzeugt werden, und das glückte ihnen so gut, daß auch im Studio die Fetzen flogen. Noch heute genügt ein mißverständlicher Satz von Czukay, um den gewöhnlich verstockten Jaki Liebezeit kurz, aber heftig „Ne, ne, ne“ brüllen zu lassen - so will der Schlagzeuger den

Bassisten sogar einmal mit einem Beil um die Verstärker gejagt haben. Doch weil die Musiker in diesen aufreibenden Arbeitskämpfen auch zu erstaunlicher Harmonie fanden und sich nie in drögen Schlagzeug- oder Gitarrensoli verloren, gelang ihnen Musik, die am Ende dieses Jahrtausends genauso geheimnisvoll und wahrhaftig zeitlos klingt wie vor 30 Jahren.

Anerkennung fanden Can schon damals zuerst in Großbritannien - dort kürte man Can nach Alben wie „Monster Movie“ bereits in den Siebzigern zu einer der „bedeutendsten europäischen Bands“ („Melody Maker“). Allerdings ordneten die britischen Verehrer die Can-Musik wie nahezu alles, was zu jener Zeit aus der Bundesrepublik herübertönte, dem Genre „Krautrock“ zu: ein Label, das Schmidt und seinen Mitstreitern seither anhängt und das sie erbost. Für Holger Czukay ist schon Rock ein Schimpfwort. „Da dreht sich alles um das Wiederkäuen gebrauchter Ideen, es ist das absolute Gegenteil zu Innovation. Nein, danke.“

In Deutschland gelang den Can-Musikern Anfang der Siebziger ihr größter Erfolg: Zu dem mehrteiligen Krimi „Das Messer“ nach Francis Durbridge lieferten sie mit „Spoon“ die Musik - und landeten in der Hitparade. Ansonsten blieben Can in ihrer Heimat ein Fall für Eingeweihte, von denen einige bis heute behaupten, daß nach Damo Suzukis Ausstieg die beste Zeit der Band vorüber gewesen sei. Die Zurückgebliebenen beschlossen, den Sänger nicht zu ersetzen, und lehnten auch prominente Bewerber wie den Sex-Pistols-Sänger John Lydon ab. So bereiste die Rumpfmannschaft die Welt, nahm noch ein paar Platten auf und befand 1978, daß es nach „zehn Jahren totaler Hingabe“ genug sei.

Seitdem versuchen sich alle Can-Ehemaligen an wechselnd erfolgreichen Solo-Unternehmungen, produzieren Opern, Filmmusik und Techno. Und registrieren seit einigen Jahren mit Erstaunen, wie der Ruhm von Can spektakuläre Blüten treibt. Heute rotieren Can-Platten in britischen Clubs und amerikanischen College-Buden, und vor zwei Jahren erschien die Doppel-CD „Sacrilege“, auf der prominente Fans wie Westbam, Sonic Youth und Brian Eno Can-Songs überarbeiteten.

So schmeichelhaft der Trubel ist, so entschieden lehnen die Kölner Angebote für gemeinsame Auftritte, etwa vor kurzem für eine „Greatest Hits Show“ in London, ab: Instrumente wie Baß und Gitarre, mit denen Can einst antraten, seien mittlerweile „schon klanglich total veraltet“, erläutert Schmidt.

Drei der Can-Musiker sind über 60; wenn er Gleichaltrige treffe, sehe er meistens „nur Wüste“, klagt Czukay. Der war jüngst noch mit dem jungen Kölner Techno-Musiker Dr. Walker auf Tournee - „ein echtes Trash-Manöver“, wie er sagt. Das zumeist jugendliche Publikum jubelte, und das findet auch Czukay „viel besser, als stumpfsinnig die alten Zeiten zu feiern“.

IRMIN SCHMIDT: „DIE SPIELRÄUME FÜR KUNST SIND NIE AUSDEFINIERT. . . “

Das Interview führte Thomas Neuhauser (ARTE/Juli 2008).

Irmin Schmidt, die Gruppe Can, die Sie 1968 mit gründeten, hat Musikgeschichte geschrieben und 2003 sogar den Musikpreis Echo für ihr Lebenswerk bekommen. Trotzdem hat Can in Deutschland sich immer einen gewissen Außenseiter- oder auch Insider-Status bewahrt. Was ist das Besondere an der Musik von Can, auch im Vergleich zu anderen deutschen Rockgruppen?

Ich nehme an, es ist die Vielfalt der verschiedenen Ausdrucksformen, die wir erprobt und gespielt haben, und es ist sicherlich auch die Tatsache, dass es teilweise eine sehr kunstvolle Musik ist. Ich komme ja selbst aus einer kunstvollen, also der klassischen Musik, und ich habe eigentlich nie das Gefühl gehabt, mit Can etwas anderes zu machen als vorher, es ist bloß eine andere Ausdrucksform. Da dies so ist, unterscheiden wir uns meiner Ansicht nach fundamental von den anderen Gruppen, die Rockmusik gemacht haben. Mein Anliegen, die Gruppe damals zu gründen, war ja nicht der Wunsch, jetzt plötzlich Rockmusik zu machen, sondern für mich waren Rockmusik und Jazz genauso neue Ausdrucksformen, wie die Neue Musik von Stockhausen, Boulez und Cage, mit der ich ja bis dahin gelebt und gelernt hatte. Ich wollte diese neuen Ausdrucksformen der Musik - und dazu gehört auch die Rockmusik - zusammenbringen, aber nicht indem ich einzelne Elemente dieser Musikstile zusammenkomponierte und verschmolz, sondern indem Musiker, die ganz in diesen verschiedenen Stilen aufgewachsen sind, wie z.B. Michael Karoli im Rock, Jaki Liebezeit im Jazz, Holger Czukay und ich in der Klassischen und der Neuen Musik, spontan miteinander Musik machen. Ich wollte wissen, was passiert, wenn solche Leute zusammenkommen, gemeinsam komponieren, eine Ausdrucksform suchen, ohne dass einer die Richtung vorgibt. Und so ist dann eben Can passiert

Aber auch die Experimentierfreudigkeit und der Einsatz der damals neuen Elektronik spielten doch eine große Rolle. Woher kam diese Offenheit gegenüber den elektronischen Möglichkeiten?

Das mit der Elektronik ergab sich ganz einfach aus der Tatsache, dass Holger Czukay und ich damals bei Karlheinz Stockhausen an der Hochschule für Musik in Köln Kurse für Neue Musik belegt hatten, und Stockhausen nun mal der große Pionier der elektronischen Musik ist. Da haben wir diese Möglichkeiten kennengelernt und das war sehr faszinierend, denn Stockhausen war für mich lange Zeit der einzige, der mit diesen neuen Ausdrucksformen tatsächlich eine neue Musik schuf, nicht nur interessante Klänge, also wirklich elektronische Musik und zwar ganz großartige Musik. Da lag es nahe, dass wir auf diesem Gebiet weiter spielten und forschten und experimentierten. Das war ja auch etwas, das uns vereinte, dass wir bereit waren, das alles zusammenzuwerfen und damit neu anzufangen.

Trotzdem wurde auch Can gerne unter dem inzwischen ja durchaus positiv besetzten Etikett „Krautrock“ eingeordnet, sogar Gruppen wie Sonic Youth, Radiohead oder Tortoise beziehen sich auf diese Musikrichtung. Können Sie mit dem Begriff Krautrock etwas anfangen, ist das überhaupt eine bestimmte Musikform?

Ich glaube nicht, dass es sich dabei um eine bestimmte Musikform handelt. Außerdem ist dieser Begriff auch erst aufgekommen, lange nachdem wir aufgehört hatten, zusammen als Gruppe aufzutreten, der Begriff kam ja erst in den achtziger Jahren auf. Mir ist das eigentlich ziemlich egal, ob Can dieses Etikett angeheftet wird, „Krautrock“ ist tatsächlich überhaupt nicht negativ besetzt,

Krauts war zwar mal im Krieg ein nicht so nett gemeinter Begriff für die Deutschen, aber in diesem Kontext besagt das eigentlich nichts anderes als in Großbritannien der Brit-Rock, vielleicht weil hier Deutsch-Rock einfach zu blöd klingt. Das beinhaltet ja die unterschiedlichsten Spiel- und Ausdrucksformen. Das einzige, was wir mit den anderen deutschen Gruppen damals gemeinsam hatten, vor allem mit Kraftwerk, das war, dass wir uns nicht mehr so sehr an den englischen Rockgruppen orientierten, sondern dass wir uns erstmals auf unsere eigenen Traditionen, unser Umfeld und unsere Kultur bezogen und davon etwas in die Musik hineinbringen wollten. Bei den Gruppen, die später unter dem Begriff Krautrock zusammengefasst wurden, also Amon Düül, Kraftwerk, Faust usw., war es vielleicht das entscheidende Merkmal, dass alle nicht mehr gewillt waren, einfach die englischen Popgruppen nachzuahmen.

Eine offizielle Auflösung der Gruppe Can gab es nicht, aber von Ihnen, Holger Czukay und Jaki Liebezeit gibt es vor allem Soloprojekte. Wie ist die Beziehung untereinander, kommen Sie gelegentlich noch zusammen, gibt es noch ein Band-Gefühl?

Der Tod von Michael Karoli hat das Band-Gefühl natürlich nachhaltig verändert, wenn nicht beendet. Das Fehlen von Michael macht es eigentlich unmöglich, auch nur mit dem Gedanken zu spielen, noch einmal als Can etwas gemeinsam zu machen, ohne ihn gibt es Can eben nicht mehr. Andererseits war es ja von Anfang an meine Idee, nicht nur ganz verschiedene musikalische Hintergründe zusammenzuführen, sondern eben auch unterschiedliche Charaktere, die ein anderes Musikverständnis haben als beispielsweise ich selbst. Natürlich haben sich diese einzelnen Musiker in den letzten Jahren auch entsprechend ihrer Individualität unterschiedlich weiter- oder auch auseinanderentwickelt, selbstverständlich hat inzwischen auch jeder seine eigenen Lebensentwürfe realisiert. Wir sehen uns also nur noch selten, in den achtziger und neunziger Jahren gab es noch Soloprojekte mit Jaki, aber seitdem auch nicht mehr. Zudem habe ich auch einen Sicherheitsabstand von gut 1000 Kilometern, ich wohne hier in Südfrankreich und die anderen in Köln.

Sie haben sehr früh die elektronischen Möglichkeiten in der Musik ausprobiert, aber die rasante Entwicklung zur vollständigen Digitalisierung und mp3-Komprimierung dürfte auch Sie überrascht haben. Wie sehen Sie die Veränderung der Hörgewohnheiten, des Klangs und der Verfügbarkeit von Musik?

Die Verfügbarkeit hat sich eben so entwickelt, das ist nichts grundsätzlich Neues. Was mp3 angeht, so halte ich das für etwas Furchtbares. Gerade für uns, die wir bei der Entwicklung elektronischer Klänge die ganze Bandbreite der Studioteknik nutzten und mit der Elektronik auch eine der wichtigsten Neuerungen in der Musik seit Mahler - nämlich die Schaffung eines großen, tiefen Klangraums - verfügbar machen wollten. Vereinfacht gesagt kann man mit Hall und Echos und der entsprechenden Aufnahmetechnik die Instrumente auf verschiedene Art räumlich zueinander in Beziehung setzen. Das geht bei der mp3-Komprimierung alles verloren, was ich sehr schade finde. Zwischen der ständigen Anwesenheit und Verfügbarkeit von Musik als Hintergrund und einer Musik, der man wirklich zuhört, gibt es eben eine große Kluft, aber es wird immer Menschen geben, die hinzuhören wollen, die sich hinsetzen und konzentriert Musik hören, und die hören sich mit Sicherheit dann keine verstümmelte Musik an.

ARTE zeigt auch den Film „Deadlock“ von Roland Klick, zu dem Can die Filmmusik gemacht hat, mit dem Titel „Spoon“ zu einem Durbridge-Krimi hatten Sie sogar einen Hit. Arbeiten Sie heute noch für den Film, wie nähern Sie sich den Bildern?

Ich arbeite sehr viel für Film und Fernsehen, habe für die „Tatort“- und für die „Schimanski“-Reihe Filmmusiken geschrieben, für Geißendörfers letzten („Schneeland“) und Wenders neuesten Film („Palermo Shooting“) und ich komponiere viel für die „Bloch“-Reihe mit Dieter Pfaff. Aber ich arbeite keineswegs nur als Filmkomponist, ich schreibe auch Ballettmusik und habe ein Duoprojekt mit meinem Schwiegersohn, da ist gerade die neue CD „Axolotl Eyes“ erschienen, einschließlich einer DVD mit einer Klanginstallation.

Also sehr unterschiedliche Arbeitsweisen. Wie abhängig fühlen Sie sich beim Komponieren von Filmmusik von den Bildern, ist das nicht sehr einengend?

Natürlich stehen da die Bilder im Vordergrund, zu denen mir etwas einfallen muss - um sie verständlicher zu machen, aufleben zu lassen, mehr Spannung oder Emotionen zu erzeugen. Das diskutiert man mit den Vorstellungen des Regisseurs oder wie zuletzt mit der „Bloch“-Regisseurin Franziska Meletzki, die gern eine Geige in der Musik haben wollte, was zu einem wunderbaren Ergebnis

führte. Beim Film ist man nicht autonom, da ist man nicht allein und ordnet sich ein. Aber es gibt eigentlich sehr selten einen Dissenz, höchstens dass eine Produktionsfirma vielleicht eine etwas gefälligere, kommerziellere Musik möchte, oder das, was sie sich darunter vorstellt. Denn tatsächlich ist meine Musik wahrscheinlich auch hier etwas anders, als die normale Filmmusik, denn ich bin selbstverständlich gegen die Soße, die man so gerne den Bildern überstülpt und arbeite da manchmal sehr minimalistisch.

Glauben Sie, es kann heute noch musikalische Innovation geben, so wie von Can damals, oder sind die musikalischen Spielräume inzwischen ausdefiniert, geht es nur noch um Variationen?

Die Spielräume von Kunst sind nie ausdefiniert, denn die Spielräume der Kultur sind auch nicht ausdefiniert. Die Kultur ändert sich und damit auch die Bedingungen für Kunst und die Ausdrucksforderungen in der Kultur. Es wird immer wieder etwas Neues formuliert werden, ob in der Malerei, in der Literatur, im Film oder in der Musik.

INTERVIEW WITH HOLGER CZUKAY

by Horia Diaconescu and Ioan Cora, September 2005,
Quelle: <http://www.czukay.de/history/interview/muzicisiface.php>

01. Since you are rightfully considered an innovator, we will start with a question about the future. Pop culture shows multiple signs of stagnation in musical forms (and styles). Given our post-postmodern time, where could we look for a new (r)evolution in the concept and interaction between man and music?

There are so many forms left to be explored, for example founding virtual bands or workgroups. I was one among others who started doing that in 2001. Damon Albarn from Blur is also one of them. After a long night of discussion (and confession - alcohol makes it possible) he asked me how I could advice him doing something new he never had done before. I told him using the net as a creation platform and establish a virtual band and so he founded the Gorillas. In fact groups coming together this way are founding new groups as it seems to be easier getting along with somebody you don't know physically. Elimination of privatisms I would say.

02. Can was rock, experiment, electronica and had good dancing tunes. Over the decades, Can became the archetypical "cult band" for many. Where do you situate Can in the context of pop-culture?

Can gave younger generations an example how to find their own identity telling them to forget what they have learnt before and start like a new born child. This is what Can did when we started to become a group in 1968.

03. Do you think the progressive and experimental music from the early 70's needs to be re-evaluated from new perspectives? Did it gain more value and independence as art in itself through the test of time? Or was it just another (definitely interesting) trend or tendency in a certain moment of modern music?

Forget about modern music. What you call re-evaluation will be done automatically from time to time when younger ones start to find their own language even when trying to copy in the first step. But when we had been around live the recognition of our fans was enormous and also the recognition by the media was excellent. Young generations are re-discovering things again not knowing what had been in the first step. I myself find out that the discovery of sampling was done before we re-invented it 34 years ago. Just think of the singing dog barking "jingle bells". My all time hero Spike Jones had done that end of the fifties and you cannot deny that this is one of the very first sampling arrangements.

04. a. How do you understand the connection between composition and improvisation, given the fact the arbitrary played a major role in Can's studio and live music? To which extent did you plan or allow the alleatory element to interfere and take part in your music?

Composition is an art of intuitive thinking and deciding, sometimes even visionary. When you start a creation process from scratch you better get your head empty. Therefore Can wasn't so much improvising like Jazz musicians do, we were making instant compositions instead. The real composition became effective a f t e r we had played and recorded. In these days electronic progress gives us a key in our hand to lay off paper and pencil and turn over to compose by listening and not reading.

b. By the way, on the 2nd track of Plight and premonition (1988), after a first set of Morse code we

hear a strange feminine voice reciting a religious poem in Romanian. Was it an alleatory insertion recorded from the global radio wave net?

Yes. David Sylvain and me recorded that spontaneously. . .

c. If we were to decipher the Morse code recorded throughout the album, are we going to reveal a premeditated meta-message conceived by you and David Sylvain?

Musically you certainly do. Message wise I wouldn't be too surprised if the Morse code was sent by Bin Laden's father in order to redirect an oil tanker into the middle of the Saudi Arabian desert.

05. a. A rather delicate issue now. Our subjective opinion is that vocalists in Can have always been more of an auxiliary element. It is true that frontmen like Malcolm or Damo had unique and very charismatic performances, but we think the band wouldn't have been too different with other good vocals. Do you agree with this?

Can had tested various singers after Damo had left (NR: in 1973) and none of them could replace the former two. It was a pity, really. You will find those kind of musicians very rarely. However, in one thing you are right. Both singers were not real front men stars, they both became another instrument in our little orchestra. One of my today's favorites is the singer from The Mars Volta, Cedric Bixler and guitarist Omar Rodriguez from Texas. Another one is U-She with whom I am working at a new album at the moment. U-She has an incredible sense when creating lyrics for example. The other night I played 4 very rough ideas. Within 30 minutes she had the lyrics for all of them and insisted immediately to record. In most cases the vocal tests become the final recordings.

b. Mr. Johnny Rotten said the only band he would be in, apart of Sex Pistols, is Can. It may be a sincere statement, as well as some declarative exhibitionism. Nevertheless, it is an interesting association of Can and punk. How do you perceive the statement of various journalists and musicians, that Can (among others) laid ground for the punk musical culture?

Can was actually a punk band without sharing social punk aspects. John Lydon wanted actually to get drummer Jaki Liebezit in his band. Also heard that he wanted to become the new Can singer. Well, I don't know how this would have turned out. . . but becoming a singer in a virtual re-united band Can or Public Image why not? That can be all possible, technically possible I mean.

c. Jaki Liebezit has often been described as the most inhumane drums player, compared to which machine music or techno seem soulful. It comes difficult to visualise Can without him. How would you describe him artistically?

Jaki attacked me once with an axe. I only can warn everyone meeting him in the darkness. That man is a *dangerous* good drummer who has dedicated his life to music and in particular to get behind the secrets of rhythm.

06. The longest Can concert it is said to have lasted one entire night. Please tell us something about that mantric marathon-night.

Don't remember that special night but I have good memories about nights or concerts where we didn't play the music rather than the music played us. You get especially open minded and the waste of unnecessary energy gets reduced towards zero. Lucky moments so to speak though I must admit that a long session doesn't necessarily guarantee every moment of enlightened music.

07. Please select a relevant Can album and present it in three or four phrases. Think that you adress to an open minded person aged 20 - 30 years old, who hadn't yet had the chance to listen Can.

Let's take Monster Movie. Can becoming a monster machine. Once started to run it can't get stopped overrolling you when trying to resist. And if you don't you will love getting eaten up by it. Wasn't there something similar with Count Dracula?

08. a. The kraut-rock scene witnesses nowadays a certain revival thanks to the CD editions on various labels (Mute, SPV etc.) and the enthousiastic authors such as Julian Cope. People tend to visualise Can, Faust, Cluster, Amon Duul II, Ash Ra Tempel etc. as a compact underworld, alternative to everything else that happened in pop-culture. How did you perceive "the scene" back then, as member of the most succesful German rock band?

Hmmm. . . sounds as if I shouldn't feel being ashamed thinking back of the good old times. However, I am not a nostalgic person and honestly speaking sometimes I feel ashamed of our weak moments and that includes also myself. (These thoughts can come up when you get older.)

b. Back in the end of 60's and 70's, could we speculate an identity crisis of German youth (or perhaps to an even larger social segment) that spawned that peculiar trend of experiment and alternate takes on music? We are asking this question thinking that most of German musicians in the 70's were basically the first generation born right after the WWII.

You speculate right, dear. I myself was born before WWII and I remember very well when we had arrived in the American zone as refugees. All appeared great for us children, the bombed houses - you couldn't find a better playground hiding yourself from your other friends. Just one thing I didn't understand: why had our family to escape from Gdansk and get hunted by foreign soldiers when Germany was so great and superb? I could not explain that to myself being 8 years old. Two years later in school we learned that the Romans got defeated by the Germanians and suddenly I got very proud again being German. The big big Romans got beaten up by the Germanians by throwing stones and hitting them with sticks, wow !!! Nevertheless, America was stronger leaving young artists in doubt presenting us Jazz and so Germany started to produce respectable Jazz musicians but also adventurous composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen, the beginning of electronic music or the Fluxus movement. Jaki Liebezeit played one year with Chet Baker in Barcelona till he got so depressed that he moved to Ibiza island where he climbed up a rock named Tago Mago every morning from where he wanted to make suicide. Thanks God he didn't succeed so some fans have the pleasure to listen to the most merciless man-machine. Honestly, sometimes when we were fighting I wished he had made suicide. But coming back to your point. . . the fact that the evaluation of arts in general was cut off in the Third Reich threw us back into stone age in a way and slowly, very slowly we started to re-orientate ourselves again. Building up destroyed houses goes much faster.

09. Speaking of destroyed houses, Einstürzende Neubauten is a German band that payed tribute to Can throughout their entire career. They are perhaps the most appreciated kraut group of the 80's and 90's (Blixa Bargeld also did an inspired cover for Can's Soul desert). How do you view their musical output?

When I heard them I thought they were much better organized than Can. But I didn't like so much when Blixa Bargeld went solo.

10. Klaus Schulze and Kraftwerk made electronic music known to the masses, by transferring it from the elites to the popular culture. Can is another band with its own importance in this process. Where do you think Can stands closer - the elitist music or the popular music?

As I already said Can was a merciless punk band which became clear when we emptied a venue more than once during a concert. One funny event may also prove that. In May 1973 Can was invited to play during a TV award ceremony of the best TV stars and productions. The stage was full of flowers and prizes were given to the artists blah blah. . . This happened at 11 a.m. and when I returned home in the evening I passed by a gas station to fill up my tank with gasoline. When I entered the cashier room in order to pay my bill the news on tv were showing a report from the ceremony. Can had just started playing when the audience rose up from their seats as if someone was shooting with a machine gun into them heading towards the exits in panic. I gave the cashier a good tip as I was very proud of what I saw. In other words Can was neither with the masses nor with the elite in the one or other form.

11. How do you see the modern (mainstream) electronic scene. Could you give us an opinion on a DJ that you find stimulating. How about the underground, home of Aphex Twin or Autechre?

I am a big fan of Aphex Twin. Great man! Also of Luke Vibert, for example, alias Waggonchrist. I don't think that the electronic scene in its exclusivity has a big potential in the future such as techno. I personally prefer creating music like a medicine where I wouldn't talk about the secret of its ingredients. Everyone has the chance to create his own sound just by making decisions on his own and not by the machines. And here we may enter the back door towards human soul qualification.

12. On a subjective selection, what are your favorite 5 albums or compositions?

Never like such questions as I must think backwards. . .

Beethoven: 6th symphony

Bach: Art of the Fugue

Mozart: Requiem

Stockhausen: Hymnen, especially Third region

Velvet Underground and Nico

But don't forget tomorrow it could be another serie.

13. How should Stockhausen's music be approached after year 2000? There are opinions that stress his vision has rather a theoretical and cultural value, and less a musical one. To put it in a simplistic form: "we learn from Stockhausen, his compositions and recordings may even be mused at, but can't be listened". Where do you stand in relation with this idea?

For some of Stockhausen's work one might see it this way. I personally love parts of his early works like *Gesang der Jünglinge* or *Kontakte* as well as the electronic scenes from his monstrous opera *Light*. If someone has really sense for the purity of music he cannot deny that Stockhausen is one of the greatest composers of our time. Only the way how we listen to music these days makes it difficult to follow him. But that is not his fault. You will find very seldom people who are able listening in concentration. The way of listening becomes more and more randomized if I may say so. Stockhausen never followed such attitudes to my knowledge.

14. A short questionnaire. Please choose in accord with solely your subjective preference.

- *Velvet Underground or The Beatles?*

- *Robert Moog or Oskar Sala?*

- *Rammstein or Kraftwerk?*

- *Frank Zappa or Robert Fripp?* Cross out Zappa, Fripp and Rammstein and enjoy the rest!

15. What is the story of your first encounters with Brian Eno? How would you describe your common artistic affinities that resulted in music made together?

Met him backstage when touring with *Roxy Music*. What Brian and myself have in common is that we both discover same or similar things independently at the same time. For example to record without mixing later. Think he is an open minded and intelligent person. And also funny is that when I looked through his records I found a disk with music from Bulgaria. And when I listened to it I immediately was overwhelmed by a feeling like having finally arrived at home. We played together live during his exhibition in the *Kunsthalle* in Bonn in 1997 as if we had played together for a long time.

16. Holger Czukay is known to be a workaholic musician. Your projects and discographic list is impressive. Tell us, please, a few words on the album you currently work on together with U-She.

Strange that you say I would be a workaholic. Actually I know very well how to relax and most of the time you will find me sleeping watching television. The last 2 years U-She and myself have restored the former *Can* studio or better the left ruins changing it to an online studio. We both are working on a new song album together with a *Can* fan via Internet who lives in Houston, Texas and who has otherwise 28 oil platforms under control. He also controls my website constantly. He sends me some starting stuff like samples from time to time asking what I think of it. And then he gets surprised when my answer is a new piece which I made out of it.

17. After seeing the DVD published by Mute Records, we have been impressed with the Echo Awards prize that has been dedicated to Can for your entire artistic activity. Recently, your original studio has also been included in the German museum of pop music in Gronau. How does it feel to receive this form of recognition after a 40 years musical career?

Good. And if the financial recognition would also follow fame and honor even better.

MUSIKLEGENDE HOLGER CZUKAY DIE ANARCHISCHE METHODE

Von Hans Hoff, SZ Online, 2008, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/musiklegende-holger-czukay-die-anarchische-methode-1.284572>

Mit seiner Gruppe Can nahm Holger Czukay das Sampling vorweg und beeinflusste Davie Bowie und Brian Eno. Ein Gespräch zu seinem 70. Geburtstag über Lärm, lebende Suchmaschinen und virtuelle Bands.

Zwischen der Eifel und Köln liegt Weilerswist. Mitten durch den unscheinbaren Ort führt eine hässliche Straße. Nichts deutet darauf hin, dass hier Musikgeschichte geschrieben wurde. In einem Hinterhof liegt das Studio von Can, das Holger Czukay heute allein nutzt. Ein freundlicher älterer Herr öffnet die Tür, lächelt und führt in einen riesigen Raum, der früher mal ein Kino war. Die hohen Wände sind mit Tüchern abgehängt und stimmungsvoll karg beleuchtet. In der Mitte des Raums lehnt ein Kontrabass. Es ist sehr still. „Lassen Sie uns nach hinten gehen“, sagt Czukay. Hinten, das ist dort, wo ein paar Sessel neben allerlei elektrischen Geräten stehen.

Holger Czukay: „Suche! - Das ist ein Imperativ. Ich bin eine lebende Suchmaschine.“

SZ: Herr Czukay, Sie haben seit der legendären Band Can immer viel mit Geräuschen gearbeitet. Welches Geräusch haben Sie heute bewusst wahrgenommen?

Holger Czukay: Ich habe vorhin die überflüssigen Beine von diesen Sesseln abgeschlagen. Die Geräusche sind mir noch im Ohr.

SZ: Sie nehmen so was bewusst wahr?

Czukay: Ja, ob das beim Bearbeiten der Sessel oder beim Kaffeekochen ist. Besonders nehme ich aber die Stille und die Ruhe wahr, wenn hier kein Mensch im Studio ist. Das fasziniert mich am meisten.

SZ: Was für ein Geräusch ergeben Stille und Ruhe?

Czukay: Das hört sich an, als sei nichts da, und doch ist etwas da. Und sei es nur das Blut in deinen Ohren. Und der Tinnitus natürlich. Der ist immer präsent.

SZ: Ein leichtes Fiepen?

Czukay: Das geht über das Leichte hinaus. Ich habe versucht herauszufinden, woher das kommt und weiß nun, dass das eine Blut-Kreislauf-Geschichte ist. Man kann das schön feststellen, wenn man kalt und warm duscht. Dann hört man, wie der Blutdruck steigt und wieder sinkt.

SZ: Der Preis, den man zahlt für 40 Jahre Rockmusiker-Dasein?

Czukay: Man kann davon ausgehen. Obwohl ich von allen in der Band der am wenigsten Betroffene bin.

SZ: Es gibt Musiker wie Pete Townshend von den Who, die fast nichts mehr hören.

Czukay: Es wundert mich nicht. Man kann aber auch damit leben. Auch Beethoven konnte damit leben.

SZ: Hat man es übertrieben mit der lauten Musik?

Czukay: Hat man. Wobei wir bei Can ja noch glimpflich davon gekommen sind, weil wir großen Wert auf die leisen Töne gelegt haben. Das belegen unsere Platten. Ich habe mich in den Pausen

der Aufnahmen immer zu den Tonbändern geschlichen und die gerade entstehenden Geräusche aufgenommen, ohne dass die anderen etwas bemerkt haben.

SZ: Sie sind ein Geräuschsucher?

Czukay: Auch, aber ich bin eher jemand, der ein Geräusch auswertet.

SZ: Wie wertet man ein Geräusch aus?

Czukay: Ich kann ein Beispiel geben. Als ich hier mit unserem Drummer Jaki Liebezeit im Studio war, haben wir Kaffee getrunken und dann ist Jaki zu seinem Instrumentarium gegangen und hat wie zufällig an den Gongs und den Trommeln vorbeigestrichen. Ich bin zum Pult geschlichen und habe das aufgenommen, als Bild der Situation sozusagen. Die stärksten Stücke sind zusammengekommen, weil ich Töne fotografiert habe.

SZ: Sie haben viel mit Tonbändern experimentiert und geschnibbelt. Sie waren der Schneider bei Can?

Czukay: Es ging weniger um das Schnibbeln, es ging darum, die richtigen Stellen auf den Bändern zu finden. Can war am Anfang eine eher schlechte Band. Wir haben viele Fehler gemacht. Das war alles andere als perfekt. Aber ich habe im Laufe der Jahre festgestellt, dass manchmal ein Fehler, den ich gemacht habe, mehr wert war als der beste Gedanke, den ich hatte. Was anfangs ein Fehler war, hat am Schluss ein ganzes Stück gerettet - oder es erst zu dem werden lassen, was es dann war.

SZ: Klingt komisch.

Czukay: Der große Vorteil, den ich habe, ist ja, dass ich nichts so richtig spielen kann. Ich bin der universale Dilettant. Das war ja auch die Grundvorstellung von Can. Wir wollten als universale Dilettanten die Fachleute und alle Maestros schlagen.

SZ: Klingt angesichts der Bedeutung, die Can in der internationalen Musikszene immer noch genießt, wie eine Untertreibung.

Czukay: Das ist aber die Wahrheit. Es gibt doch nur zwei Wege. Entweder du nimmst das, was bisher die Musikkultur ausgemacht hat, und setzt noch einen drauf oder aber du vergisst alles und fängst ganz von vorne an - wir haben den zweiten Weg gewählt, weil wir gar nicht anders konnten. Wir mussten abspecken und alles vergessen, was wir wussten. Es hieß: Spiel mal einen Ton, lass den auf dich wirken und dann schauen wir mal, was dabei herauskommt. Dabei sind dann die stärksten Stücke entstanden.

SZ: Es ist aber, Herr Czukay, schwer zu glauben, dass das alles Dilettanten waren. Sie haben immerhin vorher bei Karlheinz Stockhausen studiert.

Czukay: Aber in dem Moment, wo ich ein Instrument in die Hand nahm, wusste ich nicht, wie ich da überleben sollte. Ich hatte schon Ende der 50er, Anfang der 60er Jahre mit zwei anderen Musikern in der Gaststätte „Zur Fröhlichkeit“ in Duisburg-Walsum gespielt. Ich bekam die Stunde fünf Mark und spielte natürlich Kontrabass. Warum? Weil da niemand darauf hört. Das war ...

SZ: ... unauffällig.

Czukay: Genau. Das war meine Art, mit der ich glaubte, überleben zu können. Ich habe dann damals schon mein erstes Tonband angeschafft und den anderen gesagt: Wir nehmen jetzt etwas auf und spielen dann dazu. Ich fand das eine geniale Idee, aus einer Dreimanngruppe eine Sechsmanngruppe zu machen.

SZ: Wie fanden die anderen das?

Czukay: Erst mal aufregend, aber irgendwann merkten wir: In der Kneipe reichen auch drei Mann.

SZ: Was haben Sie da gespielt?

Czukay: Karnevalslieder und Schlager.

SZ: Klingt schräg.

Czukay: Das klingt nicht nur schräg, das war auch ein bisschen verrückt. Damals gab es in Duisburg-Ruhrort schon eine echte Beatszene. Da spielte ich mit meinen Jetliners, und irgendwann kam ein Mann und wollte mitspielen. Ich war froh, denn während der spielte, hatte ich ja frei

und konnte mich um die Mädchen kümmern. Nach drei Stücken hat er sich dann überschwänglich bei mir bedankt, und ich erfuhr, dass er ein todkranker Mann war, in dessen Körper eigentlich nichts mehr funktionierte. Aber dieses Spielen hat ihm unglaublich viel bedeutet. Was mir völlig unwichtig war, erschien ihm wie der Himmel. Da habe ich aufgehört, Musik nach Qualität zu kategorisieren. Was ich Scheiße finde, kann jemand anderes gut finden. Deshalb ist es aber noch lange nicht weniger wert.

SZ: Und mit der Einstellung sind Sie dann zu Can gekommen?

Czukay: Das war die Voraussetzung, um bei Can anfangen zu können.

SZ: Ihnen war egal, was dabei herauskam?

Czukay: Es war uns nicht egal, aber zunächst einmal mussten wir das gut finden.

SZ: Der Band wurde eine anarchische Methodik nachgesagt.

Czukay: Ja, das war Anarchie. Es war nicht wie bei Jazzmusikern, wo alles trotz der Improvisation einem roten Faden folgt, es war viel freier, auch durch die Einbeziehung von Geräuschen. Die Gewissheit, dass ich eigentlich keine Fehler machen konnte, die hat mich überleben lassen.

SZ: Im Zweifel klingt es dann schlecht.

Czukay: Im Zweifel klingt es dann gut! Wenn Sie heute hören, wie ich aufnehme, sagen Sie möglicherweise: Das ist ja wie im Kindergarten. Ich höre manchmal gar nicht auf das, was ich vorher gespielt habe, sondern bewege mich völlig unabhängig von der Vorlage.

SZ: Wann entsteht denn da die Musik?

Czukay: Sie entsteht in jedem Augenblick, sowohl wenn ich spiele als auch wenn ich auswerte. Musik ist die Summe aller Entscheidungen. Die geben das Gesicht.

SZ: Wann wird aus einem Geräusch Musik?

Czukay: Wenn man ihm eine Form gibt. Man muss schon Architekt sein, weil man der Sache eine Gestalt geben muss.

SZ: Wann geben Sie der Sache eine Gestalt, vorher oder nachher?

Czukay: Immer nachher.

SZ: Immer als Dilettant reingehen.

Czukay: Genau das.

SZ: Da muss ich mir ja überhaupt keine Arbeit mehr machen. Da muss ich auch nicht mehr üben.

Czukay: Davon lebt die heutige Generation. Ich hab' mal auf einem Filmfestival mit Ennio Morricone gesprochen, und der hat sich darüber beklagt, wie austauschbar die Musik heutzutage ist. Ich habe dagegeng gehalten, dass man nicht mehr an seinem Instrument üben muss und trotzdem zu einem unglaublichen Ergebnis kommen kann. Es ist natürlich auch viel Schrott darunter. Der beruht dann aber nicht auf der Tatsache, dass diese Menschen nicht spielen können.

SZ: Was hören Sie denn da?

Czukay: Hören Sie sich mal DJs an. Die können kein Instrument spielen. Aber ich habe Sachen gehört, dass ich gedacht habe, ich spinne. Ich war vor kurzem auf so einer Underground-Party und hab' gedacht, mich tritt ein Pferd. Ich hätte nie für möglich gehalten, dass Maschinen einen so lebendigen Rhythmus auf die Bühne bringen können. Das war eine unglaubliche Wucht. So etwas hatte ich vorher nur in den Anfangstagen von Can gespürt.

SZ: Sie teilen also nicht den Kulturpessimismus, dass früher alles besser war.

Czukay: Nein, ich bin immer noch total neugierig.

SZ: War Karlheinz Stockhausen ein starker Einfluss für Can?

Czukay: Enorm. Wir haben ihn aber - im kreativen Sinne - umgebracht. Sonst hätten wir nicht anfangen können. Wir sagten: Alles, was Stockhausen gemacht hat, ist das, was wir nicht machen werden.

SZ: Was wollten Sie?

Czukay: Primitive Musik spielen.

SZ: Das hätte Stockhausen nicht erlaubt.

Czukay: Stockhausen hatte etwas gegen Wiederholungen. Für uns war das ein Hauptbestandteil. In der Wiederholung liegt die Faszination. Wenn du etwas hast, was sich wiederholen lässt und dich nicht langweilt, dann hast du einen Edelstein gefunden.

SZ: Can hat sich oft wiederholt.

Czukay: Wir konnten sehr lange an einem Stück spielen, aber wir haben zum Schluss immer gewusst, ob es das war oder nicht. Das ist manchmal dramatisch gewesen, wenn der Schlagzeuger den Gitarristen fertiggemacht hat und der wiederum wütend in die Saiten griff, um ihn aus seinem Rhythmus zu bringen.

SZ: Sie haben in der Musik gekämpft?

Czukay: Das war immer Kampf. Man kann auch mit sich alleine kämpfen. Beethoven hat mit sich gekämpft. Ich bin auch so einer.

SZ: Sind Sie immer noch so ein überzeugter Kurzwellenfänger?

Czukay: Aber ja, die Kurzwelle ist ein Generator, sie erzeugt Töne wie ein Instrument.

SZ: Can hat sich mal einen Sänger aus der Kurzwelle geborgt.

Czukay: Wir hatten Mitte der 70er Jahre keinen Sänger, und da habe ich gesagt: „Lasst uns doch einen aus der Kurzwelle holen!“ Ich habe dann dagesessen und die Kurzwellenstimmen mit einer Morsetaste an die Musik angepasst.

SZ: Sie könnten auch mit einem Mikrophon hier in Weilerswist auf die Kölner Straße gehen und sich dort Ihre Stimme holen.

Czukay: Das ist im Prinzip das Gleiche. Es ist eine ewige Suche. Czukay ist ja polnisch und bedeutet Suche. Deshalb habe ich den Namen wieder angenommen.

SZ: Sie heißen gar nicht Czukay??

Czukay: Ich heiße Schüring! Früher hieß ich Czukay, aber wegen der Nazis, die unbedingt nur Arier haben wollten, hat mein Großvater einen tollen Familienstammbaum entwickelt, um den Namen Czukay loszuwerden. Das haben die Nazis geglaubt.

SZ: Deshalb haben Sie überlebt?

Czukay: Wahrscheinlich. Aber ich will das nicht hoch hängen. Wir hatten einen anderen Namen. Und keine Probleme.

SZ: Wann sind Sie zu Czukay zurückgekehrt?

Czukay: Das war, als ich mit den Jetliners, dem Trio, in Duisburg unterwegs war, da hatten wir zwei polnische Sängerinnen und die sagten mir, dass der Name für Suche steht. Da merkte ich, dass der Name auf mich gewartet hatte.

SZ: Weil er zu Ihrem Tun passte?

Czukay: Er passt auch zu meinem Wesen. Suche! Das ist ein Imperativ. Ich bin eine lebende Suchmaschine.

SZ: Wo suchen Sie Ihre Töne heute?

Czukay: Ich suche keine Töne, ich suche Gestalten, denn Töne, die eine Gestalt haben, werden zur Musik. Da würde mir selbst Stockhausen nicht widersprechen.

SZ: Hat Stockhausen mal Can gehört?

Czukay: Hat er, aber das war nicht seine Schiene. Er hat sich aber sehr für die Band eingesetzt, als unser Sänger Damo Suzuki von der Polizei nach Japan abgeschoben werden sollte. Da hat er alles getan, damit Damo hier bleiben kann.

SZ: Wie sind Sie zu Stockhausen gekommen?

Czukay: Ich war schon überall durchgefallen, als ich zu ihm ans Konservatorium kam, und ich

hatte nur eine Wahl: bei der Wahrheit zu bleiben. Ich sagte: „Herr Stockhausen, ich bin überall durchgefallen, ich habe noch nie eine Prüfung bestanden.“ Alles habe ich ihm erzählt, alles, was mir so zugestoßen ist. Danach guckte er mich an und sagte: „Sie nehmen mich.“ So kam ich in den Meisterkurs, in einen der ersten Kurse für Neue Musik.

SZ: Die Welt hat viel mit ihm verloren.

Czukay: Sehr viel. Er war einer der Größten.

SZ: Holen Sie Ihre Geräusche heute auch aus dem Internet?

Czukay: Nein, aber das Internet ist für andere Dinge gut. Ich habe übers Internet eine Band zusammengestellt, bei der sich die Mitglieder persönlich nicht kennen - was ich sehr begrüße. Da haben mir dann 23 Leute zugespielt, und ich habe das dann zusammengefügt.

SZ: Wie finden Sie Ihre Mitmusiker?

Czukay: Ich habe ein Chat-System. Da gehe ich unter verschiedenen Namen rein. Ich war da schon Ray Charles, Elton John, Sophia Loren und Madonna. Ich wollte damit auf mein Projekt aufmerksam machen. Da hat dann Elton John um Hilfe gerufen, weil er von der Queen in der Westminster Abbey gefangen gehalten wird, der „Candle In the Wind“ nicht gefallen hat. Es meldete sich Ray Charles, und den bat er, eine Briefbombe unter die Tür zu setzen, damit er freikommt. So habe ich eine Soap-Opera erfunden, die mir sehr viel Spaß gemacht hat, die auch zu wunderbaren Internet-Freundschaften geführt hat. Es meldete sich ein Texaner, der Ölplattformen kontrolliert, aber meinen Humor zu schätzen wusste. Der liefert inzwischen viel zu meinen Projekten.

SZ: Weiß der Mann, wer Sie wirklich sind?

Czukay: Ja klar.

SZ: Kannte er Sie denn? Kannte er Can?

Czukay: Natürlich. Das Internet ist höchst musikalisch, weil du auf Leute triffst, die mit dir musikalisch in Verbindung treten. Schön wäre es, wenn ich auf eine Bühne könnte, und die Menschen zu Hause würden von ihren Laptops live Geräusche zuliefern. Aber da fehlt mir noch die Software.

SZ: Eine virtuelle Band ist besser?

Czukay: Aber ja! Virtuelle Musiker lassen wenigstens keine halbvollen Kaffeetassen rumstehen. Das habe ich auch Damon Albarn gesagt, als der mich fragte, was er denn nach Blur mal Neues anstellen solle. Da habe ich aufgrund meiner Erfahrung gesagt: Gründe eine virtuelle Band!

SZ: Und er gründete daraufhin die Gorillaz?

Czukay: Das hat er bestätigt.

SZ: Sie haben immer noch richtig Einfluss.

Czukay: Solange ich lebe.

SZ: Wie war das, als Can 1971 mit „Spoon“, der Titelmusik zum TV-Krimi „Das Messer“, in der Hitparade landete?

Czukay: Ich hatte ein Tonband, das hatte ich 1955 in Duisburg in der Mülltonne gefunden. Darauf habe ich „Spoon“ aufgenommen. Jeder Toningenieur würde mich heute für wahnsinnig erklären. Das war uns egal. Wir brauchten einen Bandbus, den wir uns dann leisten konnten. „Spoon“ war übrigens der erste Hit, bei dem eine Schlagzeugmaschine eingesetzt wurde.

SZ: War das bewusst subversiv gedacht?

Czukay: In dem Moment denkt man nicht ans Subversive. Uns ging es um die Aufgabe. Wir mussten Spannungsmusik zu einem mittelmäßigen Kriminalfilm hinkriegen.

SZ: Wie geht das? Man schaut einen Film und denkt sich dann die Musik aus?

Czukay: Den Film hat immer nur einer gesehen, bei uns der Irmin Schmidt. Der hat uns dann den Film erzählt. Darin ist auch einer der Gründe zu sehen, warum Can so gute Filmmusik gemacht hat. Wir mussten uns den Film nicht ansehen. Als ich mich mit Morricone getroffen habe, hat er mir erzählt, wie er mit Sergio Leone die besten Filmmusiken gemacht hat. Leone hat ihm den Film erzählt und gesagt: „Fang schon mal mit der Musik an! Wir drehen dann später.“ Das funktionierte

genauso bei Can. Wir waren vollkommen unbeleckt vom Bild. Das war gut so, denn das Bild tötet ganz schnell.

SZ: Kann man mit einer guten Filmmusik einen schlechten Film adeln?

Czukay: Irmin Schmidt hat immer gesagt: „Wir müssen vorsichtig sein und die Musik nicht zu interessant machen, weil wir sonst den Film kaputtmachen.“ Darauf habe ich immer gesagt: „Los, lass uns den Film kaputtmachen.“ So haben wir es oft gemacht. Ich habe nach 30 Jahren mit dem Regisseur von „Mädchen mit Gewalt“ gesprochen. Der hat „Soul Desert“, eine unserer besten Filmmusiken, bekommen. Als ich dem von Irmins Rat und meiner Gegenbewegung erzählte, sagte er mir: „Du hast recht gehabt.“

SZ: Die Musik war besser als der Film?

Czukay: Eindeutig. Außerdem hat ein Stück wie „Soul Desert“ Bands wie die Einstürzenden Neubauten inspiriert.

SZ: Can hat die Neubauten ermöglicht?

Czukay: In gewisser Weise hat Can eine ganze Generation ermöglicht. Johnny Rotten hat ständig hier angerufen, weil er Sänger bei uns werden wollte.

SZ: Der Sänger der Sex Pistols hat hier in Weilerswist angerufen und gesagt „I wanna be your singer“?

Czukay: Ja. Der hatte verstanden, dass wir eine gute Band für ihn gewesen wären. Seine spätere Band Public Image hat ähnlich wie Can gearbeitet. Sie haben der Musik ihr Gesicht verliehen.

SZ: Stimmt es, dass Can nie aufgelöst wurde?

Czukay: Die Kerntruppe besteht nach wie vor. Uns sind nur die Sänger davongelaufen.

SZ: Can wurde 1968 gegründet. Damals gingen auch Led Zeppelin an den Start. Die haben gerade ein Comeback gefeiert.

Czukay: Bei Can würde sich das nicht auszahlen. Man hat uns sehr viel Geld geboten, damit wir noch einmal live auftreten. Das haben wir aber nie gemacht. Weil wir wissen, dass das nicht gutgehen kann.

SZ: Bei Led Zeppelin ist es gutgegangen.

Czukay: Bei uns würde es nicht klappen. Da ist die Gruppenkonsistenz zu divergent. Außerdem halte ich die Rückwärtsorientierung für Unsinn. Das Leben geht vorwärts.

SZ: Sie werden jetzt 70 Jahre alt. Haben Sie sich schon mal Gedanken über die Musik im Jenseits gemacht?

Czukay: Ich habe immer gehofft, dass es dann ganz ruhig sein wird. Ich war jetzt ein paar Tage allein im Studio, und das Gefühl allein zu sein und nichts zu hören, das ist mehr wert als alles, was man hört.

SZ: Stille als Belohnung?

Czukay: Belohnung für das, was man musikalisch verbrochen hat.

Holger Czukay war seit der Gründung im Jahre 1968 Mitglied der Gruppe Can, die in der auslaufenden Beat-Ära alles ganz anders machen wollte. Ihre oft experimentell klingenden Platten (Monster Movie, Tago Mago, Ege Bamyasi) waren beherrscht von gleichförmigen Rhythmen, in die sich lange vor der Erfindung der Sampling-Technik Geräusche und Schreie mischten. Can erspielte sich rasch internationalen Ruhm und wird bis heute von Größen wie Brian Eno und David Bowie nach wie vor in der Liste der wichtigsten Einflüsse geführt. 1977 verließ Czukay die Band und produzierte etliche Soloalben, die allesamt seine Vorliebe für klangliche Experimente hören lassen (www.czukay.de). Er arbeitete u.a. mit Musikern wie Peter Gabriel, The Edge und David Sylvian zusammen. Am Montag wird Holger Czukay 70 Jahre alt.

INTERVIEW: HANS-JOACHIM ROEDELIOUS

by Jason Gross (May 1997)

When enlightened writers talk about 'krautrock,' many times they leave out or give little respect to a group with an amazing legacy that has had an enormous influence on electronic music, industrial, new age and even trip hop. This is probably because Cluster has never been as flamboyant as Amon Duul, Can or Faust. This is definitely no fault of their own- as a matter of fact, this is one reason that they're so admirable. One half of this creative team is Hans Joachim Roedelius, who has made a fascinating solo career for himself as well. His work has appeared as a part of plays, soundtracks, dance companies and other mediums. A reunion with his partner in Cluster, Dieter Moebius, has led to new recordings and new tours, including their first American one.

Before Kluster/Cluster, what music/performers moved you the most?

Stravinski, Tchaikovski, Mussorgsky, Rimski-Korsakov, Khachaturian, Ravel, Sibelius, Beethoven, Satie, Pierre Henry, Xenakis, Manuel de Falla, Poulenc, Debussy, Bizet, Handel, Third Ear, Captain Beefheart, Hapshash and the Coloured Coat, Hendrix, real Folkmusik, real music of any kind.

How did you meet up with Moebius?

When Konrad Schnitzler and I founded the Zodiac and had started to organize events like 'Free jazz meets electronics,' 'Improvised Music meets improvised theatre' or 'Pop meets Jazz,' Moebius used to become a regular at those shows, thus showing sort of a passive companionship (unless he was hanging in a club called Abysmalsayet). We really got to know him when Konrad Schnitzler dragged him out of a steakhouse, where Moebius was working as a cook, to turn him into the musician/composer he eventually would become. The three of us founded Kluster und we left Berlin end of the 1969 to start a somewhat endless European tour of improvised shows. Schnitzler as a man of the fine arts and epigone of Joseph Beuys organized these concerts in museums, galleries and the like.

What made Kluster different from Cluster?

This basically wasn't a lot different with Kluster (a triple connection), although it was wilder, more chaotic and had more musical aspects to it. But the method and the results weren't really different, what the three of us did. It just turned to the more consequent and radical Schnitzler concept, although - if you listen to the 3 Kluster albums carefully - you will find a lot of common ground in there.

What do you attribute the long and fruitful partnership you've maintained with Moebius to?

There was an unspoken correspondence regarding aesthetic matters, their assessment and use for our own musical purposes. This was a condition for an extremely fruitful collaboration, that reached

a last summit with the audio document Cluster-Live-In-Japan, this being Cluster's legacy, because our music couldn't possibly get more convincing by means of improvising in public.

What kind of dimension did Conny Plank add to Cluster?

Conny Plank brought a huge amount of friendship, knowledge about studio technique and his own creativity into the the group, he actually became a third silent member of Cluster, without this ever having been mentioned. I dedicated one of my compositions to him as a remembrance of what he did for Cluster and also for us on a personal level, for his deep friendship and his unshakeable will to realize his vision of meaningful music in the projects, he was participating in and to which he contributed in a fundamental way, such as with Kraftwerk, Neu and Cluster, but also Ultravox, Devo, Eno and the Eurythmics.

What kind of distinct writing styles do you think you and Dieter have? Maybe they are simliar?

I believe that the reason for us being able to basically make meaningful music (albeit not always) for such a long time, is, that we managed to coordinate the diversity of our temperaments or musical languages, which we used to articulate ourselves and that we managed to unify two languages into one without losing any substance. On the other hand, the common work strengthened the individual work and vice versa. I mentioned this unspoken correspondence regarding aesthetic matters before, this enabled us to collaborate (sharing the vision of a common goal) without major fights and what I mean by this is that it is something completely non-verbal, beyond origin and education. This certainly is a piece of luck.

Could you talk about the change in Cluster's music after work with Michael Rother and the Harmonia projects?

Meeting with other people or musicians gives and takes, enriches and restricts, depending on the strength of the other's charisma and your own ways of achieving your goals. Michael, as well as Eno, gave a lot and had a certain focus regarding our common work (Musik von Harmonia, Harmonia de Luxe and the soon to be released Harmonia 1976 featuring Brian Eno) . It seems like you couldn't get more out of Harmonia, because Cluster's own hermetics demanded to be extended and deepened and Michael is not the kind of person that would easily agree to the risk of improvisation running the risk of losing the individuality of his own ambitions.

Obviously working with Michael changed my and Moebius' focus, I don't know if Michael got the same benefit from working with us as we did working with him. Nevertheless, each meeting, including meeting with him, was a step on the way to myself.

Could you talk about working with Brian Eno? His own work was heavily influenced by Cluster and Harmonia I think.

Brian Eno approached us. He know of us via Can, Neu! and Kraftwerk. We invited him, after he had joined us on stage during a Harmonia show in Hamburg in 1974. He visited us in Germany in 1976, stayed with us in our commune, and tried to impart his rich experience with pop music to us with some ideas and ended up having one track on a 4 track tape. Wie continued the dialogue we had begun in Hamburg 2 years earlier, the musical results will be available soon.

It was a lot of fun to work and be with him. Nevertheless, Cluster hung on to its shtick of improvisation as a method. I don't know how this influenced Brian's future work, but people tell me all the time, that working with us was very beneficial for him with a lot of productions he was involved with over the years. The collaboration with Eno (especially with Cluster & Eno and After The Heat) strengthened my focus on organization, reduction to the essential and tightening of the composition process and it helped me to get a better focus in general, because just as Eno, I am exclusively on my own trail (at least I hope to be...). So the distance between us was the closest

thing to achieve.

Around 1978, you and Dieter concentrated more on solo work for a while. Why did this happen?

I mentioned already, that the diversity of the musical languages with the inner understanding led to the essentiality of our music. Both of us received new impulses from the feedback of our solo works and that somehow explains why both of us devoted more time to our solo projects. But the fact that I had left the Harmonia commune to build my own nest. It was also an important fact that I was the only one who got married and my first daughter had been born.

How do you think your solo work differs from Cluster?

My solo work is an expression of my experience of life, a self-portrait, a confession. It is not an attempt to consciously find my own musical language. It is more an attempt to sophisticate the already found language in order to make it intelligible to all. I come from a family of teachers, preachers, musicians and doctors. I am trying to revitalize all these historically set predestinations to make one voice out of many voices. I am quite sure that Moebius is more a Zeitgeist person, indulging in music, feeling pleasure in constructing music, living the moment, not digging the past or beseeching the future.

With your latest work with Cluster, how do you think your music/ideas have changed?

Our latest work, Cluster Live In Japan and Cluster Live in America is just putting it to the test, improvising in public. It also was a last test, because it is redundant to produce more of that stuff. So nothing has changed, but what Cluster had to say, was accomplished as flawless as probably never before.

Are any plans to release any of the material released under the name Eruption, or if any of that material has even survived?

Kluster & Eruption (which is the original name of this last Kluster work, some cuts from the last Kluster concert in Goettingen 1970) was just released by Marginal Talent (see <http://www.conrad-schnitzler.net4.com> for details)

What are your feelings toward those artists in Germany these days (like Oval, Mouse on Mars, Microstoria, To Rococco Rot) who evince a strong mid-'70s Cluster influence. Do you follow any of that?

I don't know any of the artists mentioned.

What are your thoughts about the recent interest in German music in the USA and UK? You toured in America recently?

It's great to learn that there is this big interest, as a matter of fact I was just DJ'ing twice in 2 London clubs. The tour last year (1996) was unbelievably touching, because of the number of people that came, the attention we received, the organization and the welcome we experienced

everywhere. The same thing, actually even more, happened in Japan.

Do you know about trip hop music? It also seems to be very heavily influenced by Cluster.

I don't know about trip hop music.

Which of your own recordings are personal favorites?

My own Piano Piano, Wenn der Suedwind weht, Selfportraits, Fortress Of Love and Cluster - Live in Japan 1996.

AN AWFULLY BIG ADVENTURE

by Dorian Lynskey

The Hitler Youth, a Stasi jail, a Corsican nudist camp ... he's been in them all. Hans-Joachim Roedelius, pioneer of Germany's experimental music scene, tells Dorian Lynskey about his extraordinary life

In the spring of 1977, Brian Eno was living in Berlin, working with David Bowie on his seminal albums *Low* and *Heroes* when he journeyed into Lower Saxony to visit a remote farmstead called Forst. Two years earlier he had seen Cluster, the German duo comprising Hans-Joachim Roedelius and Dieter Moebius, perform in Hamburg and now he was finally taking them up on their invitation to see first-hand how they worked.

Surrounded by dense woodland, Forst had been transformed into an idyllic artistic community, where Cluster and their fellow musicians spent their days chopping wood and renovating buildings and their nights making music. Cluster and Eno jammed together in an old riverside farmhouse and recorded an album, the first of four collaborations. The title, *Cluster & Eno*, was prosaic. The music, mesmerising and pioneering, was not.

"We exchanged a lot," says Roedelius, his face gently creasing into a grin. "The main thing we exchanged was don't take music too serious. Life is more serious."

Roedelius is enormously restful company. He turned 70 last October but is trim and healthy enough to appear at least a decade younger. He has the close-cropped, salt-and-pepper hair and goatee of a hip college professor, and clear blue eyes. Although he converted to Catholicism in 1984, he emanates the benign calm of a Buddhist. His attitude is simple: if you make yourself open to the music, it will come.

And come it has. Roedelius estimates he has recorded, either alone or in collaboration, around 80 albums since 1970. His latest, under the name Lunz, is a collection of limpid instrumentals written with American keyboardist Tim Story. It comes with a disc of radical remixes by the likes of Elbow, Lloyd Cole, Ulrich Schnauss and Adem, which nods to the way Roedelius's sonic ingenuity and love of repetition have influenced ambient, dance music and forward-thinking rock bands. "There's an honesty about his music," says Adem over the phone. "It's heartfelt. There's depth to it. It's more than just pretty music."

Of all the so-called Krautrock performers who defined German music in the 1970s, including Kraftwerk, Can, Neu! and Faust, Roedelius is perhaps the most underrated and most intriguing. Compared to Woody Allen's *Zelig* by biographer Stephen Iliffe, in his seven decades he's encountered Nazis and communists, hippies and terrorists, Kraftwerk and Hendrix. Cluster played with Jimi Hendrix at a notoriously hellish German festival, one of the guitarist's last performances before his death in 1970. Roedelius saw a man for whom music had become a prison. "He looked like a broken-hearted man by that point," remembers Roedelius, sitting in the east London offices of Lunz's record label. "He was sick and tired of the business he had to do. It made me so sad because it wasn't true any more, what he did. He did it already and he had to do it again and again and again."

Roedelius was born in Berlin in 1934. His father was a dentist, some of whose clients worked at the

city's giant UFA Babelsberg Studios, the home of films such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. Roedelius caught their attention and briefly became a child star. As the war intensified however, the family was evacuated from Berlin. When Hitler decided that every male with a pulse should shoulder a rifle and fight the Russians to the death, Roedelius was conscripted into the Hitler Youth. He was 11. s After the war, the family ended up on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain and Roedelius was conscripted again, this time into the East German army. "It was the most boring thing I ever had to do because of the political conditioning. They used former Nazis to teach the young soldiers lessons in communism!" He barks with mirth: "Because they didn't have new teachers - it was the same people!"

I wonder how he felt about being German in those post-war years. "I never did feel that I was German. I hated what the Germans did to the Jews. It was so horrible to me. I didn't understand why it happened. Of course, German is my mother language but I think I learned very early to be more cosmopolitan."

He fled to West Germany but, with no work and no friends, he decided to return. Having promised he could come back without fear of punishment, the Stasi swiftly reneged, accusing him of being a spy. He spent two years as a prisoner, working in the coal mines, until he secured early release by penning what he describes as "awful socialist poetry". In 1960, one year before the Berlin Wall was erected, he moved again, this time for good. He drifted through a series of jobs - gardener, waiter, rubbish collector - before becoming a masseur. "From '43 to about '73 I was always on the road. Never in one place for a long time. It was a good process to learn about things that you would never normally learn about. I was thrown here, thrown there. It took me a long time to become a musician."

Slowly, Berlin's avant-garde scene drew him in. He met the controversial cult artist Joseph Beuys and joined the cutting-edge eight-person electronic collective Human Being. Musically untrained, Roedelius made his live solo debut with a microphone, a handmade flute and an alarm clock. It was that kind of era. "It was a real movement," he enthuses.

Older by a decade than most of his contemporaries, Roedelius none the less embraced the zeitgeist. He took acid, sometimes while on stage; spent time in a Corsican nudist camp; performed a 12-hour Cluster show in an art gallery; and released what he claims was Germany's first protest record, funded by the Catholic church.

His age was significant in one respect, however. Unlike many in West Germany's counter-culture, he had lived through the war. "I met Ulrike and the Baader-Meinhof scene but I didn't like it at all. I was there to take care of the children because their parents were always talking and talking and talking. And you see what came out. Nothing came out. I had to see a lot of violence in the war and after the war so for me it was easy to decide, 'No, I don't want this. This is not my thing.'"

One person with whom he did connect was his Cluster colleague, Moebius. "We are completely different people. He is Capricorn, I am Scorpio. But because we liked each other personally we didn't care. We did everything together. The only thing we didn't share was our girlfriends!" Music critics have explained Krautrock as an attempt to create a distinctly European soundtrack, entirely divorced from the blues roots of Anglo-American rock, but Roedelius never saw it like that. Cluster listened to quintessentially American groups like the Band and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and tried to translate their spirit, along with musique concrete, psychedelia and Stockhausen, into radical, free-flowing electronica. When recording their first album, they would improvise for 20 minutes, then producer Conrad Plank would raise his hand to mark the end of side one and they would do the same for side two. Their music was stubbornly individual and hopelessly uncommercial. Despite working with more successful peers - jamming with Kraftwerk, recording two remarkable albums in Forst with Neu!'s Michael Rother under the name Harmonia - they never found mainstream success themselves. They split up in 1981, briefly reforming in the mid-1990s for tours of Japan ("splendid") and America ("shit"), during which the Chicago Tribune branded them "20th-century music's best kept secret".

"I think we wished to have been more successful in earning money through just the music." So it didn't put food on the table? "It's still not feeding me," he laughs.

These days he makes music and writes poetry in his home outside Vienna. His output roams through jazz, techno, ambient, classical and world music, chancing upon unique hybrids en route.

I tell Roedelius that iTunes categorises Harmonia as New Age and he recoils. “Ach! Horrible! They don’t know how to categorise it. It’s hard to know what it is. It’s Roedeliusmusik.”

If Roedeliusmusik has a governing principle, it is spontaneity. “I want to keep the moment. If I work too hard, mostly I don’t like it any more. I just have to take it when it’s coming. I’m just looking for the right pieces, like Marcel Duchamp.” I ask how his life would have been different if his music had found a wider audience. He shrugs. “I don’t know because it never happened.” Is he happy with how it turned out? He smiles like a Buddha. “Of course.”

CLUSTER 2008

Interview with Moebius, Roedelius & Story, 2008, <http://www.eurock.com>

Joachim Roedelius and Dieter Moebius have been making music together for going on 40 years now. That's amazing, but even more so is that they are infinitely more popular now than they ever were during any of those past decades. They just completed another tour of the USA and played to large crowds in several places, SF, LA, NY, a/o.

They are also both great friends with one of the USA's most accomplished and pioneering electronic/keyboard musicians Tim Story. His recordings date back almost 30 years and still today both his solo work and collaborative releases are as fresh and uniquely amazing as they were at the outset. One of his most successful partnerships is not so surprisingly with one of the members of Cluster, Achim.

That brings us to the matter at hand, this interview. Just before their latest US musical adventure Achim and Mobi stayed a few days back in Ohio at Tim's place and thanks to the magic of the digital age this interview came about with Tim's kind help.

While not exhaustingly in depth it nonetheless sheds light on their distant past, journey up to today and plans for future projects. I think you'll find it most interesting, read and enjoy.

Q: To begin with a bit of history, was Kluster both of your first music experiences?

Mobi: For me it was mostly the first, I was playing a little saxophone just for fun.

Achim: For me before Cluster I was a physical therapist/masseur and I didn't have as much fun doing that as I did with Cluster. Before Cluster there was Human Being which also had Konrad Schnitzler who was co-founder of the Zodiac (Ed. Note: a music/arts underground club in Berlin). In 1969 we co-founded Kluster with a K.

Q: Do you remember the date of the very first concert - day and/or year?

Achim: O la, la, la, it was at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin 1969.

Mobi: It was 1969 3 O'clock in the morning (laugh)

Q: The name was later changed from a K to a C, was there any particular reason?

Mobi: We wanted really just to show by the little change in the name that it was a new formation of the group without Konrad Schnitzler at this time. We also wanted to be a bit more International with our name.

Q: Could you ever have imagined in the beginning still playing music together almost 4 decades

later?

Mobi: I think nobody can plan their life for such long time. Even we couldn't do that (laugh)

Q: This is your second tour of the USA as Cluster I believe, do you like playing here?

Achim: We like pancakes and being with Tim at his house. And in between we like to do some work (laugh). That's the first thing we do, the second thing we do is play at the "No Fun" Festival

Mobi: So we think it's going to be big fun (laugh).

Q: Do you still play in Germany and other European countries?

Mobi: Germany not so much, in June Munich, a show in Berlin. Germany's not really the place people want us so much.

Achim: In the UK for example, Denmark twice this year, Petersburg, Rome

Mobi: I think the whole world likes us to come and play except Germany (laugh)

Q: Where do you get the best reaction?

Achim: I guess it's the English language countries mostly, and Japan.

Mobi: I think only the crazy countries like us (laugh)

Q: Mobi: At some point you both began solo careers, was this because there were things you felt you couldn't express creatively in the group context of Cluster?

Mobi: Oh, of course Cluster is more a quiet kind of music. Not in the beginning, but later on. On my solo work I like it a little more punky and noisy. And you Achim?

Achim: But it was only a question for you Mobi (laugh). Anyway I started very early to do my own stuff in 1972-'73 because I like myself just to experiment with sound, so it was always somewhat normal that I did my own stuff beside Cluster and Harmonia

Q-Mobi: Is there one of your solo works you feel best realizes your own personal creative vision, that you like best perhaps?

Mobi: It's always the last one (laugh). And the last one is not yet published. It's gonna be called Bazaar.

Q: Are there any plans you have for a LIVE 2008 Cluster recording from this tour? Or maybe we'll be lucky enough to even have a new Cluster studio album in the near future?

Achim: The live recording of our 2007 Tour is out just now so I don't know about another Live album. I would like to make a studio album. I don't know, how about Moebius? (laugh)

Mobi: I know a guy in America called Tim who could be our producer.

Achim: Oh yes Tim could be our producer I would like that (laugh)

Q-Achim: You have had a quite prolific solo career releasing several outstanding albums. Do you have one or two you feel most proud of? Do you have a new recording ready for release in the near future?

Achim: I liked very much Piano, Piano because it was my first step away from electronic music.

I still like it and I'm playing piano still. There are several albums coming out in the future.

There's one on June 13 in Vienna, a dedication to a psychiatrist who had the idea to involve mentally handicapped people into art and release people from their pain in that way instead of constantly taking constantly. It's in fact a double album as there are 2 artists involved in this project.

There's another coming out very old stuff from Human Being by Nepenthe in Ohio, the very first and only recording by the group live in Berlin 1968. The same company, Nepenthe, will also re-release an older album of mine called Open Doors.

Q-Achim: You & Mobi also have done several collaborations, Harmonia among others. Now you've formed a new sort of duo with American composer Tim Story. How did you come to discover Tim's music?

Achim: He contacted my first actually, coming to Europe and visiting when I lived near Vienna. We went hiking and camping in the mountains together and discovered the beauty of the Austrian Alps. We then decided to collaborate. But the real collaboration started much later.

Q-Achim: I believe you have also done some live concerts with him is there one special musical moment you remember that stands out as a highlight of your working together.

Achim: We did a lot of concerts, and one was the "Ether Festival" in London, our concert at "The Gathering" in Philadelphia, every concert we did was nice. We play every year in Lunz where I run my own little known Festival called "More Ohr Less". Tim will be there again as well. In June we will also play in Vienna, then in July Tirana Jazz Festival in Albania together.

Q-Tim: When you and Achim plan a recording, do you discuss musical ideas beforehand then compose themes that are developed separately, or together?

Tim: Because we live such a distance apart the collaboration has taken on a couple different forms, sometimes we'll trade tracks back and forth across the Atlantic and we'll each work on them separately, but more recently for Inlandish Achim came over for a couple of weeks in NOV 2006 and we did a lot of the work together then. We did a lot of work with Achim's parts, which I later fleshed out in my studio here. So that was really a great pleasure because we were able to collaborate in the same space at the same time.

Q-Tim: What is the actual technical process in terms of how you combine each others recorded music to form the final album?

Tim: I use Pro Tools software based recording so it was very easy when Achim came here. With the new one Inlandish we recorded all his parts into the system and sometimes I played along, sometimes we just talked about how to arrange things to get just the parts together that I would like to work on. It was quite easy because we did all the recording of both parts together. With Lunz the first album we worked on together there was a little more compiling as Achim would send me tapes he had recorded in Austria and I would load them in my system here and begin to compose my parts around those. Recently it's been more like the regular studio recording process and very gratifying as we get to interact personally, which I think is great for a real collaboration.

Q-Tim: Is the final production done by you in your studio, or Achim in his?

Tim: I have a little bit more extensive studio set up here with effects and everything else than Achim does so I've been doing that mostly. It just makes more sense to do those things in the best possible location technically. Sometimes if I'm not quite sure what to do I'll send things back and maybe Achim will add some more bits, make suggestions or change things. So for the most part

I've been doing most of the final production work and final mixing.

Q-Tim: In addition to your work with him you've also done a long string of excellent solo albums. Do you have a new recording planned for release in the near future?

Tim: No Achim and I had Inlandish released by Gronland, a label in London in JAN. And as he mentioned we have a few concerts coming up this summer so we have to learn some of the new pieces too. We've gotten pretty good at playing the old Lunz tracks, but I have to sorta re-develop the live production techniques for some of the new pieces.

Also while Achim was here in 2006 we recorded some music as a trio with Achim, I and Dwight Ashley who's been a collaborator of mine. There will be some production to do on that as well. It'll probably be just after summers over in August before I will be able to begin work on a new solo album, as well as finish up the new Ashley, Roedelius, Story album which will hopefully be out in the fall, or sometime next year. Then of course Achim and I both look forward to the next Roedelius Story collaboration.

KLUSTER

Questions w/ Words by Conrad Schnitzler
Commentary by Wolfgang Seidel

The “band” Kluster was arguably one of the very first German electronic music “groups” from Berlin. Its founder CONrad Schnitzler was, and is, certainly one of the most experimental and unique artists on the German scene back then, and still now. CON has created a body of work that defies categorization. He in fact stands alone in terms of sound, methodology and execution when it comes to his earlier live work, and also his multitude of studio creations as well. His life is his work, an ever evolving act of creation.

Recently he did for Eurock a recording about his ideas, life, and musical concepts. That was made into a very different Eurock LIVE Podcast. In fact, unlike the other Eurock Podcast our attempt was to use CON’s words and combine them with his music in the spirit of KLUSTER. You can download it free online and hear this Special “CONcast” now.

Along with his audio history CON sent along an “Addendum” document. The following “Interview” is a combination of “Questions” and some of his written “Words” which speak to them, acting as a sort of “Answers”. Included as well was a more in depth commentary written by Wolfgang Seidel dealing with the culture, social and creative nature of those times and CON’s work specifically. Taken as a whole, the Podcast & “Interview” + Commentary offer a very revealing look at the work, ideas and collaborative energies that went into creating Kluster. Please Read, Listen & experience CON in a way you never have before.

Enjoy! A.

When did you found the music group Kluster?

After my exit 1969 from the group GERÄUSCHE (Zodiak - with Roedelius and Boris Schak), from 1969 to 1972 I worked with different friends, with TD among others. With them I tried to perform the music of my imagination. Finally Klaus Freudigmann and Wolfgang Seidel remained at the work continuously over the years. In addition there were several actions with Achim Roedelius and Dieter Moebius where the LPs KLUSTER Klopzeichen, Zwei Osterei and Eruption were made. Instruments, amplifier and effects I gave Moebius because he had had no own equipment.

What was the musical concept of Kluster?

I founded the group KLUSTER in 1969. The idea was to make sounds without melodies, sounds comparing to industrial noises. I had different friends with me to play. No money was to be earned with this music. No fame, to attain with it. I met Roedelius and Moebius in that time and they agreed with me and my ideas. By the way I’m not a musician; I’m an InterMedia artist and composer. With the different KLUSTER groups we did some live concerts.

I didn’t want the music to remind of the normal. My criteria’s were not folk music, not rock music, not pop songs and not dance music. The idea for “Cluster” later “KLUSTER” (I wanted to avoid American-isms) is not only a name for a group but a form of music. I had amplifier, instruments, contact Mics and effects that could be used by the others, too. Klaus had tape machines and microphones. In addition he constructed instruments and electronic sound generators, which made the most indescribable sounds. Wolfgang had everything connected with drum and

base and in addition amplifier and effects. Klaus had rooms where we could work out our music performances. The tapes “Electric Meditation” with TD were made in one of those spaces. Most of the performances happened with friends who took part in the actions; therefore Conrad, Klaus, Wolfgang and friends.

What was Eruption?

For special activities we used the name ERUPTION. ‘Eruption’ (Ausbruch) is the title of the 1st LP. Of that I had produced an edition of 100 LPs. Later the Gallery Block had made another edition of 100 LPS of it for the ‘Block Box’ with a label without Moebius’ and Roedelius’ names though. Later in 1996 Joe (Marginal Talent) produced a CD of it. The group KLUSTER- was a conglomerate of totally different players and artists over several years. But for all those years Klaus Freudigmann was involved sometimes as player, or as sound engineer or even as inventor of instruments. It was him who taped the last KLUSTER Concert. Therefore he was named equally along with the others on the label. Before and after the work with Roedelius & Moebius I still did a lot of activities with the group KLUSTER.

Did the “musik” of Kluster sell well?

It was not popular music KLUSTER did. Not many people were interested. Therefore, there were no photos of Kluster, or posters, or tickets, or newspaper cuttings, or anything related left. That was some 35 years ago.

There was a new Kluster 2007 release last year?

It was the absolute Connection for the idea of KLUSTER in this time: Global playing together without being on the same place. Every artist makes his own mix in the Kluster-intention. This means democracy and variety.

So it seems Kluster is not over and the music lives on?

If we friends meet, we didn’t think about under which name we met. It is the style of the music which comes out. No other group made such music. This is KLUSTER music, it is a style. It is an invention of Konrad Schnitzler 1969. Schnitzler/Freudigmann/Seidel & Friends were before Roedelius and Moebius came to the band and after. I founded the group KLUSTER after my exit 1969 from Zodiak, and from Boris Schak and Achim Roedelius. Kluster was never over. There is KLUSTER until today.

Commentary by Wolfgang Seidel on Kluster

Summer of Love?

Kluster was formed in West-Berlin - much closer to Siberia than to San Francisco, Haight Ashbury and Golden Gate Park. What came to Berlin with a two years delay were only the outer fringes of the “Summer of Love”. Its blossom would have died soon in the Cold War breeze. And 1970 a lot of the optimism of the mid 60ies had already ceased. It became obvious that creating a better world needs more than flowers in your hair. But the political movements of the late sixties were a child of the same optimism that fuelled the rapid developments changing not only the material side of life but also arts, music and the way people interacted. The new left and the hippie movement where all these ideas concentrated wasn’t the result of poverty, but was built on the belief that with modern technology there is enough for everybody. It’s only a question of a fair distribution.

That optimism had a soundtrack that was based on the same technology. From the electric guitar, reverb and echo units to the first synthesizers, everything was welcome that sounded as if it came from the future. Future meant space travel - so it’s quite natural that the first effects wildly used where those who send you to a space you’ve never been before: artificial reverb and echo. A lot of people had their first encounter with this new music at the movies - watching Sci-fi-films like

Forbidden Planet with the electronic tonalities of Louis and Bebe Barron (1956 - and their work wasn't called music to avoid paying royalties and having to quarrel with the conservative musicians trade unions).

For a few years rock music was the most popular of new sounds and for a lot of people the door opener. It was one of the rare moments when you could be at the same time avant-garde and mainstream. But this did not last long. Pop music quickly became old music with new instruments when it turned into highly standardized entertainment. And the use of the electric guitar developed rules like any other traditional instrument.

Amongst that people that met to form Kluster were Klaus Freudigmann and Wolfgang Seidel, who both grew disenchanted with pop music and Conrad Schnitzler who came from a complete different direction as sculptor. While the others discovered the new territories of sound via psychedelic music, Schnitzler was a fan of Stockhausen, Cage etc. but was distracted by the highbrowed elite attitude with which this music surrounded itself in Germany. What met was the self empowerment of early rock music with the search for new sounds and structures of 20th century avant-garde music.

That Kluster made simple music on DIY instruments, droning and banging on one note for half an hour did not mean we were into any kind of primitivism. We hated the bongo playing hippie and his backward dreams of tribal "healthy" societies (forgetting that hunger, war and oppression were not invented this year). To us the longing for sweet melodies was a regressive refuge from a world that isn't sweet. We did not want to go back. If the future was inevitable, we wanted to shape it - at least sonically. That we preferred slow tempos sometimes gets mistaken as "dark". We just gave every sound enough time to be listened to. And we wanted to draw a line between us and the, "look I am the fastest guitar heroes" that began to rule the stages. What we did was get rid of the schemes of pop and popular classic and find out, what else we can do with our tools, polishing and lubricating them for a future music.

But no matter how far your mind is in the future - your stomach is still on earth and demands feeding. When things got tougher in the 70ies, the people that met under the labels Kluster and Eruption had to look for ways to earn their living. Conrad Schnitzler started his long solo voyage, Klaus Freudigmann took part in the squatters movement, and others took ordinary jobs and surfaced now and then with some new piece of music. What's left are some tapes and a few minutes of film documenting an installation Conrad Schnitzler sat up at Galerie Block (1970) reflecting the ideas behind Kluster. Violins that had bought cheap from the flea market were equipped with contact microphones and plugged into radios that had been mounted to the wall as amplifiers. The visitors (hopefully no musicians) experimented collectively with the sounds from the violins hearing themselves in the radio.

There is some confusion about Kluster/Eruption recordings. This is rooted long ago in the past but should also be solved after these many years. Kluster was always Conrad's brainchild. Eruption was used for events where Kluster was open to other people. The first time I remember that the name was used was for the Christmas concert at Quartier Latin (1971?) where everybody that had milled around the Zodiak showed up for some time. There even had been concerts where audience participation was the main idea and preventing the "real" musicians from taking part - something Conrad first did with his violin installation at Galerie Block. Take away the music from the musicians and their routine, then let people find out how to create sounds whose minds are not constrained by being trained to fulfil a paying audience's expectations. Kluster is not only a name and not a logo or a brand. It is a concept, a form of making music and a sound resulting from that concept. And music that fits into that concept is Kluster. That's what Conrad's work in those years was all about. It's nice that what's left from that time surfaces now. But it's not meant for the collector. It's meant to revive the old idea of everybody having the gift of creativity. That is now hidden under the restraints of daily life and work. Conrad decided early to withdraw from the music scene because it is a market place where art and ideas do not count - it's all about sales figures and thus serving common tastes. O.K. - Conrad sells his music, too. But he does it to a small audience where he believes people are really interested in his work and not only following a fashion. If he was interested in commercial success, he would follow the rules of economy and look for one product selling as much as possible. Instead he makes a recording - and when it's done, it's done - and then he focuses on the next one not thinking about how to market the last one. That's why there are so many releases. This is where the artist thinks different than a label.

This text is written to give an idea what time and situation is reflected in the music. It was the era of the big discussions how society works and how it should work. And music was a field to experiment not only with something different ideas sonically but also socially. To explore what happens when there is no hierarchy or economic purpose. At the time Kluster regarded the process of creating sound with as much as importance as the recording - or even more. This is something that is lost. Music had become mostly a product for a market, following its rules and disguising that simple truth under esoteric talk - which only makes things worse. Well, I can't talk for Conrad - but I believe this is one of the reasons why he retreated from public, making his music for his friends. If they like the music - good.

The idea of an improvised remix concert of original, pre-recorded sound, was realized by nobody more fully than Conrad Schnitzler, the pioneering musician who convinced Tangerine Dream and Kluster (Cluster) to delve into the then-unexplored realm of synthesized sound, with his *Kassetten Konzert*. Prefigured by Pierre Henry performing live mixes with tapes, not unlike Stockhausen working his potentiometers, or Brian Eno, who processed Phil Manzanera's guitar solos with *Roxy Music*, Schnitzler nevertheless made the *Cassette Concert* his own with the unique and very influential techniques he developed in the 80s.

Today composers including David Myers and Gen Ken, David Prescott, Giancarlo Tonuitti, and Serge Leroy use similar systems, and echoes can be found in electronic dance music; Richie Hawtin's live fragment-assemblage DJing, for example, and indeed, much laptop live performance. In the 80s, Schnitzler developed the concept of cassette concerts to create larger, more complex sound as a soloist for his live performances, and later used the techniques as a means for his music to tour without needing to travel himself, requiring a "performer" other than Schnitzler to select the material, adding uncontrolled, unforeseen elements to each concert. As each tape contains only one component of the piece, they are selected and combined differently forming the same basic, but variable and unpredictable composition. *Cassette Concerts* allowed Schnitzler to combine the best elements of structured composed music, improvised music, and conceptual music into a workable method of both composing and performing live electronic music. As predecessors of today's computational generative systems his techniques introduced a new take on electronic music performance, transforming static recordings into evolving event with an infinite number of outcomes. Other than the concrete differences that come from selecting the various tracks, there is variation through the mixing of volumes, the adjustment of equalization, and the placement of the speakers, both in stationary positions and with movement.

As Schnitzler's long time collaborator, I am also a "player". I was involved in Schnitzler's *Zodiak Free Arts Lab*. Disenchanted with rock music, so too began collaborations with Schnitzler aimed at re-negotiating the roles of performer/listener and creating free-flowing improvised sound. The cassettes have been replaced today by CDs, with additional and updated signal processing of original sounds, but the techniques remain otherwise unchanged. Some of Schnitzler's rarely seen videos from the 80s are also screened during the performances.

A STORY BY HARALD GROSSKOPF

by Harald Grosskopf, 1995 & 2005

Mit Achtzehn verweigerte ich erfolgreich den Kriegsdienst und kam zum Zivildienst, den ich in Seesen, einem kleinen Ort am Rande des Harzes und in Freiburg absolvierte. Ein harter Dienst, bei dem ich viel menschliches Elend sehen und erleben mußte. Zum Teil arbeitete ich als Hilfspfleger in diversen Operationssälen. Am Anfang ein großer Schock für einen Neunzehnjährigen. All diese Schmitte, das Blut, die Toten.

Mein Entschluß stand fest. Im Oktober 1970, wieder zu Hause bei den Eltern, entschied ich, für den Rest meines Lebens Musik zu machen. Inzwischen war ich Hippie geworden, trug das Haar schulterlang und rauchte Haschisch. Manchmal schluckten wir LSD oder Mescaline, eine Droge, die von mexikanischen Indianern aus den weißen Blütenknöpfen (Buttons) des Peyotekaktus gewonnen wird. Ich zog bei meinen Eltern aus, nachdem ich dort noch zwei Wochen gewohnt hatte. Ich hatte mit Freunden eine Wohngemeinschaft gegründet und ein kleines Haus angemietet. Dort zog ich ein.

Einer von uns Vieren war Ulli, Bassist der „Stuntmen“, mit dem ich eine neue Band gründen wollte. Es ging in diesem kleinen Haus meist wild und chaotisch zu. Kurt injizierte sich regelmäßig Opium in den Arm. Da ich in Krankenhäusern gearbeitet hatte, verstand ich einiges von Sterilität und war entsetzt, mit welcher gefährlicher Nachlässigkeit Kurt sich Schüsse setzte. Ganz unabhängig von der zerstörerischen Energie dieser Droge. Die unmittelbare Wirkung der Droge, welche sich drastisch in seiner Mimik und Körpersprache ausdrückte, haben mich nachhaltig abgestoßen. Ich schwor mir nie so etwas zu probieren. Es mißfiel mir auch, daß manche unserer Freunde und Bekannte in das Drogenbusiness eingestiegen waren. Sie brachten ihren Stoff, oft mehrere Kilogramm Haschisch, in unser Haus, legten ihn auf unseren Tisch und zerlegten ihn in kleine gut verkaufbare Portionen, die in Aluminiumfolie verpackt wurden. Ich befürchtete Schlimmstes. Meine dunklen Vorahnungen sollten kurz darauf Wirklichkeit werden.

Eines Tages machte das Drogendezernat der Kriminalpolizei unserer Wohngemeinschaft den Garaus. Sie hatten das ganze Treiben wochenlang im Auge gehabt. Einige von uns wurden verhaftet. Am nächsten Tag prangte ein großes Foto mit all unseren „Drogenwerkzeugen“ auf der Titelseite der Tageszeitung. Überschrift: „Rauschgiftkommune aufgefliegen“. Ich entging der Verhaftung nur, weil sie in meinem Zimmer nichts gefunden hatten. Ich wollte so schnell wie möglich aus dieser Situation heraus. Meine Karriere als Musiker, bei allen Vernebelungsexperimenten, hatte ich nicht aus den Augen verloren.

Kurz nachdem der Laden aufgefliegen war, besuchten mich zwei Typen aus dem Rheinland. Sie hatten sich zuvor in Hannover erfolglos nach einem Drummer umgesehen. Dabei waren sie einem Freund von mir über den Weg gelaufen. Der hatte sie zu mir geschickt. Einer der beiden hatte wie ich schulterlanges, blondes Haar und stellte sich als Jürgen Dollase vor. Dieser Mensch war eine merkwürdige Erscheinung. Er war Student an der Düsseldorfer Kunstakademie und studierte Malerei. Sein Selbstbewußtsein schien mir grenzenlos. Ich hielt damals vieles von dem was er von sich gab für Angeberei, war aber auch sehr neugierig und witterte eine Chance weiterzukommen.

Der zweite hieß Corrado Faccioni, ein ausgesprochen verschlagener, für mich vollkommen undurchsichtiger Typ, dem ich instinktiv mißtraute. Seinen Namen hatte er von seinem italienischen Vater,

einem verschlossenen, autoritären, ehemaliger Marineoffizier, der seine beiden Söhne ziemlich mies behandelte. Corrados Bruder war eines der ersten Heroinwracks, die mir persönlich begegneten. Er wurde später in eine psychiatrische Heilanstalt eingewiesen. Corrado schien der Manager der Band zu sein. Wie sich herausstellte, war er nicht besonders gut für diesen Job geeignet, aber als Roadie konnten wir keinen Besseren haben. Mein Mißtrauen ihm gegenüber konnte ich jedoch nie ganz ablegen. Wie sich später herausstellte, hatte Corrado Faccioni tatsächlich eine kriminelle Ader, von der wir zunächst ohne es zu ahnen, Nutzen hatten. Er „besorgte“ uns alles was wir an Equipment brauchten. Verschiedene Bandbusse, Drums, PA Systeme etc. Wir fragten nie, woher das ganze Zeug kam. Heute weiß ich, daß er andere Bands beklautete. Er versprach, ihr altes Equipment zu verkaufen, um ihnen dann vom Erlös neue Geräte aus England mitzubringen. Das alte Zeug nahm er an sich, ließ sich obendrein von den Ahnungslosen Bargeld in die Hand geben und lieferte meist nie.

Wir selber kauften unsere Verstärkeranlagen in England. Mit dem Auto fuhren wir einige Male nach London und schmuggelten brandneues Zeug, welches wir legal gekauft hatten, über die Grenzen von Belgien und Holland. Dem Zoll zeigten wir fingierte Reparaturquittungen, auf denen die Sachen als unser reparaturbedürftiges, legales Eigentum ausgewiesen war. Verstärker und eigentlich alles was eine Band so alles brauchte, war Anfang der Siebziger in England wesentlich billiger zu haben. Eines Tages - Corrado hatte diesmal Dieter Dierks, Produzent, Besitzer und Manager eines Musikstudios bei Köln, um ca. Dreißigtausend Mark geprellt - verschwand er für immer von der Bildfläche. Dieter Dierks hat ihn jahrelang erfolglos von Interpol verfolgen lassen. Ich begegnete Corrado gute fünfzehn Jahre später auf der Frankfurter Musikmesse wieder. Er war sehr gut gekleidet und erzählte mir, daß er in Norditalien lebt und mit wertvollen Hi-End Anlagen handelt.

Jürgen Dollase war etwa ein Jahr älter als ich, spielte neben den Keyboards Bass und hatte gewaltige Pläne. Eine Platte sollte in naher Zukunft aufgenommen werden. Radioauftritte und Interviews waren organisiert. Ich beschloß spontan mit den beiden mitzufahren. Meine Schlagzeugkunst konnte ich ihnen nicht vorführen, da die Besucher der WG, die meist die Angewohnheit hatten auf meinem Schlagwerk herumzuballern, das gute Stück dabei demoliert hatten. Auf der Fahrt von Hannover ins Rheinland berichteten mir beide von ihrem begnadeten Gitarristen, der wie sich herausstellte tatsächlich ein großartiger Musiker war und der mit Jürgen die Band bildete, welche Blitzkrieg heißen sollte. Ein ziemlich provokanter Name für eine deutsche Rockband, wie ich fand.

Wir übten, außer Sonntags, jeden Tag. Mindestens sechs bis sieben Stunden am Stück. Das Programm war kompliziert, umfangreich und forderte, da ich Notenlesen nicht beherrschte, meine ganze Aufmerksamkeit. Einen wesentlichen Teil meiner Technik habe ich dieser intensiven Probezeit zu verdanken.

Ich wurde bei den Eltern von Jürgen untergebracht. Sein Vater war Rektor eines kleinen Gymnasiums. Im Hause gab es noch die Mutter von Jürgen, seine Großmutter, zwei jüngere Schwestern und einen Bruder in meinem Alter. Rainer, der ältere Bruder von Jürgen, war Doktor der Psychologie und wollte Professor werden, wohnte aber nicht mehr im Hause und war verheiratet. Rainer sorgte dafür, daß ich mit meinem Zeichentalent einiges für meinen Lebensunterhalt verdienen konnte. Er gab mir die Möglichkeit, eine seiner fachliterarischen Veröffentlichungen über Kinderpsychologie mit Illustrationen zu gestalten. Dafür bin ich ihm bis heute dankbar.

Mein Schlafplatz im freundlichen, menschenreichen Einfamilienhaus der Dollases wurde der einzig noch verbleibende Raum des Hauses - der Vorratskeller. Man stellte mir ein Campingbett zur Verfügung. Ich war zufrieden. Die kurze Zeit bis zum internationalen Durchbruch konnte ich auf diese Art und Weise leicht durchstehen. Mich selber zu ernähren und zu versorgen war ich nicht gewohnt. Diese Tatsache beunruhigte mich damals auch nicht sonderlich. Ich besaß keinen Pfennig. Als der internationale Durchbruch nach drei Wochen nicht erreicht war, mußte ich mich darauf vorbereiten, auf den familiären Schutz zu verzichten. Die zweimonatliche Gastfreundschaft, inklusive leiblicher Versorgung, ist mir bis heute in angenehmer Erinnerung.

Corrado hatte mir eine Einzimmerwohnung in Mönchengladbach besorgt. Sie diente bis zu meinem Einzug dazu, Stripperinnen und Barfrauen, die im Vorderhaus in der „Saharabar“ ihrem Broterwerb nachgingen, Unterkunft und Umkleideraum zu sein. Über mir wohnte ein freundlicher Mann, der ab und zu für einige Monate „auf Urlaub“ ging, wie mir seine Freundin jedesmal zu erzählen versuchte. Manchmal, wenn seine Dusche kaputt war, kam er zu mir herunter und fragte mich,

ob er sich bei mir duschen könne, was ich ihm nie abschlug. Er schien von kleinen Gaunereien zu leben, welche er von Zeit zu Zeit gemeinsam mit Peter G., dem Betreiber der „Saharabar“ betrieb.

Einmal kam Peter frühmorgens in mein Zimmer gestürzt, nachdem er wie wild gegen die heruntergezogenen Rolläden geschlagen hatte. Er berichtete mir atemlos, daß sie gerade eben, auf einer ihrer Touren, bei der sie ein Teppichlager um den Inhalt reduziert hatten, der Polizei, die schon in Sichtweite war, entwischen konnten.

Peter war ein fanatischer Fan von „Borussia Mönchengladbach“. Die waren 1971 und '72 Deutscher Fußballmeister geworden. Peter war ein Mensch, der nicht davor zurückschreckte zahlungsunwillige Gäste seiner „Saharabar“ samt Türfüllung aus dem zwielichtigen Etablissement zu befördern. Dieser Mann sollte fortan der Manager von Blitzkrieg sein. Corrado hatte diese Unterweltverbindung zustandegebracht.

Wenn Peter mit seinem über mir wohnenden Kumpel nächtliche Touren unternahm, lieb er sich zuweilen unseren Bandbus. Manchmal brach mitten in der Nacht heftiger Streit zwischen den beiden aus. Dann flogen die Fäuste unter lauten Drohungen. In tiefstem rheinischen Slang. Es krachte stundenlang im Hausflur. Sie schlugen und schleuderten sich gegenseitig auf die Holzterrasse, gegen Türen und Treppengeländer. Ich wagte nicht zu atmen. Anderntags schien zwischen ihnen nichts ungewöhnliches geschehen zu sein.

Peter besaß einen großen grünmetallinen Mercedes 280 SE, mit dem er uns, oft mit atemberaubender Geschwindigkeit, bei der mir der Angstschweiß den Nacken herunterlief, zu den Gigs fuhr. Er hatte die äußerst unangenehme Angewohnheit, sich während der Fahrt hektisch, einen Redeschwall auf uns herablassend, über beängstigend lange Zeiträume zu uns herumzudrehen. Zwei seiner schönen Autos hat er bei ähnlicher Gelegenheit zu Schrott gefahren. Gottseidank ohne uns. Die einzige Geldquelle, die ich damals hatte, waren zehn, manchmal zwanzig Mark, die Peter mir unwillig einmal bis zwei mal die Woche in die Hand drückte. Ein erniedrigendes Gefühl. Außerdem war es hart, mit so wenig Geld auszukommen.

Peter hatte Kontakte zu Plattenfirmen aufgenommen. Wolfgang Steinicke, unser Gitarrist, wollte allerdings keine professionelle Karriere als Musiker anfangen. Er wollte Mathematik studieren. Ich war sehr enttäuscht, als wir durch seine Freundin erfuhren, daß er aussteigen wolle. 30 Jahre später hatte ich dank Internet wieder Kontakt zu Wolfgang. Er ist ein freundlicher Mensch, erfolgreich einbezogen in astronomische Wissenschaften, schreibt Bücher, führt ein Institut für Entwicklungshilfe in Freiburg und macht immer noch Musik.

Wochen später brachte Corrado einen Italoamerikaner, der schwarze lange Haare und einen Vollbart trug, von einem seiner zahlreichen Londonbesuche mit. William (Bill) Joseph Barone hieß der einundzwanzigjährige Typ. Er hatte schon als Siebzehnjähriger in einer der Bands von Otis Redding Gitarre gespielt. Was mir gar nicht paßte, war die Tatsache, daß Bill zu mir in die winzige Einzimmer Wohnung ziehen sollte. Inzwischen war nämlich meine Freundin Pirjo, eine Finnin, nach Deutschland gekommen und wohnte seit Monaten bei mir. Da die Wohnung Peter gehörte, konnte ich keine Einwände erheben. Ich mußte versuchen, mein Bestes aus der Situation zu machen. Bill war ein von Medikamenten abhängiger Asthmatiker und dazu Frühaufsteher. Jeden Morgen lautete er darauf, daß wir unsere Augen auftaten. Sobald das geschah, legte er seine Lieblingsplatten auf und drehte den Lautstärkehahn bis zum Anschlag auf. Dieses Ritual wiederholte sich Monat für Monat. Jeden Morgen Jefferson Airplane und Steppenwolf. Oder Steppenwolf und Jefferson Airplane. Immer und immer und immer wieder. Das Zeug hing mir zum Halse heraus.

Pirjo und ich taten oft als schliefen wir noch und konnten so das Inferno eine Weile aufschieben. Wenn ich diese Platten von damals heute höre, dann kommt mir immer noch ein merkwürdiges Gefühl hoch, ähnlich wie es mir mit dem Beachboy-Song „Barbara Ann“ geht, der mich auf die gleiche Art und Weise während der Pausen meines allerersten Auftritts langweilte. Innerhalb kürzester Zeit lernte ich auf Amerikanisch zu fluchen und Philadelphia Ghetto-Slang zu verstehen. Ich sprach mehr Englisch als Deutsch. In der Enge der Situation habe ich mir gute Englischkenntnisse aneignen können.

Jerry Berkers kam etwa gleichzeitig wie Bill zu uns. Alles im Rahmen unseres Scoutings nach einem Ersatz für Wolfgang Steinicke, der uns spontan verlassen hatte um in Freiburg Mathe und Astrophysik zu studieren. Jerry, der wie ich gerade erfuhr eigentlich Ger Berkers hieß, stammte aus Brunsum in Holland. Er war wie Bill Gitarrist. Da wir uns schon für Bill entschieden hatten, aber

Jerry wegen seiner ungewöhnlichen Stimme nicht wieder gehen lassen wollten, fragten wir ihn, ob er nicht Bass bei uns spielen könne. Das tat er dann auch eine Weile mit sehr hoher musikalischer und technischer Qualität.

Jerry war in der Tat schon zu Wallenstein-Zeiten „seltsam“. Allerdings nicht von Beginn an. Alles, was ich von ihm wusste, war, dass er vorher (ca. 1970/71) in einer Show-Band mit Go-Go-Girls durch Australien getourt war und dort von einem Versorgungs-Offizier der US-Army engagiert wurde, um mit seiner Band für die GI's in Vietnam an der Front zu performen. Die Musiker der Band waren im Schnitt 18/19 Jahre alt und offensichtlich zu naiv, um zu wissen was auf sie zukommen würde.

Jerrys Stimme war sehr originell. Dunkel und gefühlvoll. Diese Stimme ist vor allem auf unserem Album „Mother Universe“ zu hören. Jerry war damals ein gut aussehender freundlicher junger Mann mit halblangen, dunklen Haaren und einem kurzen Vollbart, der nur mit dem Finger zu schnippen brauchte, um die Aufmerksamkeit der Frauen auf sich zu lenken.

Wir hatten Anfang der Siebziger Jahre viele Studiosessions in den Dierks Studios (Köln/Stommeln) unter dem Namen „The Cosmic Couriers“ gemacht. Dort wurde im allgemeinen immer LSD konsumiert wenn wir Musik improvisierten. Die Plattenfirma (Ohr, später Pilz-Label) wollte mit Jerry ein Soloalbum („UNTERWEGS“) machen und bat ihn an Texten zu arbeiten. Auf dem Album trommelte übrigens der Drummer der späteren „Bläck Fööss“ aus Köln. Zu dieser Zeit fing Jerry's Verhalten an sich langsam zu verändern. Er zog sich immer mehr in sich zurück und wurde seltsam ernst und entrückt. Wir dachten zunächst er brauche seine Zeit für sich um diese Solo Album Texte fertig zu bekommen.

Er erzählte mir in dieser Zeit (ca. 1971/72) das erste Mal von seinen Erfahrungen in Vietnam. Wir wohnten damals zeitweise mit mehreren Leuten sehr primitiv in einem Haus in der Innenstadt von Mönchengladbach. An einige seiner bedrückenden Vietnam-Schilderungen kann ich mich bis heute gut erinnern. Ich als Wehrdienstverweigerer und Pazifist war sehr schockiert, dass ein so junger Mann wie Jerry schon persönlich derartig dramatische Erfahrungen in einem realen Krieg gemacht hatte. Für uns fand Krieg in Zeitungen statt. Jerry berichtet von einem üblicherweise stattfindenden Transport des Bandedquipments auf einer großen Plattform, auf der die ganze Bühnenbackline komplett aufgebaut und festgeschraubt war. Bühne und Musiker wurden komplett mit Helikoptern oder mit Hilfe schwerer Trucks zu den Soldaten an die vorderste Front gebracht. Zum Teil tief in den Dschungel. Jerry erlebte, dass der Viet-Cong derartige Transporte mit schweren und leichten Waffen beschoss. Mit den entsprechenden Folgen: Tote und Verwundete. Ein anderes Mal fiel während des Auftritts direkt neben ihm eines seiner Go-Go Tänzerinnen von Snipern tödlich getroffen um. (An anderer Stelle wird berichtet, dass sämtliche (insgesamt 3) Go-Go Tänzerinnen während des Gigs erschossen wurden. Anm. d. Webmasters) Die Musiker waren alle gut befreundet. Derartig gefährliche Situationen hatten sie noch mehr miteinander verbunden. Um so drastischer muß eine solche Erfahrung auf Jerry gewirkt haben. Ein drittes Erlebnis schilderte, wie seine Unterkunft im Dschungel die ganze Nacht mit schweren Panzergranaten beschossen wurde. Jerry hatte 12 Stunden lang Todesängste.

Ich bin überzeugt, dass diese Erfahrungen tief in seine Seele eingedrungen sind, sie gewaltig erschüttert und verwirrt haben. Sein LSD Konsum hat diese Erlebnisse wahrscheinlich wieder real werden lassen. Wir waren zu jung, um die Warnzeichen zu erkennen und zu unerfahren um ihm zu helfen. Jerry verwahrloste zunehmend und redete wirr. Er trieb sich mit Heroinsüchtigen herum und schlief im Freien. Einmal schaute er mich unendlich traurig an und sagte: „Harald ich sterbe jetzt!“. Dann war er tagelang verschwunden.

Ein anderes Mal tauchte er um 3 Uhr nachts bei den Eltern von Jürgen Dollase auf und fragte, ob sie das Taxi zahlen können, mit dem er gerade aus Aachen (!) gekommen war. Dort war er wohl einige Tage vorher mit dem Fahrrad (75 km) hingefahren. Sein Musikhören in unserer Band „Wallenstein“ wurde dabei emotional immer intensiver. Bei einem unserer Auftritte im Hamburg verschwand er in der Pause und tauchte erst 3 Tage später wieder auf. Er sagte sein Gesicht sei von Blut überströmt gewesen. Er wurde für uns unberechenbar und wir schauten nach anderen Bassisten. Dieter Meier wurde für kurze Zeit sein Nachfolger und hatte ja auch ein ähnlich dramatisches Ende. Jerrys Album „UNTERWEGS“ erschien auf dem Pilz-Label. Danach aber verschwand er aus unserem Leben. Ich hörte, seine Eltern hätten ihn in eine Psychiatrie in Holland einliefern lassen. Einige Jahre später (vielleicht 1977/78) begegnete ich ihm zum letzten Mal in einer Szene-

Kneipe in Mönchengladbach. Er hatte kurze Haare, keinen Bart mehr und trug einen Anzug. Sein Verhalten schien mir durch Psychopharmaka sehr gedämpft, fremd und distanziert. Vor sechs oder sieben Jahren wurde Jerry tot in einem Park in Holland aufgefunden. Überdosis Kokain.

Wir hatten mit „Blitzkrieg“ einen Gig auf einem Riesenfestival in Landshut. Das erste Mal in meinem Leben stand ich vor gut zehntausend Menschen. Es regnete stark und wir hatten Angst, daß wir tödliche Stromschläge abbekommen könnten. Einige berühmte Rockmusiker sind auf diese tragische Weise ums Leben gekommen. Besonders gefährdet sind Sänger, wenn sie mit dem Mund ein unter Strom stehendes Mikrofon berühren. Dann folgen Gitarristen und Bassisten, die über die feuchten Instrumentensaiten den tödlichen Stromschlag abbekommen können. Meine Angst galt eher dem Schaden, welches Wasser einem Holztrommelkessel zufügen kann. Wir spielten gut, denn wir bekamen anschließend ein Schallplattenangebot nach dem anderen.

Peter brachte uns damals erfolgsmäßig gut nach vorne. Wir spielten häufig und verdienten zeitweilig ein ausreichendes Einkommen. Wir hatten Beiträge in allen Musikmagazinen, von denen es natürlich lange nicht so viele gab wie heute. Selbst der SPIEGEL schrieb über uns in seiner Kulturabteilung. Leider war Peter ein sehr ungeduldiger Mensch. Er war davon ausgegangen uns innerhalb von einigen Monaten ganz nach Oben bringen zu können. Nachdem wir unseren Namen „Blitzkrieg“ in „Wallenstein“ ändern mußten, weil wir Ärger mit einer gleichnamigen Band aus England vermeiden wollten, warf Peter das Handtuch.

Wir hatten einen Schallplattenvertrag. Unsere Plattenfirma hieß OHR MUSIK. Sämtliche namhaften Undergroundmusiker und Gruppen, angefangen mit „Tangerine Dream“, Amon Düül, Ash Ra Tempel, Klaus Schulze, „Popol Vuh“, „Guru Guru“ u.s.w. waren auf diesem Label. Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser und Gille Lettmann, die beiden Labelchefs, hatten Kontakt zu Professor Timothy Leary, einem Psychologen der von der Harvard Universität geflogen war, weil er Experimente mit LSD an seinen Klienten weitergeführt hatte, die in den Anfängen seiner psychologischen Forschungen noch legal waren. Kein Mensch wußte, was LSD bewirken konnte. Durch seine literarischen Veröffentlichungen wurde er eine der legendärsten Figuren der internationalen Hippieszene.

Nachdem LSD als illegale Droge eingestuft und verboten wurde, wurde Timothy Leary immer mehr zu einer politischen Figur, weil er eine Menge Anhänger hinter sich hatte. Er galt schließlich als Gefahr für die amerikanische Gesellschaft, weil er lautstark den Ausstieg propagierte. „Turn on, tune in, drop out“. Der Hippie-Slogan schlechthin. Timothy Leary, der LSD-Papst, lebte jahrelang auf der Flucht vor dem amerikanischen CIA. Die Schweiz hatte ihm Asyl gewährt. In den USA drohten lange Haftstrafen wegen illegalen Drogenbesitzes. Eines Tages wurde er dann aus Afghanistan entführt und zurück in die USA gebracht, wo man ihn wegen geringer Mengen Hasch einlochete.

Er hatte in Basel prächtige Beziehungen zu den Labors einiger Pharmagiganten, in denen reinstes, ungepanshtes LSD produziert wurde. Oft wurde in geringen Mengen Strychnin zugesetzt. Ein brutales Gift. Dr. Albert Hoffmann hatte in den Sechzigern in den Laboren dieser Schweizer Pharmagiganten das Lysergsäurediäthylamid (LSD) und dessen psychogene Wirkungen entdeckt. Seine Eigenversuche gibt es in Buchform. Aus jenen Quellen stammte die Wahnsinnsdroge, welche wir damals in den Musikstudios konsumierten, bevor wir uns in das damit verbundene musikalische Abenteuer stürzten und die legendären Kosmischen Kuriere - Sessions veranstalteten. Vieles was damals aufgenommen und zum Teil auch veröffentlicht wurde war musikalischer Schrott, aber ich erinnere mich an ganz phantastische musikalische Erlebnisse während der Aufnahmen. Die Bänder, die damals aufgenommen wurden existieren wahrscheinlich heute noch. Unveröffentlicht und inzwischen vermutlich zu Staub zerfallen, nach über zwanzig Jahren. Unwiederbringlich verloren für die Nachwelt. Ambient- und Trancemusik der ersten Stunde. Wer wird diesen Schatz heben. Falls es nicht schon zu spät ist. Es war die Zeit in der ich meine Liebe zu elektronisch erzeugter Musik entdeckte. Dieses Universum an klanglichen Variationen ließ mich fortan nicht wieder los. In dieser Zeit entstanden einige Platten die den Grundstein der heutigen elektronischen Musik legten. Niemand dachte damals daran diese Musik „Techno“ zu nennen.

„Wallenstein“ begann mich zu langweilen. Querelen untereinander ließen das Gefühl füreinander bröckeln. Wir hatten bis 1975 vier relativ erfolgreiche Schallplatten herausgebracht. Mit abnehmender Verkaufstendenz. Das Projekt drohte in den Mainstream abzugleiten. Die Band begann sich erst einmal aufzulösen. Nach meinem Ausstieg mit einer neuen Besetzung gelang „Wallenstein“ einige Jahre später mit dem Titel „Charline“ ein großer kommerzieller Erfolg. Charly Terstappen (Char-

ly T.), der später jahrelang für Marius Müller-Westernhagen trommelte, wurde mein Nachfolger. Ich hatte keine Lust mehr auf Rockmusik. Wollte keinen Vierviertelrockbeat mehr trommeln und verkaufte mein Schlagzeug, ein durchsichtiges „SONOR“ Acryldrums mit allem Schnickschnack. Für den Erlös kaufte ich eine Westerngitarre, einen „Barcus-Berry“ Tonabnehmer, einen Musicman Gitarrenamp und ein „WEM“ Copycat. Das ist ein Band-Echogerät englischer Produktion welches damals bei den Gitarristen schwer angesagt war. Echosounds hatten mich während der „kosmischen“ Sessions total fasziniert.

Die polyrhythmischen Strukturen die man damit erzeugen konnte packten den Trommler in mir. Ich konnte mich, quasi in Echtzeit, selbst musikalisch begleiten. Stundenlang saß ich mit der Gitarre vor diesem Echogerät und spielte mit den Melodien und Rhythmen. Wie sollte es, nachdem ich „Wallenstein“ aufgegeben hatte nun mit mir weitergehen. Ich war Schlagzeuger ohne Schlagzeug und als Gitarrist fühlte ich mich keineswegs. Dazu war ich zu schlecht.

Der entscheidende Kick kam eines abends, als ich noch halbwach im Bett liegend einer Musiksendung des WDR zuhörte die „Schwingungen“ hieß. Gerade lief ein unbekanntes Stück welches mich immer mehr in den Bann zog. Ich war vollkommen überrascht als der Moderator Winfried Trenkler am Ende den Namen Klaus Schulze, den ich ja kannte und den Plattentitel „Blackdance“ erwähnte. Ich war beeindruckt. Als ich ihn zwei Jahre zuvor noch bei Ash Ra Tempel und mit seinem Soloprojekt hörte war ich nicht sonderlich begeistert.

Ich entschloß mich Kontakt aufzunehmen und schrieb ihm und auch Manuel Göttching, der Ash Ra Tempel inzwischen allein weiter führte und den Namen auf „Ashra“ gekürzt hatte, einen Brief, in dem ich meine Begeisterung über die musikalische Entwicklung mitteilte. Ich hoffte mit in diese Musik einsteigen zu können. Kurz darauf besuchte mich Manuel in Mönchengladbach. Jeder kannte mich hier. Ich war es leid, dass ich in keine Kneipe gehen konnte, ohne dass ich erkannt wurde und in Gespräche verwickelt wurde. Die lokale Musikszene klebte immer noch an Rockmusik, steckte voller Identifikationsprobleme. Meine Begeisterung für „elektronische Musik“ teilten nur wenige. Meist stieß ich auf Ablehnung, wenn ich Namen von Elektronikmusikern erwähnte. Alle sahen in mir den „Wallensteindrummer“. Der wollte ich aber nicht mehr sein. . .

Was macht eigentlich . . . ?

Jürgen Dollase wandte sich seinen anderen künstlerischen Wurzeln zu, nachdem Wallenstein aufgelöst wurde und er das Musikmachen komplett stoppte. Jürgen, der lange Zeit ein Fastfoodfreak war, wurde beinahe über Nacht ein Gourmet. Seine Kochkunst ist mehr als fantastisch. Heute schreibt er Gastronomiekritiken unter anderem in der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung (FAZ)“ und im „Feinschmecker“ und gehört seit einigen Jahren zu Deutschlands führenden Gourmetkritikern. 2004 war er in Sachen „Haute Cuisine“ zu Gast in der ZDF-Sendung „sonntags“.

Joachim Reiser lebt heute in der Nähe von Mönchengladbach und arbeitet als Dozent für Violine an der Mönchengladbacher Musikschule. Mitte der 80er Jahre gründete Joachim ein Rockstreichorchester, für das er auch die meisten Stücke schrieb. Einige der Stücke erschienen als Publikationen bei den Musikverlagen Schott und Tonger. Nebenbei hat er zahlreiche CDs produziert, die aber kommerziell nicht erhältlich sind.

Jerry Berkers verließ Wallenstein bereits im Herbst 1972 und trat anschließend nur noch solo auf. Während der Produktion seines ersten (und einzigen) Soloalbums wurde Jerry geisteskrank und musste von seinen Eltern in eine psychiatrische Anstalt gebracht werden. Offenbar hatte LSD Konsum seine schrecklichen Vietnamerlebnisse wieder wahr werden lassen, während er an den Songtexten für sein Album arbeitete. Jerry wurde vor sechs oder sieben Jahren tot in einem Park in Holland aufgefunden. Er starb an einer Überdosis Kokain.

Dieter Meier starb 1986 unter tragischen Umständen an den Folgen schweren Alkoholmißbrauchs in einem Krankenhaus in Mönchengladbach.

Bill Barone kehrte nach der Trennung von WALLENSTEIN wieder in die USA zurück. Heute

lebt er in Philadelphia und arbeitet für Caterpillar Baumaschinen. In den USA spielte er noch einige Jahre in verschiedenen regionalen Bands und hatte auch einige größere Auftritte (u. a. mit Chuck Berry 1977). Aus dieser Zeit sind jedoch keine Tonträger bekannt bzw. veröffentlicht worden. Nach einer langen Pause von 20 Jahren kamen Bill und Harald Dank Harald's Webseite wieder in Kontakt. 2003 und 2004 war Bill in Deutschland zu Besuch und traf sich mit ehemaligen Bandkollegen.

Jürgen Pluta produziert seit vielen Jahren mit DJ Hooligan für das Projekt Da Hool. Ende 2008 veröffentlichten sie ihr Album „Light My Fire“. 4 ausgekoppelte Singles landeten alle in den Top 20 der deutschen Dancecharts (DDC), die Single „Light My Fire“ sogar auf Platz 1. Mit Da Hool bereiste er u.a. Spanien, England, Ukraine, Russland, Niederlande, Tschechische Republik, Estland etc.

Wolfgang Steinicke, der noch zur ursprünglichen Besetzung von WALLENSTEIN gehörte, und später von Bill Barone ersetzt wurde, verließ die Band noch vor dem ersten Album Ende 1971, um in Freiburg Mathematik und Physik zu studieren. Heute leitet er ein Büro für Umweltuntersuchungen in Freiburg (www.klima-luft.de), schreibt und veröffentlicht Bücher über Astrophysik und hält zu diesem Thema zahlreiche Vorträge weltweit. Nebenbei ist er als Schriftführer im Vorstand der Vereinigung der Sternfreunde e. V. (VdS) tätig.

THE DRUMMING MAN: AN INTERVIEW WITH MANI NEUMEIER OF GURU GURU

by Frank Gingeleit, Aural Innovations #19, April 2002

There are few - if any - other German Rock Bands that stand for all aspects of the broad scope of German Progressive Rock of the Sixties and Seventies that consisted of heavy Rock, experimentalism regarding drugs, music and sexuality and a left wing political attitude as is true for Guru Guru. Guru Guru always considered themselves as a part of the students' protest movement, lived together as a commune, and felt that the mere existence of their kind of music was a political statement in itself. Neumeier started his recording career as early as 1966 as the drummer of the Swiss based Irene Schweizer Trio. Free Jazz was one musical starting point for him, followed by an orientation towards eastern music ("Jazz meets India" was the title of a performance with Irene Schweizer at the Donaueschingen Music Festival in 1967), classic Jazz, ethnic drumming and, of course, the Rock Music of the late Sixties and early Seventies, leading to the fact, that Guru Guru was referred to as the German "Cream", a title of honor first attributed by others but later kindly accepted by Mani and the band. . . Which band? There were quite a lot of completely different bands called Guru Guru and there were frequent changes of the line up. This was in general typical for German Rock Bands of that time, but Guru Guru seemingly set the record with 26 changes in 33 years. The continuous "mastermind" behind all these different projects under one name was Mani Neumeier. Besides his musical abilities, his personality is spiced up with wit and humor, mostly of a kind nature, but sometimes bizarre and deconstructive. This flows into the performances in general - Guru Guru shows represent "action music" (in analogy to "action painting"), intellectually transformed aggressiveness, colorful phantasies and reflections on human nature, including the amphibic origin of all higher species, as in the famous "Elektrolurch" and the "Terra Amphibia" project.

Guru Guru exists as a band up to this day, to be seen on stage at the annual "Finkenbach Festival" near Heidelberg, Germany, organized by Neumeier and on other rare occasions, as the band members now live in different parts of Europe, every now and then holding reunions for rehearsals, recordings and concerts. Besides this Mani Neumeier worked and works in a great number of other projects, among them free improvisations with guitarist Luigi Archetti performing as "Tiere der Nacht" (i.e., "nightly animals"), most recently recording and performing with the New Music composer and inventor of new musical instruments Hans-Carsten Raecke and working together in a Dance-Trance-Goa-Techno-Rock project called "Lover 303" with German female guitarist and drum machine programmer Conni Maly. But it is Japan, where Mani Neumeier is far more famous than in Germany or the US. Guru Guru and others of Mani's recordings still sell best in Japan and his statue is to be seen in the Tokyo Wax Museum among celebrities of the world. The day Mani and I met to make the appointment for the interview to follow below, he had returned from a successful two weeks' solo tour in Japan that led him to ten different cities. Up to now Mani recorded or contributed to more than 60 longplayers and compact discs, one for each year of his life. He is now 61 years old, still wildly drumming and with no plans for retirement in the near future.

Frank Gingeleit (FG): Since your life with music is much more than Guru Guru, let's start where it all began. What were your first steps into the music business, what was your musical

education like, and who were the examples you followed?

Mani Neumeier (MN): I started gigging as an amateur musician as early as 1959 in a couple of amateur bands in Switzerland. We started with Dixieland, Swing and Modern Jazz as at that time there was no Beat Music or Rock'n'Roll in Continental Europe. In Zurich, where I lived at that time you had much better opportunities to get the "new" records from England and the United States than in Germany. And it was also Zurich where I happened to see Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton, John Coltrane, Art Blakey, Miles Davis, Theolonius Monk, Max Roach... To see them live on stage were the greatest moments in my life, and they were my "teachers". I never reached their class, but I'm still striving to get closer to it and maybe I will some day. As a professional musician I started as a member of the Irene Schweizer Trio and the Globe Unity Orchestra together with Jacky Liebezeit. We took everything apart that we could find and put it back together in a new and fresh way. There were recordings produced by Joachim E. Behrend (later also well known as an author of books on Jazz - F. G.) and we were on stage at the Donaueschingen Music Festival and at the Berlin Jazz Festival in 1966. I discovered and developed my own style of drumming. Maybe I might be called the first European Free Jazz drummer. But, anyway, I already had a "name in music" before the Guru Guru thing started. I had a few lessons at the "Basel Drum School" - all sorts of percussion instruments - and many years later I took lessons to play an Indian Drum called Taval. My teacher, an Indian master of the drums, was Paramashivam Pillai, but I've already been in the music business for about twenty years then.

FG: Let's focus on Guru Guru. It seems that this was quite a leap from what you had been doing before.

MN: I started Guru Guru as "The Guru Guru Groove Band" together with Uli Trepte in 1968. We wanted to leave the Free Jazz thing into the direction of electronically amplified music. Jimi Hendrix was the shining example, followed by Frank Zappa, The Who, The Rolling Stones and Pink Floyd, in the late Seventies also Punk Music. From the beginning we also brought African and Indian elements into our music. We wanted to make some sort of music that has not been there before. I think we set a mark with the album UFO. We were almost instantly identified with German Rock Music, but I didn't like the term "Krautrock". It was a label put upon us by others like "Oh, now the Krauts even want to make Rock Music..." Of course there was musical development, with new phases of the band project every three to four years - sometimes even faster - adding up to 26 different line ups 'till now. If we would still perform like in 1968, people would probably run away. Despite this: What we were doing in 1968 was essential German Rock. We are still musical underground, something that does not get on the air regularly. And drug experiences were an essential part of our music. Drugs helped us to explore music and our minds. We wanted to get away from the A-B-A format in music as well as in our lives...

FG: So the Guru Guru band project also was some kind of a sociological experiment?

MN: Yes, we were a commune, a part of the Underground Movement. All our time was exclusively devoted to the group and the music. From 1968 to 1971 we did not even have a permanent residence. We lived in a bus like nomads. Every now and then we lived at the homes of friends, fans and other bands. From 1971 to 1976 we lived in a house in Langenthal and in 1976 we found our home in Finkenbach. We lived there as a band together with our girlfriends and our tour crew. It was a project that worked quite well and it was even more than a project, rather a clan, a family. (Since 1981 the home in Finkenbach serves Mani Neumeier as his personal "summer residence" - FG) We wanted to change the whole society. We lived "socialism". Everybody had to put in as much as he took out. We shared everything and everybody was equal.

FG: A word about your economical situation at that time?

MN: In the beginning there were certain restrictions and limitations - for a little while we lived on jelly sandwiches and joints, but we never starved or suffered from severe poverty. At that time not

all of the 22 Guru Guru longplayers had been released, but we sold records, played many concerts, appeared in movies, had more than one hundred radio and TV shows and were featured on the front pages of several German music magazines.

FG: This was in the beginning, and then?

MN: Guru Guru sold more than half a million copies of more than twenty record releases, not of one album, as the music industry might have preferred. We went through twenty different managers, were ripped off by almost all of them and later it was me who did the job with the bookings. We successfully toured abroad, in Continental Europe, in the United States and in Japan. After the shows people came with piles of records to be autographed.

FG: Let's return to Guru Guru in the political climate of the late Sixties and early Seventies. Looking back: Was it only a personal experience of the band members and the people who lived with them, or was there more?

MN: Our music at that time was a political statement in itself. We were part of a scene together with other bands with political attitudes like ours. We were left wing but no members of a political party. The sessions we had with other bands or some of their members - Amon Düül, Can, Xhol Caravan, Kraan - had a touch of conspiracy. The musical output was completely new. Most of the tunes, like our LSD Marsch for instance, had nothing to do with the British or American examples of that time. We played concerts with a left wing student union called SDS, where political statements were read between our tunes. In the city of Heidelberg in the Neckar valley, we managed to put on a daytime show on a hillside facing the famous Heidelberg Castle where the whole city was forced to listen. When the police showed up to end the concert, we had already split. To us left wing political attitudes meant openmindedness, toward the whole world and foreign customs, cultures and attitudes. In 1974 a group of Shoshonees lived with us for a while and our concerts at that time were demonstrations meant to draw the attention to the political and social situation of the Native Americans. All this was quite provocative at that time. Another example: we were one of the first bands in Germany wearing long hair. We were bad mouthed in the streets and we were not served in restaurants. But we wanted these effects of shock and provocation.

FG: But provocation was also a programmatic part of your regular shows?

MN: Yes, our concerts did not only mean to present music. The intention was total artwork. Besides all other intentions there was also an element of slapstick and play acting. The name Guru Guru itself was a joke in the direction of the Beatles - they had their personal Gurus in the late Sixties. In some songs we used animal sounds instead of vocals. We were the first Rock Band that had put on masks during a concert (as the Elektrolurch Mask - see photo, F. G.), we had chickens on stage during the Chicken Song (sings "Set your chicken free") and other provocative actions. In the beginning we sometimes took LSD just before a concert began and then we were waiting for what might happen on stage. - It was only about three years ago that I learned that in Japanese Guru Guru means "rotating", I didn't know this before. Did you know that they put a statue of me in the Tokyo Wax Museum, right next to celebrities of the world?

FG: Besides Guru Guru your career was full of other projects.

MN: The main side projects are Tiere der Nacht, Terra Amphibia and Lover 303. Tiere der Nacht is improvisational free music. Not only Free Jazz, but also other musical elements. It's a conversation between Luigi Archetti and me. I tried this concept also in full band performances, but this soon turned out to become too dense. With only two performers it has an air of minimalism. I love it. To work like this means full freedom, it's a gift, but it takes years of experience to achieve this.

The latest project is Lover 303. I really hate Techno, but I used to play along with drum machines and sequencers long before there was Techno. Conni Maly, my partner in this project, uses electronic devices and a guitar. She has a good feeling for rhythms, and I am forced to play in a way completely

different to how I usually play, mainly counterbeats. This way Techno gets a warmer texture and it appears to become more “human”. This project is also a bridge between generations. Conni is about half as old as I am, a “networked post hippie girl”. We also play Goa Shows in rural areas and so Techno reaches the villages. And I’m also involved in Contemporary Music projects. There’s a great diversity in all of these projects. One outstanding project was of course “Meet the Demons of Bali” together with Peter Hollinger and sixteen native drummers from Bali. And there is the Mani Neumeier “One Man Show”, quite frequently seen on stage.

FG: Other well known music performers using provocation as a part of their concerts, as Alice Cooper or Ozzy Osbourne for example, always claim that this is merely a part of their shows and has nothing to do with them personally. What do you think about yourself in this respect?

MN: For me it’s not only show. My message is love and trance and do your own thing. For me it means more than an element of my shows. “Love” is the word that describes it most precisely - and simply. In the beginning of Guru Guru provocation was a goal in itself. Now I want to make people happy. And I think I can achieve this. People have a better state of mind after a concert than they had before. But on the other hand I’m not quite sure that it’s me who’s doing it. Maybe it’s something cosmic that goes through me and reaches the people.

FG: This last statement might have been a good end for an interview with a Space Rock Magazine. But readers might also be interested to know how it will go on. What are your plans for the future?

MN: There will be a documentary CD of the live performances during my “Sixtieth Birthday Anniversary Tour”, where I performed with Luigi Archetti, Conni Maly, Hans Reffert and former and present members of Guru Guru. And there will be a new Guru Guru CD before this year ends. The current Guru Guru line up is: Roland Schaeffer, Peter Kuehmstedt, Luigi Archetti and me. Hans Reffert joins us every now and then. And I will go on tour again. I want to perform as long as I can make people feel happy.

INTERVIEW MIT ROLAND SCHAEFFER (GURU GURU)

Das Interview mit Roland Schaeffer, seit 1975 Mitglied der „Krautrock“-Gruppe „Guru Guru“, die in diesem Jahr 40-jähriges Band-Jubiläum feiert, führte Thomas Neuhauser (ARTE/August 2008).

Roland Schaeffer, ARTE zeigt einen Themenabend zur deutschen „Krautrock“-Szene der siebziger Jahre. Auch die vom Schlagzeuger Mani Neumeier 1968 gegründete Gruppe Guru Guru, der Du seit Mitte der siebziger Jahre angehörst, wird zu den Krautrockern gezählt. Geht dieses Etikett in Ordnung oder stört es eher?

Mittlerweile versteht man unter „Krautrock“ eine eigenständige deutsche Rockmusik, die in den siebziger Jahren, teilweise auch schon Ende der sechziger Jahre entstand. Der Begriff wurde wahrscheinlich von der englischen Musikpresse erfunden, aber erst später, in den Achtzigern, inzwischen ist das zu einer Art Markenzeichen geworden. Wir haben uns eigentlich nie als Krautrocker verstanden, der Begriff stört aber auch nicht als historische Einordnung. Das war ein großer Schmelztiegel von ganz verschiedenen Musikstilen, da gab es die elektronische Richtung à la Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze, oder die mehr von der Minimal Music und von der Neuen Musik beeinflussten Can, und es gab eine Reihe von Bands und Musikern, die mit Drogen experimentierten, die mit Drogenerfahrungen und teilweise auch unter Drogeneinfluss Musik gemacht haben, die frühen Guru Guru gehörten da auch dazu. Wenn man heute die erste Guru-Platte „Ufo“ hört, auf der ich noch nicht dabei war - ich hatte damals noch eine andere Band namens „Brainstorm“ - dann ist das immer noch Musik wie von einem anderen Stern. Guru-Gründer Mani Neumeier kam ja vom Jazz und der frei improvisierten Musik, hatte auch mit Joachim Ernst Behrendt produziert und in der Avantgarde-Szene gespielt. Für Mani war die Musik von Jimi Hendrix Experience ein starker Einfluss, um aus dem eher akustischen Free Jazz in die Rockmusik mit großen Verstärkeranlagen zu wechseln.

Die sogenannten „Krautrock“-Gruppen wie Can, Faust, Amon Düül, Kraan, Tangerine Dream und Guru Guru hatten ja - vielleicht mit Ausnahme von Kraftwerk - in Deutschland eher einen Insider-Status, waren aber im europäischen Ausland und sogar bis nach Japan ziemlich bekannt und einflussreich. Gibt es dafür eine Erklärung?

Tatsächlich hatte keine der genannten Bands damals einen Hit, dafür war z. B. eher Udo Lindenberg zuständig, der ja damals auch deutsche Rockmusik machte. Die „Krautrock“ sangen auch fast alle in Englisch, waren international ausgerichtet, und wir hatten schon einen gewissen Erfolg, so dass die Bands Stadthallen mit bis zu 1000 Leuten füllen konnten. Manche Bands waren im Ausland sehr erfolgreich, vielleicht weil man dort mit einem unvoreingenommenen Blick von außen auf diese neue Entwicklung schaute. Denn diese deutschen Bands haben nicht mehr nur die angelsächsische Musik gecovered, sie haben eigenes Material gespielt und auch die gängigen Blues-Rock-Schemata verlassen, vielleicht war das auch ein Markenzeichen, das im Ausland gut ankam.

Der Begriff „Krautrock“ kam ja wohl erst in den achtziger Jahren auf und wurde dann sehr unterschiedlichen deutsche Rockgruppen angeheftet - von Guru Guru bis Tangerine Dream oder Cluster. Gab es da Gemeinsamkeiten, wie ließe sich diese deutsche Rockmusik beschreiben und was war an ihr deutsch?

Das lässt sich nicht alles in eine Topf werfen, Kraftwerk z. B. hatten sicher auch einen ironischen Umgang mit bestimmten Klischees, der Maschinenästhetik und der Verwendung der deutschen Sprache, aber es gab auch Gruppen wie Novalis oder Hölderlin, mit gefühlsbetontem, romantischem

Orgelsound, bei dem man vielleicht deutsche Innerlichkeit oder Spätromantik heraushören kann. Da könnte man bei näherer Betrachtung sicher noch viele Facetten finden.

Guru Guru hat in diesem Jahr 40-jähriges Bestehen gefeiert, mit einer ausgedehnten Tournee und der neuen CD „PSY“. Wo habt Ihr gespielt und was für ein Publikum kommt heute zu Euren Konzerten?

Wir haben fast alle mittelgroßen Clubs bespielt, im Herbst geht die Tournee noch mal mit dreißig Konzerten weiter. Es kommen natürlich die, die uns schon vor dreißig Jahren gehört haben und noch mal Tuchfühlung aufnehmen wollen, aber es kommen auch Leute der neuen oder wieder auflebenden Hippie-Bewegung, wie man das z. B. auf dem Festival Burg Herzberg erleben kann, das seit Jahren gut besucht ist und wie ein totaler Flashback in die sechziger und siebziger Jahre erscheint, und es kommen auch - teilweise mit ihren Eltern - sehr junge Leute, die dann meist ganz begeistert sind, dass es noch Bands gibt, die ohne großen technischen Aufwand ganz eigenständige Musik machen. Und sie staunen auch über unsere Spielfreude und Vitalität, schließlich sind wir alle Ende fünfzig, Mani Neumeier ist Mitte sechzig, da fragen die Leute manchmal, ob uns die Musik jung hält. Wir spielen auch nur wenige der alten Stücke, natürlich den Klassiker „Elektrolurch“ als Reminiszenz, sonst aber hauptsächlich neues Material, das teilweise auch spontan entsteht, dafür kennen wir uns inzwischen gut genug, das hört man z. B. auch auf der neuen CD „PSY“.

Du hast ja neben Guru Guru noch verschiedene Soloaktivitäten, mit einem starken Akzent auf der traditionellen indischen Musik. Was hat Dich dahin geführt?

Es war eigentlich ein Zufall. Natürlich gab es damals die Baghwan-Bewegung und die Einflüsse indischer Gurus, das bekam man natürlich mit, aber ich fühlte mich davon nicht so sehr angezogen, ich sah mich eigentlich immer als Rock-Jazz-Musiker. Dann bekam ich einen Anruf von der Band „Dissidenten“ - die nannten sich so, weil sie eine Abspaltung von der Gruppe „Embryo“ waren - ob ich mit nach Indien zu verschiedenen vom Goethe-Institut organisierten und sogar gut bezahlten Konzerten fahren wollte. Damals kriselte es gerade bei Guru Guru, die ja als Musik-Kommune im Odenwald lebten, was nicht immer konfliktfrei ist, und in Deutschland war die Neue Deutsche Welle unterwegs, auf die wir gar keinen Bock hatten. Also sagte ich kurzfristig zu und auf dieser Tournee hat mich die indische Musik gepackt. Das war Musik, die man in Europa noch gar nicht gehört hatte, besonders die südindische Musik und das Nadaswaram, ein sehr lautes Blasinstrument. Ich habe mich dann da richtig hinein gearbeitet und auch in ein bekanntes Musikinstitut in Bangalore eingeschrieben. Ich habe mir einen Lehrer gesucht und war dann sieben Jahre lang jedes Jahr ein halbes Jahr in Indien zum Musikstudium. Das war für mich auch ein Teilausstieg aus der hiesigen Rockszene, die eine bedenkliche Entwicklung nahm: man brauchte immer mehr Betriebsmittel um die riesigen Verstärkeranlagen und Bühneneinrichtungen zu unterhalten, da blieb dann für die Musiker selbst oft wenig übrig. Das wollte ich nicht mitmachen und habe mich dann in den achtziger Jahren fast ganz auf die indische Musik konzentriert. Deshalb habe ich von den achtziger Jahren hier auch nicht viel mitbekommen, und wenn ich heute manchmal Musik aus den Achtzigern höre, denke ich bei den meisten Sachen, wie gut, dass ich nicht hier war (lacht).

Einige der weltweit erfolgreichsten Rockgruppen der jüngeren Gegenwart, wie z. B. Radiohead, Sonic Youth oder Coldplay, nennen heute „Krautrock“-Gruppen als wichtigen Einfluss. Kannst Du nachvollziehen, wo sich diese Einflüsse zeigen?

Zunächst kenne ich von den genannten Gruppen gerade mal zwei, obwohl die alle bestimmt megabekannt sind. Aber ich gehe mal davon aus, dass diese Musiker von der authentischen Spielweise im „Krautrock“ fasziniert sind, von der Spontaneität und der Experimentierfreudigkeit, also der Bereitschaft, neue Wege auszuprobieren. Aber man müsste die natürlich auch fragen, von welchem „Krautrock“ sie beeinflusst sind, von Kraftwerk oder Can oder Tangerine Dream usw. In weiten Bereichen der Rock- und Pop-Musik werden ja nur noch Erfolgsrezepte kopiert, es sind die gleichen Muster, die Sänger singen in der gleichen Art und die Melodien gleichen sich. Da hat sich eine Art Produzenten-Musik breit gemacht, und die Produzenten suchen immer nur den Hit. Die Krautrock-Musik hatte dagegen noch ein hohes Maß an Authentizität, vielleicht macht sie das gerade heute wieder interessant.

INTERVIEW MIT DIETER BORNSCHLEGEL (GURU GURU)

von Manfred Miersch, 2003

Dieter Bornschlegel gilt als einer der vielseitigsten Musiker der Szene, der auf ein reiches Schaffen zurückblicken kann. Hier ist ein Interview, das der Autor dieser Website im Oktober 2003 mit Dieter führte. DB = Dieter Bornschlegel / MM = Manfred Miersch

MM: Wenn ich richtig informiert bin, hast Du von Mitte 1973 bis Mitte 1974 bei Atlantis Gitarre gespielt. Bei Guru Guru warst Du anscheinend von Anfang 1977 bis Herbst 1978. Eine Deiner ersten Bands hieß „Traumtorte“. Hattest Du während Deiner Zeit bei „Traumtorte“, „Atlantis“ und „Guru Guru“ bestimmte musikalische Vorbilder? Welche Bedeutung hatte die englische und amerikanische Rockmusik der 60er und 70er Jahre für Dich?

DB: In jeder Phase meines Lebens hatte ich die unterschiedlichsten musikalischen Vorbilder. Zunächst bin ein Kind der Beat Generation. BEATLES, STONES, TROGGS, SMALL FACES, SIMON AND GARFUNKEL usw., deren Musik ist noch heute in mir lebendig und ist ein wichtiger Teil meines musikalischen Kosmos. Wie ich ein Kind des Beat bin, so bin ich gleichfalls ein Kind des Radios. Wir hatten zum Glück früher noch kein Fernsehen. Ich hörte viel Hörspiele. Nächtens hockte ich auch oft bis Frühmorgens vor dem Weltempfänger und übte nach AFN oder BBC indem ich aus den Songs die Solos oder neue Akkorde raushörte. Ein gutes Training für die Gehörbildung. In der Zeit mit TRAUMTORTE war in erster Linie die Band YES für mich ganz entscheidend. Einflüsse kamen allerdings auch z.B. von JOSE FELICIANO, BADEN POWELL, DJANGO REINHARD, STEVIE WONDER, LED ZEPPELIN, CARAVAN und MOVE. Als ich mit 18 Jahren zu ATLANTIS in eine landschaftlich schöne Wald und Villengegend nahe Hamburg zog, was für mich als Ruhrpottjunge wie das reine Paradies erschien, hörte ich hier viele Sendungen von MICHAEL NAURA im NDR. Ein Livemitschnitt von CHICK COREA's Band, RETURN TO FOREVER, hat mich zum Fan des damaligen Gitarristen der Band BRIAN O' CONNOR werden lassen. Als AL DIMEOLA später in die Band einstieg war diese für mich gestorben. Irgendwann hörte ich JONI MITCHELL und hatte mich auf Anhieb sofort in diese Stimme und diesem exzellenten Songwriting verliebt. Noch heute sind ihre Songs neben den BEATLES für mich das Beste was es an Songwriting gibt. Als ich zu GURU GURU kam hörte ich in dieser Zeit mehr Jazz Fusion, Latin. GEORGE BENSON war lange Zeit mein ganz grosser Favorit. JOHN ABERCROMBIE, ALLEN HOLTHWORTH, PHILLIP CATHERINE, JOHN MC LAUGHLIN, ZAVINUL, AIRTO, CRUSADERS, waren weitere Kandidaten die ich damals fleissig studierte.

MM: Auf dem Cover der Platte „Guru Guru live“ von März 1978 ist ein Typ zu sehen, der in kurzen Hosen Gitarre spielt, bist du das?

DB: Ja, ich war und bin ein Freund der kurzen Hose. Ganz der Typ Camper und Naturbursche. Ich liebe den weiten Horizont, den Himmel. Selbst wenn ich Gitarre übe, halte ich immer nach Plätzen Ausschau, wo ich das auch draussen bewerkstelligen könnte. Es kommt vor, dass ich mich mit umgeschnallter Gitarre durch den Wald spiele. Ich erinnere mich noch daran, dass ich, als wir in der Hamburger Vollzugsanstalt Santa Fu für eben dieses Album, GURU GURU LIVE Livemitschnitte machten, ich mir dafür ein extra knappes Höschen auf der Bühne anzog. Sozusagen als Kontrapunkt zu der professionellen Stripperin die wir für die Heteros im Knast für diesen Abend engagiert hatten. Die Schwulen im proppevollem Saal haben das zu honorieren gewusst :-)

MM: Angesichts der oft wechselnden Bandmitglieder und musikalischen Stilrichtungen von Guru Guru, sowie der skurrilen Songtexte und der ungewöhnlichen Sounds und Geräuschquellen, die verwendet wurden („Jodeln“, „Entenfänger“, „Maniscope“), hat man den Eindruck, daß die Band ziemlich unberechenbar, unklassifizierbar und einigermaßen ausgeflippt war. Wieviel an der Musik war spontan und wieviel geplant?

DB: Es war immer beides vorhanden. Auf der einen Seite waren die Songs in ein festes Korsett eingeschnürt, doch gleichzeitig war eigentlich fast immer alles und zu jeder Zeit erlaubt. Wenn das beim Publikum gut ankam hat man das beim nächsten Konzert vielleicht nochmal versucht. Was als aktiver Musiker auf der Bühne Spass machte, hätte mich als Konsument vielleicht doch etwas genervt. GURU GURU wäre fuer mich als Zuhörer zu anstrengend und uncharmant gewesen. Ich habe auch immer versucht mein Songwriting in die Band einzubringen. Ich weiß dass ich darin Erfahrung habe, und das Talent Songs zu schreiben war bei MANI NEUMEIER und ROLAND SCHAEFFER nicht sonderlich ausgeprägt. Rückblickend kann man feststellen, dass mit jedem Musikerwechsel in der Band sich auch die Musik immer um 180 Grad drehte. Mal Rockabilly, mal New Wave, mal Avantgarde. Teilweise klang das nicht gerade authentisch sonder eher gekünstelt. Die Besetzung Neumeier, Schaeffer, Kühmstedt, Bornschlegel, die Mischung, und in der gleichen Reihenfolge, aus selbstsicher vorgetragenem Dilettantismus, powervoller Virtuosität, groovender Erdigkeit, und dem zum Ausgleich nach Harmonie strebendem Songwriting, hatte allerdings auch seine gewisse Magie und Aura. Ohne Zweifel.

MM: Guru Guru war in den 70ern gerade auch als Live-Band ziemlich bekannt, so gab es zum Jahreswechsel 75/76 sogar eine kleine Serie zu Guru Guru in der SOUNDS (Autor: Andreas Roßmann). In Teil 2 von Januar 1976 wird Mani Neumeier mit den Worten zitiert: „Früher wollte ich ein Revolutionär oder was weiß ich sein, aber heute will ich nur noch ein guter Entertainer sein!“ Gab es für Dich persönlich eine Verbindung zwischen der Musik und Deinen (damaligen) politischen Anschauungen?

DB: Na ja zum Revolutionär braucht es ja wohl auch einiges mehr als nur ein bisschen auf dem Schlagzeug rumzumachen und Groucho Marx zu imitieren. GURU GURU war ja eigentlich doch ziemlich unpolitisch, auch wenn wir mal bei Gegen-Rechts-Veranstaltungen, in Gorleben oder bei Partys in den Anfängen der Grünen aufgespielt hatten. In den 60ern war ich mal bei einer Grossdemo gegen die USA in Bochum . Um was es da allerdings ging wusste ich nicht so genau. Ich war 14 oder 15 und hatte mit meinem Hauptschulabschluss keinen blassen Schimmer von Politik. Ein Typ der damals mit in Bochum war hat später seine Oma mit dem Beil erschlagen. Ein anderer hat mich dauernd versucht auf Hasch zu trimmen indem er mir dauernd Dinge zum essen gab in dem Hasch versteckt war, oder während ich schlief mir ein auf Nadel gespiesstes glimmendes Piece unter die Nase hielt. Alles recht seltsam. Es gibt viele meiner Songs die sich mit unserer Gesellschaft auseinandersetzen, und sich für die Schwächeren und Unterdrückten dieser Welt stark machen möchten. Da bin ich ein wenig wie VILLON. Politik aber auch ficken gehören für mich auch unbedingt ins Repertoire eines jeden Songschreibers. Ich möchte bei der Gelegenheit auf den PEACE ATTACK Sampler, der diese Woche [Anm.: Oktober 2003] erscheint aufmerksam machen. Als vor zwei Jahren George W. Bush die Kriegstrommel zu rühren anfang, versuchte ich zeitgleich quasi eine musikalische Peacefront aufzubauen. Mehr als 250 Bands aus aller Welt konnte ich immerhin bis heute bewegen sich mir anzuschliessen um gemeinsam gegen den Wahnsinn Krieg und Kriegspropaganda anzuspielen. Zusammen mit dem Label KMG Records und ATTACK ist jetzt ein Doppel CD Sampler mit diesen Bands erschienen. NEKTAR, HELLMUT HATTLER, JAN DELAY, FEHLFARBEN, MELLOW MARK, RAMESH WEERATUNGA, YAIR DALAL, TOTEN HOSEN, TERRORGRUPPE, THE RAMONES, HANS HARTZ, SLIME und viele viele andere bekannte Gruppen, aber auch unbekanntere Bands und Künstler, denen ich mit meinem Peaceprojekt VISION EUROPE VISION - PEACE gleichfalls eine Plattform bieten wollte.

MM: In der weiter oben genannten SOUNDS tauchen bereits Berichte über die Wegbereiter des Punk auf: Texte zu der Band „Tubes“ und dem englischen Pub Rock. Wie habt ihr die damals aufkommende Punk-Bewegung wahrgenommen, die ja das Ende der „progressiven“ Rockmusik und der Hippiekultur manifestieren wollte?

DB: Es gab eine Zeit da endeten die Konzerte von GURU GURU immer mit einer Punkattacke. Ich vermute dass war wohl eher eine Verarschung als eine Hommage. Was mich persönlich angeht, so wollte ich auf der Gitarre immer ein Virtuose werden, der irgendwann mal geschmeidige und

intelligente Soli von sich gibt. Allein aus diesem Grund war das Zweiakkorde Hacke Hacke der Punker nichts für mich. Heute sehe ich das alles etwas gelassener und kann jetzt dem Punk durchaus was abgewinnen, sowie ich denke generell gegenüber anderen Musikstilen toleranter geworden zu sein. Das Leben ist halt so. Es gehört wohl einfach zur Entwicklung des Menschen viele Dinge, Vorschriften und Regeln, vor allem in der Jugend, in Frage zu stellen, und alles neu oder wenigstens anders machen zu wollen.

MM: Kannst Du Dich erinnern wann Du das erste Mal auf den Begriff „Krautrock“ gestoßen bist? Was verbindest Du damit?

DB: Richtig bewusst wurde mir die „Bewegung“ Krautrock erst als ich damals mit ATLANTIS auf den vielen Deutschrock Festivals unterwegs war. ATLANTIS war wohl eine der wenigen Bands die man da noch als Rockgruppe bezeichnen konnte. Bei vielen anderen Bands war nicht mehr ganz so leicht zu definieren was für Musik die machten. ATLANTIS war mit INGA RUMPF als Sängerin eine der wenigen Bands deren Songs ganz auf die Vocals zugeschnitten wurden. Böse gesagt, vielleicht ist Krautrock ja nur aus Mangel an weiteren guten Sängern oder Sängerinnen zu dem geworden was er ist ;-) Gesang jedenfalls spielt bei vielen Krautrock Bands doch wohl eher untergeordnete Rolle. CAN fand ich übrigens persönlich sehr gut und auch KRAAN. Ich habe mal später von HOLGER CZUKAY die Filmmusik „Rote Erde“ gehört. Ein ausgezeichnete Songschreiber der Kerl.

MM: Wie war Deine Haltung gegenüber der elektronischen Variante des „Krautrock“, das heißt den Bands, die mit den ersten Synthesizern und Sequenzern arbeiteten (Tangerine Dream, Popol Vuh, Klaus Schulze, Kraftwerk, Cluster)?

DB: Ich habe nur am Rande von diesen Bands was mitbekommen. Das Ambiente in denen sich diese Festivals meistens abspielten war oft grauenhaft. Kalte muffige Hallen in fahles Licht getaucht und mieser Sound waren nicht sonderlich animierend den Bands in Ruhe zuzuhören. Darüberhinaus bin ich ein Musiker, der sich vor jedem Auftritt mindestens zwei Stunden warm spielen muß, damit er sich auf der Bühne wohl fühlt. Also blieb mir kaum Zeit vorher mal in die Halle zu gehen. Es sah aber immer recht seltsam aus, wenn da einer oder zwei Figuren auf der Bühne an monströsen Apparaturen schraubten und kein Schlagzeug zu sehen war. Ob im Fernsehen oder Live, wenn ich Musiker stehend vor Keyboards sehe habe ich schon keine rechte Lust mehr zuzuhören. FAHRN FAHRN FAHRN AUF DER AUTOBAHN finde ich, ist übrigens auch heute noch für mich ein sehr sehr bescheidenes Musikwerk. Selbst Hellmut Hattlers TAB TWO, an deren ersten Album ich mitgewirkt hatte, klang Live trotz den tollen Bass und dem hervorragenden JOO KRAUS, mit diesen vom Computer oder Band eingespielten Drumloops unfertig und gekünstelt.

MM: In den 80er und 90er Jahren gab es bereits Krautrock-Revivals, insbesondere nach dem Erscheinen von Julian Copes Buch „Krautrocksampler“ (1995). Wie beurteilst Du die Tatsache, daß die damals oft hart kritisierte Musik der deutschen Bands, die unter diesem Etikett versammelt wurden, plötzlich „postum“ gewürdigt und gefeiert wird (auch durch diese Website)?

DB: Es ist sicher richtig das man eine wichtige Strömung wie es der Krautrock nun einmal war irgendwann auch einmal gebührend würdigt. Es ist ja auch so, dass der Krautrock früher nicht die Möglichkeit hatte sich medial ins richtige Licht zu rücken wie das in der heutigen Zeit möglich ist. Es gab vielleicht im Monat eine einzige Sendung im Radio die das Thema Krautrock behandelte, und das war es dann auch schon. Wenn das heute noch so wäre könnte ich mir kaum vorstellen dass sich sowas wie Hip Hop je durchgesetzt hätte. Wundervoll finde ich es auch, dass es fast allen Krautrock Bands gelungen ist, ihren ganz eigenen individuellen Sound und musikalischen Kosmos zu kreieren. Manchmal braucht es wohl eine geraume Zeit neue Musik zu verstehen. Oft ist man ja zu sehr mit sich selbst beschäftigt Will, indem man nur auf einen einzigen Musikstil setzt, sich vielleicht nur von anderen Menschen und Gruppen abgrenzen, und versperrt sich damit aber die Möglichkeit die Magie der Musik, die die anderen mögen, zu entdecken. Ein Deutschrockfestival war letztlich immer auch ein Parcours durch die verschiedensten musikalischen Welten, und die Zuschauer gingen wohl alle immer sicherlich gut durchgeschüttelt nach Hause.

MM: Welche Musik hörst Du gegenwärtig gern und wie würdest Du die Musik bezeichnen, die Du zur Zeit selbst machst?

DB: Ich höre eigentlich nur was mir so täglich aus dem Radio entgegenströmt. Ich wechsele lediglich ab und an die Sender. WDR 2, HR1 oder so. CDs höre ich wenn überhaupt, eigentlich nur die

eigenen. Damit meine ich nicht die alten Sachen von GURU GURU oder ATLANTIS sondern die vielen Songs die ich in den letzten 20 Jahren geschrieben habe. Und das sind eine Menge. Ob Hip Hop, Jazz, Country, Psychedelic oder Klassik, mit vielem habe ich mich beschäftigt und suchte und fand dabei in allen Stilen auch immer die eigene Seele, meinen eigenen Sound. Seit langer Zeit bin ich mein eigener Meister geworden, der nur seinem eigenem musikalischen Universum folgt. Wer weiß, vielleicht braucht es wieder eine längere Zeit bis die Leute die Magie dieser Songs entdecken :-). Gestern hat mir ein Rezensent aus USA sein Review über der neuen CD „Das Ewige Eis“ meines neuen Projekts DEIN SCHATTEN, freundlicherweise zugeschickt. Wen es interessiert, was das für Musik ist, die ich derzeit mache, der oder die kann ja wenn er/sie möchte bei GRAVE CONCERN weiterlesen oder gleich www.dein-schatten.de einschalten.

REVIEWS OF THE TWO FIRST ASH RA TEMPEL LP'S

extract from Julian Cope's "Krautrock sampler"

Ash Ra Tempel's first two LPs had taken the metal of Detroit to heights not even considered by the MC5 or the Stooges or even Funkadelic. Sure those groups had got close on stage. But Ash Ra Tempel got it on record. While the collective Detroit obsession with the Outer-spacings of Sun Ra and the free-jazz innervations of John Coltrane had been tamed beyond recognition by the American record industry, Ash Ra Tempel suffered no such disappointment. And those searching for the fulfilment of the Detroit promise need have looked no further than Ash Ra Tempel in 1971. There's a part of Iggy Pop's autobiographical *I Need More* in which he writes (p.17) about the early Stooges sound thus:

"[...] I'd play this sort of wild Hawaiian guitar with a pick-up that I invented, which meant that I made two sounds at one time, like an airplane ... using 55-gallon oil cans which I got from a junkyard and rigged up as bass drums, I home-made a drumset. For drumsticks I designed these semi-plastic moulded hammers. Scotty beat the shit out of these cans; it sounded like an earthquake - thunderous. . . It was entirely instrumental at this time, like jazz gone wild. It was very North African, a very tribal sound: very electronic. We would play like that for about 10 minutes. Then everybody would have to get really stoned again. . . But what we had put into 10 minutes was so total and so very savage - the earth shook, then cracked, and SWALLOWED ALL MISERY WHOLE." (my capitals)

Music that Swallowed All Misery Whole. . .

In the first two Ash Ra Tempel LPs, *Ash Ra Tempel* and *Schwingungen*, they had captured on record All that Iggy Pop had promised *Could Be* but, because of Record Industry Hang-ups, had been unable to deliver. And this music which could Swallow All Misery Whole reached into the core of each musician who played in Ash Ra Tempel and pulled out, still wriggling, the cosmic conger eel of white light which so few artists ever capture in the Moment of Recording.

For years, I had drooled over that description in *I Need More*. I'd shown many friends that passage - I had bored them with it. And all the time Ash Ra Tempel had already done it in 1971. . . But it was not without a price. The first LP was by a Kosmische power-rock trio of gargantuan size. The 20-minute opening track "Amboss (Anvil)" was all of Iggy Pop's above description and more. Sure it was a fucking cosmic freakout. But it was played by Renaissance Man and Cosmic Man at the same time.

Fuck Jim Morrison's ridiculous "Renaissance Man of the Mind" description.

That was just an excuse to be a fat slob.

That was just an existentialist knee-jerk.

No. No. No.

These freaks were fit.

Superhuman.

Superman.

Ash Ra Tempel

They were here to go. But all in good time. And they had staying power over 20-minute tracks. On “Amboss”, Klaus Schulze plays drums like a hundred drummers. He’s not twice as powerful, he’s a hundred times as powerful. Hartmut Enke, the spiritual leader of the band, hits his Gibson bass the way only a giant could: the huge extra-longnecked she-bass was courted, cajoled and ultimately goosed into action by this huge handsome freak they all called The Hawk. And Manuel Göttsching plays blues like Clapton, but right alongside pre-emptive Keith Levene white noise and egoless as Lou Reed’s Live 1969 rhythm guitar freakouts. The interplay is so intuitive that frequently it’s impossible to hear the instruments - you just hear the Music. And the LP was housed in yet another of Ohr Records’ extravagant packages - a centrally opening gatefold with an Ancient Egyptian exterior, a freaky occult gematriac interior, and a tragically beautiful Head poem that began: “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness staring hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the Negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix.”

Schwingungen

By the second LP, Schwingungen (Vibrations), Klaus Schulze had temporarily left the band to record his mighty epic solo album Irrlicht, an album which begins like a night rally in some unknown stadium then continues into the very heart of cosmic-dom, Klaus accompanied only by his synthesizers and an orchestra which he said later “possibly thought I was mad.” In the meantime, Schwingungen saw Ash Ra Tempel going through its cosmic Stooges’ Funhouse stage, complete with Mathias Wehler on wailing alto sax, in the Steve McKay tradition. The line-up was augmented by their road manager Uli Pop on congas, and Wolfgang Muller on drums, and came on like an organic freerock blitz. Side 1 features ultrafreaky singer John L., recently sacked from Agitation Free for being just too much of everything. And on the awesomely tragic 12-minute “Flowers Must Die”, John L, pre-empted John Lydon’s PIL wail with a Seering death’s head drama that Never has failed to bring tears to my eyes. The words, like so many translated rock’n’roll lyrics, have a vivid and dignified poetic truth in their delivery that transcends the hippyspeak in which they are written:

“I see when I come back,
From my lysergic-day-dream
Standing in the middle
Of the glass and neon forest
With an unhappy name: City
Flower must die. . .
I want to be a stone, Not living, not Thinking, A thing without warm blood in the
city.”

ASH RA TEMPEL - AN INTERVIEW WITH MANUEL GÖTT- SCHING

by Archie Patterson, 2000, <http://www.eurock.com>

In the legends of the German Cosmic Music era, no name is more revered than Manuel Götttsching, the guiding light and musical spirit behind Ash Ra Tempel and Ashra.

Manuel began his musical life in the Steeplechase Blues Band jamming for fun. When the late 1960's exploded and the first rays of the new age dawned on the horizon, Manuel and his mates, Hartmut Enke bass and Klaus Schulze drums, transformed into Ash Ra Tempel and burst onto the German scene like the blazing solar fire of a cosmic comet.

Their name gave them a larger than life aura and set them apart from other groups at the time. Their music embodied the spirit of the times with its free flowing improvisations and instrumental excursions. The use of cosmological imagery and the German language for their song titles set them apart from the pack who only wanted to copy their Anglo heroes. These "normal" musicians created something of mythological proportions.

This interview sheds light on the man behind the music which still today all these years later has a certain magic that transcends time and space. Listening to it today can still bring a gleam into your eyes and make your ears tingle as it embodies the spirit of a certain time in space when everything seemed possible, and rock music was the lifeblood of our youth.

Q: What was the musical scene and cultural atmosphere like in Germany when you formed A.R.T.?

A: The late 1960's - the student's protest and hippie culture splashed over the ocean from the USA. Musically, most young Germans listened to and copied American and, more often, English rock and pop. It was the era of "Beat", "Rhythm and Blues" and a little "Soul".

But, there were a few bands in Germany trying to withstand the Anglo-American invasion. They were creating their own typically German style by turning their backs on common song structures. This was music, made from scratch. Let the good times roll. Many years later people described this music as "Teutonic Railroad Rock 'n Roll".

The main bands came from basically three areas of Germany:

Cologne & Düsseldorf - Can and Kraftwerk
Munich - Amon Duul and Popol Vuh
Berlin - Tangerine Dream, Agitation Free and Ash Ra Tempel

In addition, there were many more groups who appeared and disappeared.

Q: Was there a special meaning for the name?

A: This beautiful question was always answered by my good friend and partner, bass player in Ash Ra Tempel Hartmut Enke. He could expound for hours about the meaning and symbolism of those three words. In short:

Ash - (an English word) the ash, the remains, the final curtain; Ra - the Egyptian Sun God, the energy, the source of our lives; Tempel - a place for rest and contemplation (written in the German idiom)

Musically we were just a three-man band in a traditional line-up: drums, bass, guitar and heads full of inspiration. I felt personally that, at least, no other band on earth would show up with a name as strange as that and music the same.

Q: Your first album was released by the OHR Records label. How did you get connected with that company?

A: Our concerts then were quite successful, if not legendary. Some of these performances are documented on the 6 CDs released as THE PRIVATE TAPES. Klaus Schulze played and recorded with Tangerine Dream on their first album ELECTRONIC MEDITATION for OHR Records one year before in 1970. So here we got our connection.

Q: What was the story of OHR Records. Who founded it? Who decided about what groups to record? Who did the artwork? Was it a co-operative group of musical people, or more like a normal company where the artists only do what the owner tells them to do?

A: Even in a “normal company” no owner tells the artists what to do. At least I don’t know such a company. Also, I don’t know any artist who only does what the owner of a company tells him to do. (A sentence by Klaus Mueller).

OHR Music was founded in 1970 by Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser and a successful German “Schlager” publisher and producer Peter Meisel, as a label for new German rock music, such a label at this time was revolutionary. Today we are used to hundreds of small labels for all kinds of music. In 1970, I repeat, this was a revolutionary task. The label lasted 4 or 5 years. During this time many other labels were founded by all the major companies in Germany.

The daily business was done in fact by the driving force behind the label, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, whose genuine spirit explored the new trend a little earlier in time, when all of his “colleagues” within that branch were still snoozing. Peter Meisel gave the financial support and business structure.

Artwork for our albums was done by friends. The cover for SEVEN UP was painted by Walter Wegmuller, who later designed a new set of Gypsy Tarot cards for the release of a special album called TAROT. The cover of JOIN INN was made by a painter from Cologne. For the covers of the “Cosmic Couriers” series Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser employed a designer of his choice.

Q: Later OHR Records turned into the Cosmic Music label and the owners were reportedly very fond of Timothy Leary. How much did drugs have to do with the music in those days?

A: “Cosmic Music” was a branch of OHR. “The drugs” had actually little to do with the music (nor with the label), but they were present, as they were present at this time in general. I speak of marihuana/hashish, which were very popular in those days. Everyone under 30 smoked this and that, the elders did so years ago, and still the rivers flow..... Drugs have been and will be a part of life, not necessarily because one is a musician, a painter, an architect, or a psylocybinien? They were around and took a great part of my time, but there was another drug that I fell in love with: *MUSIC*

Q: In the mid 1970’s A.R.T. dissolved and you did a lot of solo work. The music became less rock and more electronic. How did your musical ideas change?. What gave you the idea of doing solo electronic music featuring mainly guitar?

A: The influence of electronic equipment in producing music grew rapidly in those years. I was fascinated by these sounds, but even more I was addicted to the idea of sequencing those sounds into continuous musical compositions.

I owned just my old Gibson guitar plus a few effects units, I asked my producer (Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser) to buy me a 4-track (TEAC) and 2-track (Revox) tape machines. I began to build my studio. I needed time, time for experiments, time for reflecting on the years that had passed, time to call for augurs.

What a trip it became. I created music with a minimum of equipment. The resulting music resembled the sound of sequencers and synthesizer, but was played with a single guitar. I recorded backwards, with the tape machines at double speed, half speed..... I tuned the strings differently and fell in love with my dynamic pedals, which could, if you pluck a string, cut away the attack, and with the aid of lots of echo, I found my floating sound. Naturally, the echoes and delays were creating this “sequencing” effect (thus reflecting the trend of those days).

For sure, I am not the only musician at that time who knew about and played with these techniques. I only wanted to create music that was strong and profound enough to escort me into my future life.

Q: Not only the sound of your music changed, but the record company ceased to exist a short time later. What happened to the “Cosmic Couriers”?

A: From 1973 on, many groups like Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze, Popol Vuh wanted to leave the company. Finally, this led to law-suits that the company lost. Maybe this story deserves a better explanation, but “all good things must pass”.

I still recorded STARRING ROSI and INVENTIONS for the label, then I left in 1976. Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, together with all of his labels vanished, probably floating into the cosmic zones, as he never turned up again in music, or any other business.

Q: Did the music scene and overall social atmosphere in Germany change at that time?

A: The “Punk” era began around 1977. Virgin Records signed the Sex Pistols. Their influence was evident.

In Germany, at the turn of the decade, the atmosphere had changed completely. Now, the music was called “Neue Deutsche Welle”, (NDW = New German Wave). But contrary to our first musical adventures 10-12 years back, this music was highly successful in a commercial sense.

Regarding electronic music, a new trend was the so called “synthie-pop”, mostly led by English bands like Human League or Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark. Of course these new trends attracted the bigger record companies, and many new, small labels saw the light as well.

Those hippie, cosmic days were gone. (Funny, but this spirit re-emerged some 10 years later - although in a different costume - with the rise of “techno”, “house” or “rave” music).

Q: After your solo album INVENTIONS it was a while before you did another album and then you formed the group Ashra to do several records and perform live. Why/When did you decide to form another group and work with Harald Grosskopf and Lutz Ulbrecht?

A: After the release of INVENTIONS I wanted to reform the band. Lutz Ulbrich joined me and together we performed a beautiful concert in Paris in December 1974. We toured then as a duo in France and England during 1975. At the end of the year Lutz quit to accompany Nico (the legendary “femme fatale” of the Velvet Underground) during her concerts of 1976.

I began recording a solo album again, NEW AGE OF EARTH, and did a tour as well in December 1976. These performances as a soloist were quite an experience for me. In the beginning of 1977 I signed a long term contract with Virgin Records. When NEW AGE OF EARTH was released worldwide in Summer '77, Virgin wanted a concert in London. I again asked Lutz Ulbrich and also Harald Grosskopf to join me. I had known Harald from the Cosmic Couriers sessions and he had

also played on the STARRING ROSI album in 1973.

Q: Your albums NEW AGE OF EARTH and BLACKOUTS are considered by many as the first electronic new age albums. How did you come up with the particular concept or sound for those albums? Was there any other musician or style who perhaps influenced your musical ideas?

A: I started my musical career as a guitar player. After producing INVENTIONS FOR ELECTRIC GUITAR, I decided to expand my equipment in order to create compositions for keyboard and synthesizer. This was a new thing for me then.

A substantial influence in my style came about in 1974 with the discovery of so called “minimal music” by composers like Steve Reich, Philip Glass and Terry Riley. Especially Steve Reich’s music, I have listened to it for many years. He is a genuine innovator in terms of creating music that combines the elements of improvisation with structured composition.

Q: In the 1980’s you seemed to disappear from the scene. What happened?

A: By the end of the ’70’s the style and politics of Virgin Records as I mentioned before had changed. After CORRELATIONS in 1978/79, BELLE ALLIANCE in 1980 was the second recording with Lutz Ulbrich and Harald Grosskopf. I felt it showed the great variety of styles the band had to offer. I was rather disappointed with how little attention they gave to the release of the BELLE ALLIANCE album.

In 1981 I played a long tour as a guest with Klaus Schulze. Inspired by those daily live performances, in December 1981 I went into my studio and recorded the music of E2 - E4. It took me exactly one hour, no overdubs, no editing. The only alteration I had to make was to cut the piece into two parts for the LP format as there were no CDs in those days.

I half-heartedly offered E2-E4 to Virgin Records in 1982 as I didn’t trust them to promote it properly. I was lucky, when at the beginning of 1984 my old friend Schulze started a new label, “Inteam Records” and wanted to release it. This record gained a great deal of attention at the end of the ’80’s in the “house”, “techno”, “dance-floor” scene as dozens of re-mixes were made and many parts were sampled (including the very successful “Sueno Latino” by an Italian group of musicians and DJ’s).

Q: Now in the 1990’s it seems you have re-emerged from retirement. You have had your entire catalog reissued by Spalax in France. Several albums of unreleased music have also come out and now the PRIVATE TAPES Special Edition is about to be released. Does the music you made in the past still sound good to you today? Do you have any plans to record a new album to celebrate the coming millennium?

A: From 1985 on, I worked again with Lutz and Harald. During that year we played a concert in England and recorded the basic material for TROPICAL HEAT, which was finally released in 1991.

In between, in 1988, I had performed with Lutz Ulbrich at the Berlin Planetarium. The music was especially composed for the event and included lyrics as well. The four main themes of that composition (without the lyrics) were then released in 1989 as WALKIN’ THE DESERT. In May 1991 I performed again with Lutz and Harald in Cologne. It was a nice open air concert in the evening, in front of the Cologne Cathedral. The show also featured Klaus Schulze (we were only missing Tangerine Dream). It was sponsored by a radio station and the City of Cologne to honor a man whose weekly radio program had supported our music for more than 10 years.

In 1993 I began to work with Lutz on a new, guitar based album. It should be in the style perhaps of INVENTIONS, but also incorporate the techniques of the ’90’s (reflecting the “German” atmosphere of today as well).

Yes, I like the reissues. That music directed my life. When I am sitting, thinking, wondering how all that came about, I choose an old tape and I begin to remember.

Well, I'm a king bee, baby. Rollin' on and on and on.....(like a German VW - if you know what I mean).

INTERVIEW WITH MANUEL GÖTTSCHING

by Eurock, 2006, <http://www.eurock.com>

In the beginnings of the new German rock era in the late 60's there were several artists and bands that broke through the original barriers of musical "schlager" tradition in their homeland. None were more pioneering than Ash Ra Tempel. Their first self-titled album is perhaps the ultimate recording by a power trio.

Manuel Götttsching was the guiding light of ART, and went on to create a body of work in subsequent years that embodies the spirit of musical exploration and invention, on guitar and electronically.

This interview evolved out of questions submitted, then discussed over dinner, translated, and edited. It is reflective, as well as visionary. As Manuel tells his story and expounds on his ideas, it becomes very clear just why the music he makes was/ is some of the most unique and innovative, whether it be in the past, present or future. A. Patterson

Q: As one of the original German "space rock" musicians who founded Ash Ra Temple back when the music was very influenced by experimentation and LSD, you have not remained stuck in the past. How would you describe your way of maintaining creative inspiration and the energy to realize your musical ideas now since the scene has changed so completely?

MG: Initially LSD was only used - figuratively - at the production of "Timothy Leary & Ash Ra Temple "Seven Up" in 1972. Except for then, it was only a minor influence on my music. Surely LSD was a trendy drug at that time, and played a part in the production of "Seven Up", but not for me personally. It's little known, that it wasn't primarily the drug, but Timothy Leary's theory of the seven levels of consciousness that the album was about. The reason everything was reduced to LSD was that Timothy Leary was so well known as a notorious drug-guru. The actual subject of the album was totally neglected for the most part. In reality, Timothy Leary was a serious scientist and researcher, and a nice person overall.

Q: So you weren't on LSD during the recordings?

MG: We could've been drinking, using cocaine or opium, or just staying sober. The album was about the seven levels of consciousness. How we could create that musically, that was the next step. What to use to help, LSD, magic mushrooms, or red wine were secondary. Each one does it his own way. We tried it with LSD because Tim was experimenting with it. But it was all about

the levels of consciousness.

Q: And one can attain that state without the use of drugs?

MG: Why not?

Q: And that was also Tim's opinion?

MG: It was also his. Tim Leary was a neurologist. He only had experience with LSD, because he was researching with it, and had a specific interest in it as a scientist for use as a therapeutic drug. Tim didn't like experiments like they usually were realized in clinical "laboratories". He rather preferred them in a more familiar and private environment. After all it was about the human psyche. Empirically, people are more open when they don't see a nervous guy in a white coat that chews on a pencil who asks them what kind of a colour they see inside a bleak room. That is why his so called communities were founded, where he held sessions with LSD.

LSD was known about generally before then, and it's not Tim who invented it. It was the Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann who turned 100 years old in January, who discovered it in 1943.

Many psychologists had worked with LSD before Tim did research with it, without taking the drug themselves. And Tim was someone who tried it out himself, so he knew more about what he was doing than others.

"Seven Up" wasn't my first album. I was inspired earlier to play music, through the music I heard and then played by myself, from the Blues, Improvisation, Experimental Music to Minimal Music. I've always been interested in popular music, as well as experimenting musically. That interest inspired me to find a mixture, or let's say the fusion between popular and experimental music.

Q: Which musician/groups inspired you?

MG: As far as composers I'd say especially the minimalists Steve Reich, Phillip Glass and Terry Riley. As musicians, guitarists of the 60's like Eric Clapton or Jimi Hendrix.

Q: Is Eric Clapton a great guitarist in your opinion?

MG: Yes, he played a lot of interesting things with his band "Cream". That was very experimental music at the time. They adapted it from Rock and Blues. They took a short initial theme, and extended it into an hour long improvisation, a free flowing form of music. They did that not only in the studio, but even in concert. That was new at the time, and they were very successful. The group existed for only a short period. After that, 1970 and later - back to his roots - Eric played the Blues again, and made his own successful songs out of it. They were very nice songs, but not experimental like 1967.

Q: What about Jeff Beck?

MG: Jeff Beck made a few nice solo albums, which I remember from that time. He later refined his guitar sound and playing technique, but always stayed connected with his Blues traditions.

I also remember Peter Green from the beginnings of Fleetwood Mac, and other English blues musicians. They all were students of Alexis Korner and John Mayall. Many famous guitarists "went to school and studied" with these two important personalities. As a guitarist, of course, this kind of music influenced me.

Q: Can you talk a bit about the "Concert For Murnau". What was the creative process like as you

wrote the music for that film?

MG: First of all it was an idea to make a complete electronic music piece for a silent movie. I was inspired by Willy Sommerfeld, a silent music pianist from the 20's, who is now 102 years old, and still vamps silent movies on piano.

Willy Sommerfeld is not only the last silent movie pianist from the silent movie era, He's a phenomenon! He only improvises, without scores, without a concept, sometimes he doesn't even know what kind of movie will be shown. He just develops a soundtrack off-the-cuff live on piano.

This in fact is similar to the first concerts of Ash Ra Tempel, where the three of us went on stage and didn't know what we were going to play. We didn't know which key to play in so just started out of the blue, and over two hours of playing something developed out of it. We were just playing what we felt, and it translated into some sort of music!

Willy Sommerfeld did that on piano in a classical form, so I thought I could do that with electronic music. I wanted to try, using today's technological possibilities, to improvise a movie score electronically.

That turned out to be very difficult as you have to prepare all the electronic equipment and programming, then react to situations in the movie. Using the improvisational method of Willy's was the basis of my conception. I selected "Schloss Vogel'd" ("Haunted Castle") because it was highly diverse. I started with voices and rhythmic elements that are often used in electronic music, i.e., drum machines and voice sampling.

Then I had the idea to do something with an orchestra, because of the venue in which it would be performed, the State Theatre of Brunswick which usually provides an orchestra with musicians. To integrate classical musicians into an experimental format is really problematic.

You can't inspire orchestra musicians to improvise; you have to practice with them (that's why Steve Reich established his own orchestra). They want to see written scores for orchestra and singers, there's no room for making things up as you go along.

Another difficulty was having to change the concept due to the movie itself, which came in a completely different version than the one I'd seen before. The demo tape was short, fast and made from a black and white film. I then got a restored colour version, which was 20 minutes longer. I played the first version with 24 fps (frames per second) which produced a different level of tension dramatically. After the restoration, the movie created a different sort of visualization, so I had to lay out the music in a different way. Then I decided to use a chamber ensemble provided by the theatre, with two violins, two horns, a cello, plus electronics. "Schloss Vogel'd" ("Haunted Castle") is a sort of psycho-thriller, which takes place at a hunting party where the attendants try to expose a murder of the past.

Q: Are you satisfied with what came out, or would you do it different way now?

MG: I'm satisfied with the end result. But it's basically a different approach and additional elaboration of the theme. Due to the need for preparation, the electronic and the orchestral passages were created separately except for two of them. The orchestra needed the scores very early, and then I added the electronics relatively quickly after. There were only two rehearsals, but it would have been better if we had more time to rehearse continually. For the next time there will be only two possibilities, one is that I can work intensively with the orchestra, using a continuous score, and the electronics is just a kind of overlaid on top. Or, that I shape it purely electronically, like I

am doing for the film festival in Wroclaw, Poland. Both ways are exciting.

Q: Would you prefer the Russian “Berliner” street musicians?

MG: No, it would be too hard to rehearse with them on the street for two months.

Q: Was “Inventions for Electric Guitar” a kind of minimalist precursor to E2-E4?

MG: “Inventions for Electric Guitar” was a minimalist experiment, but of a different nature. That composition had a structure and a clearly defined build-up. It wasn’t recorded in one take, it was repeated for hours until it sounded the way I liked it. The only thing that is similar to “E2-E4” is the repetitive form of both compositions.

“E2-E4” was improvised completely off-the-cuff, while “Inventions” was recorded during three months of hard work. The structure of “Inventions” was worked out as a predetermined sequence. “Inventions” is from 1974, and was based on my earlier experiments on guitar. You can hear some elements on side two of the first Ash Ra Tempel LP from 1971, but that was completely improvised, not in a composed form. “E2-E4” came out of my later improvisations with electronic instruments, the guitar playing a very important and solo function.

“Inventions” builds upon the musical beginnings I made on guitar that were basically improvised and played live at concerts. The basic approaches of “E2-E4” are already in evidence on “Ash Ra Temple”. By “Inventions For Electric Guitar”, I worked out a real structure, and there is a certain sequence.

Q: “Inventions” sounds electronic.

MG: I played guitar, my only instrument at that time, and tried to make it sound different than a guitar usually sounds, not like an electric guitar or traditional Blues guitar. That was rather awkward to do. Creating sounds you can only produce in the studio and not on stage was too difficult to reproduce in concert. That is why I only played a shortened version of “Inventions” live on stage: the most concise passages of it.

Q: Did you use any electronics on “Inventions”?

MG: No. On “Inventions” I only used guitars that were played in different ways.

At concerts, I played the simpler version, which was reproduced without a big effort.

Q: That was a studio creation then?

MG: It was a studio recording. Effects that you hear are made as you record guitar and then play the tape at double speed. You cannot play a piece and then say “Wait, I have to reverse the tape and now you hear how it as sounds being played backwards”. You could not do that on stage.

Q: So it is being played backwards?

MG: It’s played backwards, or alternatively at double or half speed.

After “Inventions” I had enough of playing guitar for a while and I wanted to do some other interesting things and started playing organ. That brought me to “New Age of Earth”. For it, I composed things in a different way, on a keyboard instead of a guitar because of the playing technique which is different. You can combine tones in a different way on guitar. You can create other ideas musically due to the intervals and harmonies you do not get from a guitar. That sort of composing experimentation led me to “New Age of Earth”.

“New Age of Earth” is not an electronic record. It was music that came about through exploring the possibilities of the keys on a keyboard or piano. It was however sold as electronic music because it was produced electronically.

Q: Does it have anything to do with “New Age Music”?

MG: No. That was only a coincidental title. I think New Age Music came later in the 80’s. There was an esoteric movement in the 60’s in the USA, but that had nothing to do with New Age Music as we know it today.

In addition, when you hear NEW AGE today it sounds like MUSIC, but my record was meant as symbolizing a New Age of Earth, not more and not less. Moreover, at that time, New Age Music did not really exist.

Q: “New Age” was more composed than improvised?

MG: Yes. However, after that, I began working more with synthesizers and electronic instruments, then started my solo tour in 1976 to release the album in France. I began buying different kinds of instruments and developed my music in a more electronic direction. Those are the origins of “E2-E4”. Later I started with fashion shows, where I improvised on electronic equipment.

After that, I released “Dream & Desire” which I recorded for radio broadcasting, mixed with experiments from the studio. That is where “No One Laughs Backwards” came from in 1978.

Q: Why was it called “No One Laughs Backwards”?

MG: I cannot remember.

Q: “E2-E4” came in one go. I cannot believe that. I think you really deliberated how to do it before you did it?

MG: No. It came out of a quirk of the moment. There was no concept.

For example, I played in the studio yesterday, only I did not record it. That was not so important, because I am not so familiar with that new technique yet. I will have to rehearse for few years until it sounds as perfect as “E2-E4”. In 1981 when “E2-E4” occurred, I had already worked five years long with the instruments that I used, at home, in the studio, and at the fashion shows.

Q: Which instruments do you mean?

MG: I mean electronic instruments, five keyboards, synthesizer, sequencer etc. that were used on the recording.

Q: And yesterday?

MG: Yesterday I worked on a live programme with the Ableton. (Ed. Note: a piece of software made by a small company in Berlin)

Q: Is that what Klaus Schulze exclusively uses?

MG: I think he uses it too.

Q: That is the way Schulze plays it. Do you want to learn it that way?

MG: No. (laughing) What I am busy with now, is something completely new, it has nothing to

do with the old techniques.

Q: But there are musicians that already use it, or not?

MG: There are musicians that use it all around the world now, and know how to play it. However, they play different music than I do. In conclusion, it is only important what kind of music comes out. That is like using an instrument. When you play guitar, first, you have to learn to play good, then you can begin to improvise. Willy Sommerfeld had to learn to play piano good, so that he could improvise so well. Now I have a programme that is very good, so that you can play around with it. However, you have to learn it as you learn every other instrument.

Q: And how many years will you need for that?

MG: I have no idea. That depends how much fun it is to play with.

Q: For the live performance with the Zeitkratzer Ensemble, did you have to write out the other parts for the various instruments, and then do many rehearsals? Alternatively, did the music flow in an organic way, loosely, yet structured as an evolution of the original theme during performance?

MG: The musical outline for the Zeitkratzer Orchestra was written by Franz Hautzinger in short form. They were in brief patterns, and after that, the Zeitkratzer performed it several times. This version, which I did, is based on the first notation.

Franz Hautzinger selected a few short patterns from the piece, and presented them as music scores. The musicians familiarized themselves with it, and then played their own variations. They improvise. They were given short scores. The music is not composed note by note. It is only a basic structure that they augment.

Moreover, when they finish the original ideas, they start again with the basic structures. It is like a framework they can develop themselves by building upon it. The interesting thing is that the ensemble consists of very good musicians that have much fun improvising and playing music. On the other hand, there is a basic harmony that not everyone plays at the same time; they listen to what the others play. Then develop themselves a form of interplay, without a conductor that says, now you, and now you. They can do that without any instructions. When does the violin player start - when does he stop - they just hear that. Then sometimes, someone stops playing, and lets someone else play, and it works. A good ensemble can do that.

Q: The mix surprised the members of the ensemble?

MG: Yes. When you have a recording, you can highlight what is more important, by accenting certain parts, removing others, and creating a new musical form. I did the final mix of the E2E4 concert. When the ensemble heard it they liked it a lot.

Q: With the Zeitkratzer concert, and the release of three new productions at the end of 2005, it seems you have come alive creatively again. Do you have any plans for 2006-07 formulated yet, in terms of other concerts and releases?

MG: Yes, in April I'm invited to a festival in Japan. It will be my first time with a video artist, and the first solo concert in 30 years! You cannot count "Die Mulde" as a concert, it was more an artistic installation. For the musical program, I will be playing parts of "Die Mulde" and "Concert for Murnau" as well as some new stuff, plus "Sunrain" in a new version.

I will perform this program again in Breslau together with "Haunted Castle" in an electronic version. Then in August, perhaps a second concert where I will perform "E2-E4" live for the very first time. We will see?

There are also invitations from China and the U.S.A. And together with the Zeitkratzer I would like

to perform “From Phoenix to Laguna”, then a concert in St. Petersburg with Edward Artemiev, “Inventions”, live on guitar with three popular friends in the USA, and maybe a composition for the Kronos Quartet.

There is a lot to be done “ let’s go for it!

Q: Will there be any new releases?

MG: Yes, a new album with Joe Claussell.

(Ed. Note: a famous New York DJ among the new generation of electronic musicians. He has his own label, shop, and has also recorded with Herbie Hancock. There is also coming in the near future a DVD release of the Zeitkratzer-concert).

I was also thinking about a remix of “New Age of Earth”. However, because of the work on a new version of “Sunrain”, I am not inclined now simply to do a remix. There are so many different variations, which were not possible at that time. I am thinking about a new version of “Sunrain”, but it would not have anything to do with the rest of the album. It would be a re-creation with many different variations and possibilities.

Q: Would it still be called “Sunrain”?

MG: Sure. It is a constant motif, which simply varies in a new way.

Q: Will it be a similar composition to “E2-E4”?

MG: No for heaven’s sake, as “E2-E4” is not a composition!

Q: You don’t think that “E2-E4” is your best work?

MG: Perhaps it’s my best work. It is what it is. However, when you take it apart, I don’t know what happens. You can’t really do that. That’s why it’s so hard to play. I’ve been playing “Sunrain” for 30 years again and again. You can play that in so many different variations.

In addition, “E2-E4” was just a good moment. There is not much substance to it. There are only two chords and bum-ching. It was correct what Franz wrote, there are short things and you make something out of it. You can write it down note by note, but for what?

Q: Are there other compositions of yours more musically full of life?

MG: On “Inventions” all three tracks.

Q: Is there only one on “New Age”, “Sunrain”?

MG: Especially “Sunrain”, I always played that. “Deep Distance” is what Joe Claussell likes, and has played. The second track, “Ocean Of Tenderness” is a quiet piece; I don’t know what to do with it. On side two, there is a long electronic track you could do a lot with. However, I have never played that live, it is too arduous and not rhythmic. There are basic ideas in it that you might make an orchestral version out of perhaps.

Q: In which direction does your music now evolve? You can’t call it Kraut, Cosmic or Jazz anymore. DJ’s, Zeitkratzer or Kronos Quartet are interested in it. Are you just evolving, or diverging from your roots?

MG: Those are just terms. Principally I’m not far away from what I’ve done in 1974 or ’75. Today

I simply have tools that are more modern at my disposal, which offer me different possibilities.

Q: When I listen to “Haunted Castle”, it sounds very classical. However, it was intended for a specific movie with certain flair and in a certain mood.

MG: I was always interested in making music that was born today and was made for tomorrow. That is why I am interested in modern electronic developments. They allow me to do something that was not possible in the past. When I play guitar I get certain ideas. When I play a keyboard, the ideas are very different because my fingers work in another way. When you have a synthesizer or a sequencer, you get different ideas, like you never had before.

Q: What about acoustic instruments?

MG: Those are instruments of the past. They now sound somewhat obsolete.

Q: Does that mean you will not use them anymore?

MG: No, surely not, I play a “so called” instrument myself. Interesting is the fact that you can interpret a piece like “E2-E4” with acoustic instruments and the result is a composition that is very typical of electronic music. It works using subtle sound displacements that can only be processed electronically. You can achieve a floating form with a good interplay of musicians by an ensemble where the sound can be interpreted in accordance with the possibilities of the instruments. In most cases, the results are the opposite. We know that from film music, where electronic instruments are used to imitate the natural instruments of an orchestra.

I combined those sorts of technique with the Zeitkratzer Ensemble. It was funny to interpret that backwards, but that kind of music really does not translate very well for orchestra. It is more natural when working with electronic instruments. I want to create new ideas and experiments by fusing different styles. I call that contemporary music because you play it “today”, and it offers creative possibilities in terms of new directions. In my opinion, that is modern music, or the music of today.

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COSMIC JOKERS BIOGRAPHY

August 16th, 2003, <http://www.intuitivemusic.com/cosmic-jokers-biography>

Founded by Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser in 1973, Cosmic Jokers was the most representative kosmiche rock German act, characterized by the use of phuturistic sci-fi sounds, psychedelia, and galactic atmospheres.

The origins of the Cosmic Jokers spin around the figure of Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, a German music journalist who had wrote a number of books on 60's psychedelic music, like a biography of Frank Zappa and "De Nieuwe Pop Muziek" (The New Pop Music) in 1970. Kaiser replaced Jurgen Schmeisser as a manager of the German psychedelic and folk rock label Pilz (mushroom), which was a subsidiary of BASF. During Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser's management, the label released the works of new German bands such as Popol Vuh, Hoelderlin, Emtidi and Broselmaschine.

After the Pilz experience, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser decided to start a new label in Berlin called Ohr (ear), which was owned by Metronome Records, and he launched his career as a music producer. Kaiser's figure was decisive for the existence of an autonomous German music product, and he was aware of this fact as he explained: "In 1970 there were no German record companies interested in German music. We showed the German People that they can trust their own music." (Mojo magazine, April 2003)

Ohr records became an important platform for the German rock music, which released some of the early works of German bands like Tangerine Dream, Guru Guru, Ash Ra Tempel, Embryo, Birth Control, Emtidi, Wallenstein, Amon Duul and Mythos. The beginnings of Ohr records were difficult since they have to deal with the complex situation in the country since only the labour exchange was allowed to arrange work for other people. Kaiser remembers about the meager situation of the music industry in Germany at the time: "When we started there was no audience for German groups in Germany. The business was controlled by British and American groups. In Germany it is illegal to be a group's manager. After three weeks of starting Ohr I got asked to go to the government office and they said, "You do something which is not allowed. If you go on you have to pay 30,000 marks fine". (Mojo magazine, April 2003)

Such complex situation was that the friction between the people in the industry reached the media when, in 1971, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser was protagonist himself of one of the most shocking and hilarious moments in the history of the German music. It was during a live debate on the German WDR TV about the German music industry featuring Nikel Pallat (manager of Ton Steine Scherben), Conny Veit (Gila), Bodo Albes (manager of Frumpy), Wolfgang Hamm, Hans G. Helms and Heinz-Klaus Metzger. After Kaiser and Pallat got into an argument about the capitalism in the German industry, Pallat took out an axe he had hidden under his jacket and started hitting the table provoking the stampede in the participants, then he kept some microphones in his pocket. At that point the TV channel stopped the airing of the show.

In 1971, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser was the architect of one of the most curious experiments in the history of German music when he joined in the same team Ash Ra Tempel and the American psychologist and writer Timothy Leary, whose ideas about the spiritual benefits of the LSD shocked the universities and put him in the eye of the storm of the late sixties American countercultural movement. Leary was very popular for having coined the classic hippy phrase "Turn on, tune in, drop out" and for

appearing at John Lennon and Yoko Ono's bed-in in New York singing "Give Peace A Chance". He was also an important influence to other rock artists such as the Moody Blues and the Who, and he was beforehand in touch with Brian Barritt, with whom he had experimented with heroin claiming that they could communicate telepathically.

Timothy Leary started having problems with the law in 1965 when he declared himself responsible of an accusation on her daughter for crossing from Mexico into the United States with marijuana. Consequently he was convicted of possession under the marijuana tax act and sentenced to 30 years in jail. In 1969, the marijuana tax act was declared unconstitutional, and Leary's conviction was put down, but later in 1970 he was again convicted for the same charges and sentenced to jail, being assigned to work as a gardener in a lower security prison. In prison, Leary created a psychological profile to make the authorities believe he was incapable to represent any risk by faking the psychological tests that he had wrote himself many years ago. In the night of September 12th 1970, Leary scaped from prison, supported by the militant Yippie group The Weatherman and Richard Nixon described him as "the most dangerous man in the world". Timothy Leary and his wife exiled to Algeria with a fake passport in the name of McNellis and disguised with a bald head. They later moved to Switzerland, the birthplace of LSD, where he got in touch with the cosmic music scene after Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, from the Ohr label, would fly to meet the man.

Kaiser had been in fact trying to contact for a while the beatnik poet Allen Ginsberg to get him involved in his projects but he had no luck. Later, Ash Ra Tempel's Hartmut Enke did the same trip to meet Leary with the idea of working out a concept based on a map of the stages of conscience of the mind which Leary and Barritt had traced under the name of "the seven steps to a better karma of consciousness". This was the inspiration for the album "Seven Up". Eventually the rest of the band moved to Switzerland to record the new album with Leary at Sinus Studios in Munstergasse, Bern. The story tells how, just the same as a Beatles' friend did in their tea, Timothy Leary's son-in-law, Dennis Martino, dropped some LSD on a bottle of 7 Up drink and passed to the band without telling so. Leary also contributed in the album with some vocals, they said he could sing better than anybody else in the band.

During their stay in Switzerland, the whole crew moved to a farm in the mountains near Bern where they spent a several days tripping on acid and allegedly improvising some sort of sex orgies, though there are no records of the members of Ash Ra Tempel involved in. Bryan Barritt did and he can recall: "I remember that there was a lot of legs! Ten people or something like that, all fucking at random, moving on to one another, all out of our skulls. I got the blame for that." (Mojo magazine, April 2003). Timothy Leary was also later involved in other projects for Ohr records' chairman Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, like the later Cosmic Jokers albums. In 1974, Timothy Leary was detained by Interpol agents at an airport in Kabul, Afghanistan and he was extradited to the United States, where he was imprisoned again and later released in 1976. He died on 31 May 1996 of prostate cancer.

After the "Seven Up" experiment Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser gave birth to a new brain-child: the label Kosmische Musik. For some people Kosmische Musik was a geniality that expanded the boundaries of the modern music and took a few steps ahead of it's time, for other people it was just the result of having a bunch of tripping hippies improvising, and somebody pointed that it was just Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser's way to raise his ego and recover the worship from his wife that Timothy Leary had stolen. Kaiser's plan was simple and original at the same time, he reunited a collective of artists under the name of Kosmische Kuriere (cosmic couriers) and invited them for a series of improvised jams, also called "acid parties" by some, which were recorded between February and May 1973 at Dieter Dierk's studio in Stommeln. The collective involved Manuel Götttsching of Ash Ra Tempel and his girlfriend Rosi Müller, Klaus Schulze, Dieter Dierks, Jürgen Dollase, Harald Gropkopf, and Kaiser's wife, the former fashion designer and co-producer Gille Lettmann. Timothy Leary had also joined with vocals. The result was a free fusion of psychedelic rock and space rock and electronic music.

Ash Ra Tempel's guitarist Manuel Götttsching, whose early discography was released on Kaiser's labels, has a different memory of those recordings: "The drugs had actually little to do with the music (nor with the label), but they were present, as they were present at this time in general. I speak of marihuana/hashish, which were very popular in those days. Everyone under 30 smoked this and that, the elders did so years ago, and still the rivers flow... Drugs have been and will be a part of life, not necessarily because one is a musician, a painter, an architect, or a psylocybinien?"

They were around and took a great part of my time, but there was another drug that I fell in love with: "MUSIC".

A year later, Kosmische Musik released four albums with the resulting material of these sessions, all of them under the name of The Cosmic Jokers, including "The Cosmic Jokers", "Planeten Sit In", "Galactic Supermarket", "Sci Fi Party" and "Gilles Zeitschiff". All of the tracks featured the correspondent authors, but the musicians involved were not noticed about any of these releases and got no payment or benefit from any of the productions. It was precisely Manuel Götttsching himself who discovered the scam when he heard by chance one of the albums in a Berlin record shop and got absolutely shocked. After these many bands from the label such as Popol Vuh left the company, and Tangerine Dream refused to release their forthcoming "Atem" album on the label to find out that Kaiser had already licensed it to the Polydor label in the UK without their knowledge. Klaus Schulze, who was involved in the "Kosmische Kurier" sessions, took legal action against Kaiser, provoking the withdrawel of all of the Cosmic Jokers' albums from the market. Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser lost the case in court and eventually the musicians got their rights back. Then the Ohr and Kosmische Musik labels closed and Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser apparently disappeared from the country and quit the music industry for the rest of his life. Manuel Götttsching, who was one of the most involved musicians in Kaiser's projects, has a different version of the story: "It's probably one of Klaus D. Mueller's (Klaus Schulze's manager) myths about this story of the Cosmic Jokers Sessions. Of course I knew about the releases, of course I had contracts before, and I received royalties, even an advance. This all was very little money, but that should be no argument to spread around rumours like this. You can say many things about the producer Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser but I have no reason of saying him to have acted incorrectly so far."

When Stephan Kaske, from the German band Mythos, was asked if he had any news on Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser and Gille Lettmann he said: "Not really. After they had blown away their brains with dope they lost their credibility, reputation and at last their music and imperium. Dieter Dierks got all this in '78 or '79 as far as I know. Now his organizations (i.e. Venus Records) are managing the labels and pay my licenses. In 1980 "Starmaiden" (Gille Lettmann) wrote me a letter with extreme confused "cosmic" stuff. I answered her letter shortly to wish her good luck (honestly), but my letter returned unopened. "Sorry, Mr. Kaske. I cannot open this letter addressed to Gille Lettmann. Please send it again to "Starmaiden", she had written on the envelope. Anything left to say ???"

ROLF-ULRICH KAISER, PROPHET DER KOSMISCHEN MUSIK

von Detlef Mahnert, <http://www.detlev-mahnert.de/Rolf-Ulrich-Kaiser.html>

Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, der Gründer der legendären Labels OHR Musik und Kosmische Kuriere sowie Autor eines guten Dutzends von Büchern über Popmusik, Gegenkultur und Frank Zappa, ist eine der Schlüsselfiguren der jungen deutschen Musikrichtung, die unter dem von den Engländern kreierten Namen 'Krautrock' populär wurde.

Ausgangspunkt der Folklore-Bewegung in Westdeutschland war das Festival auf Burg Waldeck 1964. Zu dieser Zeit wird sich Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, aus Köln nach Waldeck gekommen, der soziopolitischen Rolle der Musik bewusst, ihrer Kraft, neue Ideen zu verbreiten und die Entwicklung einer Gesellschaft voran zu treiben. Er beschließt also, sich in die Folk-Pop-Bewegung einzubringen, und zwar mit Hilfe von Texten, der Organisation von Festivals und der Produktion von Schallplatten.

1967 veröffentlicht Kaiser das „Songbuch“ (Ahrensburg-Paris : Damokles-Verlag, 1967), eine Gesamtdarstellung der internationalen Folk-Pop-Szene. Das Buch enthält vor allem Interviews (z. B. mit Pete Seeger und Joan Baez) und Textproben.

1968 wird er mit Martin Degenhardt und Thomas Schröder der Mitorganisator der berühmten Essener Song Tage. Vier Tage lang, vom 25. bis zum 29. September 1968, bietet dieses Festival, an dem an die 40 000 Personen teilnehmen, ein ehrgeiziges Programm: junge deutsche Rockgruppen wie Floh de Cologne, Guru Guru, Tangerine Dream, Amon Düül, Soul Caravan (später Xhol) treten neben bekannten Größen aus der internationalen Szene auf: Tim Buckley, The Fugs, Paco De Lucia, Julie Driscoll, dem deutschen Free-Jazzler Peter Brötzmann, Brian Auger und - zum ersten Mal in Deutschland - Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Inventions.

Die Idee der Organisatoren war es, vor allem solche Künstler zu verpflichten, die am besten die Sprünge und Verwerfungen der politischen und kulturellen Gegenwart reflektieren. So versucht im Rahmen des Festivals eine Ausstellung, die Bedeutung der Pop-Folk-Musik und des 'Underground' zu verdeutlichen. Die Festival-Zeitschrift „Songmagazin“ erscheint täglich. Sie wird zum Vorläufer einer Reihe von Schriften, die R.-U. Kaiser im folgenden Jahr publiziert: Protestfibel. Formen einer neuen Kultur. Mit einem lexikographischen Anhang von Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser (Bern, 1968), Fuck The Fugs, das buch der fugs (1969), Zapzapzappa - das buch der Mothers of invention (Köln : Kinder der Geburtstagpress, 1969); B ist doch ein Scheißer das beste aus der deutschen untergrundpresse und Das Buch der Neuen Pop-Musik (Düsseldorf, 1969). Gewissermaßen als Synthese aus seinen Schriften veröffentlicht Kaiser 1970 die Buch-Collage mit seiner programmatischen Botschaft: „Underground? Pop? Nein! Gegenkultur!“ (Köln, 1970).

1969 gründet er - mit finanzieller Hilfe des Herausgebers und Plattenproduzenten Peter Meisel (Direktor des Hansa Musikverlag) -, das Label OHR Musik Produktion GmbH. OHR, dessen Verkauf in den Händen von Metronome Musik liegt, soll die Platten der experimentellen neuen deutschen Rockszene veröffentlichen, die gerade einen Boom erlebt. Peter Meisel steuert die nötigen finanziellen Ressourcen bei, während sich Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser um das Tagesgeschäft kümmert. „Macht das Ohr auf“, ist der Slogan der jungen Plattenfirma, orientiert an der ständigen Forderung der BILD-Zeitung: 'Macht das Tor auf!' (Gemeint ist natürlich das Brandenburger Tor, zu der Zeit unpassierbare Grenze zwischen der BRD und der DDR.)

Die erste Produktion, Fließbandbaby's Beat Show von Floh de Cologne, zeigt bereits die Leitlinien des Programms : eine Mischung aus Folk-Musik, Kabarett und marxistischen Parolen. Später erscheinen bei OHR Musik zwischen 1969 und 1974 die ersten Platten von Floh de Cologne, Tangerine Dream, Ash Ra temple, Klaus Schulze, Guru Guru, Amon Düül, Annexus Quam, Embryo und der weniger bekannten Witthüser & Westrupp, Xhol, Birth Control, Mythos, Walpurgis. . . OHR wird so zur Heimat der wichtigsten Gruppen, die in ihrer Gesamtheit bald von der englischen Presse unter der Sammel- bezeichnung „Krautrock“ zusammen gefasst werden - eine Bezeichnung, die - ursprünglich eher abwertend gemeint - bald zum erstaunlichen Qualitätsbegriff mutierte.

Angesichts des Erfolges von OHR und der unleugbaren Fähigkeit Kaisers, neue Tendenzen in der populären Musik aufzuspüren, schlägt die BASF ihm 1971 vor, einen ihrer Ableger, das Label Pilz (Markenzeichen: der wunderschöne Fliegenpilz auf jeder Plattenhülle) zu übernehmen. Bei Pilz veröffentlicht Kaiser nun unter anderem die ersten Alben von Popol Vuh und Wallenstein Witthüser und Westrupp. In seiner ungebrochenen Aktivität hört Kaiser aber gleichzeitig auch nicht auf zu schreiben und ver- öffentlicht : Fabrikbewohner. Protokoll einer Kommune und 23 Trips (1970) , Die Gegenmedien. Neue Modelle von Kommunika- tion (1970), Frank Zappa (Hoorn, 1971) bei einem holländischen Herausgeber und 1972 Rock-Zeit. Stars, Geschäft und Geschichte der neuen Pop-Musik (Düsseldorf/Wien, 1972). „Rock-Zeit“ ist nach Wolfgang Layer Kaisers längstes und kritischstes Werk über das ökonomische System, in dem die Untergrundmusik langsam verfault (Produkt, Promotion, Produzent, Profit) - ein System freilich, in dem Kaiser in mancherlei Hinsicht und durchaus mit Gewinn seine Rolle spielt. . .

Bruno Wendel und Gunter Korber, zwei Mitarbeiter von OHR, sind schließlich Kaisers Omnipräsenz offensichtlich leid: er möchte alles regeln und alles kontrollieren und lässt seinem Team kaum die Luft zum Atmen. Und so verlassen die beiden OHR im Jahre 1972, um ihr eigenes Label zu gründen, Brain Records. Hier nehmen sie unter anderen Guru Guru, Klaus Schulze, Cluster, Grottschnitt, Novalis, Harmonia und Neu ! unter Vertrag, aber auch The Scorpions und Jane, die bald zu den großen Trümpfen von BRAIN RECORDS werden.

1972 driftet R.-U. Kaiser dann aber in Richtung einer ebenso esoterischen wie säuerlichen Gegenkultur ab. Mit seiner Freundin Gille „Starmaiden“ Lettmann, einer den okkulten Wissenschaften verpflichteten Kartenlegerin, trifft er Brian Barritt und Timothy Leary. Leary, der amerikanische LSD-Prophet, ist gerade in die Schweiz geflohen, um der C.I.A. - und zehn Jahren Gefängnis - zu entkommen. Diese „kosmischen Botschafter“, wie sie sich seit Beginn der 60er Jahre nennen, haben sich zum Ziel gesetzt, „um die Welt zu reisen, um LSD 25 zu verteilen - nicht um Geld damit zu verdienen, sondern um das Weltbewusstsein zu entwickeln“, dixit Brian Barritt.

Der Kaiser und Gille Lettmann gehen in dieser kosmischen Religion völlig auf und widmen sich mit Haut und Haaren ihrer Weiterverbreitung. Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser beschließt, in der Schweiz Aufnahmen mit Brian Barritt und Timothy Leary, Ash Ra Temple (Manuel Götttsching und Hartmut Enke), einigen ehemaligen Musikern der Agitation Free (Michael Duwe, Gesang und Flöte; Dietmar Burmeister, Schlagzeug) und diversen anderen Gästen zu machen. Ergebnis dieser Aufnahmen ist das dritte Album von Ash Ra Temple, 7up (Kosmischen Kuriere, 1973). Der Titel „7up“ hat seinen Namen von einem Spiel während der Aufnahmearbeiten, bei dem es darum ging, eine Flasche Mineralwasser herumgehen zu lassen, in der man LSD aufgelöst hatte. . . Für das Album gründet Kaiser ein Tochter-Label von OHR Musik : „Die Kosmischen Kuriere“ (auch „Kosmische Musik“ oder außerhalb von Deutschland „Cosmic Music“ genannt), dessen Hauptaufgabe er darin sieht, die Ideen von Timothy Leary zu verbreiten. Um Stoff für Die Kosmischen Kuriere zu bekommen, verpflichtet Kaiser verschiedene Künstler von OHR : Manuel Götttsching, Hartmut Enke, den Ton-techniker und Klavierspieler Dieter Dierks, Jürgen Dollase, Klaus Schulze und den Schlagzeuger Harald Grosskopf. Sie nehmen offiziell zwei Platten auf: Tarot (Die Kosmischen Kuriere, 1973), mit Walter Wegmüller, einem Zigeuner-Künstler, und Lord Krishna von Goloka (Die Kosmischen Kuriere, 1973) mit Sergius Golowin. Zurück in Berlin, nach tief gehenden psychischen Erfahrungen, jammen die Musiker zusammen im Studio von Dieter Dierk, von Februar bis Mai 1973, ohne dass das Ergebnis sie wirklich zufrieden stellen kann.. Ohne die Musiker zu informieren oder noch einmal zusammen zu holen, beschließt Kaiser, die Bänder mit Hilfe von Gille Lettmann neu zu mischen und publiziert sie unter dem Gruppennamen The Cosmic Jokers. . . Nicht weniger als 5 Alben entstehen so.

Ab 1973 beginnen dann mehrere Gruppen mit OHR zu prozessieren, weil verschiedene Vertrags-

Unklarheiten bestehen und Tantiemen nicht gezahlt werden. Wallenstein führt einen Prozess gegen Die Kosmischen Kuriere. Edgar Froese von Tangerine Dream will mit Kaisers seltsamer Religion nicht zu tun haben und verweigert ihm die Verwendung des Namens „Cosmic Music“, an dem er die Vaterschaftsrechte beansprucht. Im Oktober 1974 bricht Hölderlin den Vertrag mit Ohr - ihre Texte entsprechen den Vorstellungen der Plattenfirma nicht mehr.

Diese Prozess-Serie wird zur „Affäre Kaiser“. Sie wird von der deutschen Musikpresse aufgenommen, die ihrerseits R.-U. Kaiser auch noch wegen seiner Beziehungen zu dem zwielichtigen Timothy Leary angreift. Ruf und Glaubwürdigkeit Kaisers sind nun ernsthaft beschädigt, und bald brechen die Aktivitäten von OHR Musik und Kosmische Kuriere in der Folge der juristischen Probleme zusammen.

Schließlich beendet Kaiser nach der Veröffentlichung von Einsjager und Siebenjager (Kosmische Musik, 1975) von Popol Vuh sowie eines 1975 mit Gille Lettmann zusammen entworfenen Tarotspiels (!), „The Legendary Star Maidens Tarot“ alle künstlerischen und geschäftlichen Aktivitäten. Bald gehen Gerüchte um, er sei in die Psychiatrie eingeliefert worden (exzessiver LSD -Konsum?).

Sicher ist, dass Kaiser seit mittlerweile 25 Jahren nichts mehr von sich hat hören lassen. Angeblich ist er Anfang der 80er Jahre auf der Buchmesse in Frankfurt gesehen worden..

Aber nun gibt es ein Lebenszeichen: Altmeister Werner Pieper, Szenen-Insider, Freund vieler Rockmusiker, Autor und Verleger, hat in seinem Buch „Alles schien möglich. 60 Sechziger über die 60er Jahre und was aus ihnen wurde“. (Der Grüne Zweig 252., Löhrbach: Werner Pieper und The Grüne Kraft 2007. S. 50-55) über seine beinahe erfolgreiche Suche nach Kaiser berichtet. Laut Pieper lebt RUK an immer wieder wechselnden Orten unter dem Namen Meson Cristallis, wohl völlig abgehoben von allem Irdischen. Kontakt zur banalen nicht-kosmischen Welt hält Sternenmädchen Gille Lettmann. Ehe sie aber Auskünfte gibt, muss man für sie einen Fragebogen ausfüllen. . .

POPOL VUH

Selbstbildnis einer deutschen Gruppe, Sounds nr.25, januar 1971

Popol Vuh ist eine Gruppe von Menschen, die Musik macht: keine Musikgruppe.
Popol Vuh ist eine Gruppe von menschen, die zusammen leben und die meiste Zeit damit verbringen, Musik zu machen.

Wir verstehen uns nicht als Musiker, sondern als Menschen, deren Entscheidung es war, das, was sie fühlen und das, was sie fühlen läßt, in Musik zu sagen. Der Glaube an Vermittlung und Kommunikation ist unser Glaube an Musik. Die Musik, die wir machen, entsteht aus der Rückerinnerung, in die wir mutwillig, mit dem Wunsch zu erfahren, eintreten. Wir lernen, unsere Phantasie zu begreifen, wir ergreifen sie, wir leben sie. Unsere Musik und ihre Wandlung werden diesen Weg vermitteln: Das traumatische Leben, die unbewußten Räume. So hat unsere Musik zwangsläufig mehr Bezug zu der Musik der Urvölker, - ohne sich an sie anzulehnen. Wir sind dabei, unseren eigenen Weg einer Meditationsform zu finden, die aus unserem Kulturbereich kommt. Wir begegnen dem Unbewußten mit unserem Bewußtsein, wir fallen aus der Zeit und dehnen diesen Augenblick.

Die Gruppe lebt in Peterskirchen, bei Wasserburg, in einem alten Pfarrhof. Dieser Pfarrhof ist inzwischen zu einer Siedlung kreativer menschen geworden. Wir machen in der Mitte des Hofes Musik. Mit der Zeit entsteht dort ein Klangraum wie in einem Ei auf den Bildern von Hyronymus Bosch.

Der MOOG SYNTHESIZER ermöglicht es, jeden auch nur gedachten Klang zu erzeugen. Darin liegt zunächst auch eine Gefahr: In dem, in seiner Vermittlung noch unerforschtem Medium - Musik - ist die MOOG Maschine ein unglaublich perfektes Instrument zur psychischen Beeinflussung, denn die Vorgänge sind direkt: Ein gepreßter Klang vermittelt gepreßte Gefühle, ein offener Klang die Möglichkeit zu entspannen, einen kreativen Frieden zu finden.

Wir arbeiten - in unserem Verständnis - nicht mit Tönen, sondern mit dem gesamten Tongebäude der Obertonreihe. So ist der konkrete Ton nie in seinem Raum begrenzt, er verhält sich zu ihm, wie das Bewußtsein zum Unterbewußtsein, er agiert in ihm, wie der Kreismittelpunkt im Kreis. Wir versuchen nicht, Schwingungen zu erzeugen, die sich aus einem musikalischen Produkt ergeben, wir arbeiten schon mit Schwingungen als Ausgangsmaterial. Diese Musik vermittelt sich unmittelbarer als irgendeine andere Musik zuvor: Die Schwingungen treffen linear beim Hörer auf.

Wir sehen in dem MOOG Synthesizer eine der wesentlichen großen, geistigen Zusammenfassungen unserer Zeit. Der elektronische Ton ist eine Nachbildung einer umfassenden Erfahrung. Der Synthesizer kann jeden Ton herstellen und verfügt somit über die Summe aller Erfahrungen. Dadurch stellt die Maschine an uns die Herausforderung, einen totalen Weg zu gehen. Wir zeigen mit unserer Musik, daß Elektronik nicht allein als technischer Vorgang spürbar ist, sondern sich als ein großes Feld an Empfindungsmöglichkeiten darstellt. Technik kann in der Verbindung mit Phantasie eine neue Form eingehen, die man vielleicht als Spiegel unserer eigenen Erfahrung sehen kann.

Die einzelnen technischen Bestandteile des Gerätes vermögen nichts, außer auf Technik hinzuweisen. Die Verbindung der Einzelteile kann zu dem Sprung führen, der über Technik hinaus weist.

Die Musik, die man mit dem MOOG machen kann, umfaßt so die Empfindungsmöglichkeiten des

Menschen schlechthin, und so zeigt uns diese Maschine einen ungeheuerlichen Weg, sich selbst in seinen ganzen Möglichkeiten zu erfahren. So verstehen wir unsere Musik auch in der Vermittlung als bewußtseinserweiternde Musik.

Wenn wir an Melodie denken, dann erinnern wir uns, wie wir als Kinder gesungen haben: absichtslos, nur zum eigenen Glück. Irgendwann haben wir aufgehört, wie die Kinder zu singen. Heute holen wir das nach, wie Ungeheure.

Es interessiert uns wenig, in dem Synthesizer eine Reproduktionsmöglichkeit, uns bekannter Dinge zu sehen. Wir benutzen ihn, um das, was immer hinter diese Dingen steckt, auszudrücken. Wenn wir spielen, daß es so klingt wie ine Flöte, dann klingt die Landschaft, aus der diese Flöte kommt, mit. Der konkrete Ton befindet sich in einem Klangraum, der sich ständig ändert. Dadurch besteht ein gehörter Klang immer aus zwei Elementen, die sich zueinander verhalten, wie das Bewußtsein zum Unterbewußtsein, wie der Tag zur Nacht, wie der Grundton zur Dominante.

Wir sind in der Lage, Rhythmen an der Maschine zu entwickeln, die der Fallangst entsprechen. Wir sind selbstverständlich auf der Suche nach dem Klang, der die menschliche Sehnsucht schlechthin manifestiert. Die Vermittlung der absoluten Freiheit. Wir denken nicht daran, daß möglicherweise die Vermittlung von Glück nicht zulässig ist, denn das würde bedeuten, wir könnten keine Musik mehr machen.

Wir vermitteln eine Meditationsform in der Musik, die aus unserer Kultur kommt. Nicht aus der indischen und auch nicht aus irgendeinem anderen Kulturbereich. Der Name Popol Vuh sagt nicht, daß wir so denken würden, wie die Quichè-Indianer, dem Ursprung der Maya-Kulturen, sondern wir bewundern an dem Popol Vuh die Art und Weise, wie das Buch entstanden ist: In einer gigantischen Rückerinnerung.

Das Buch Popol Vuh ist die Strukturbeschreibung des Denkens eines Volkes von dem Standpunkt aus, daß das Denken eines Volkes ein für allemal vernichtet wurde. Quasi der apokalyptische Standpunkt.

Das Abendland hat sich immer mit dem Leben beschäftigt. Im Gegensatz zu dem Denken anderer Kulturvölker, die sich vornehmlich mit dem Tod beschäftigt haben. Das Abendland hat den Tod in das Unterbewußtsein verdrängt. Wir begegnen ihm dort. Wir durchlaufen dieses Stadium, denn wir können nicht so tun, als wären wir Jogis. Und deshalb ist auf unserem LP-Cover auch ein See und keine Urmutter. Unser Cover weist auf das hin, was wir denken, nämlich die Symmetrie.

Wir zeigen einen oberbayerischen See und nicht einen tibetanischen Tümpel. Alles spielt sich vor unserem Augen ab, im Moment - in diesem Augenblick. Und so gehen wir einen Weg, wo unsere Fantasie unsere Realität wird.

Unsere Musik versucht dasselbe zu tun, sich rückzuerinnern. So hat sie mehr Bezug zu der Musik von Urvölkern, als zu der des Abendlandes, die die Tonalität benutzt hat, um einen bestimmten Spannungszustand auszudrücken, in dem das Verhältnis des Abendlandes zu sich selbst ausgedrückt wird. In einer gewissen Angst gegenüber dem Unbewußten. Wir versuchen ein neues Lebensgefühl zu vermitteln, in dem das traumatische Leben, der unbewußte Raum, bewußt gemacht wird. Das heißt vermutlich, daß die Entwicklung dieser Musik, die wir machen, nicht vorsehbar ist, aber gebunden bleibt an unseren Kulturraum. Bisher hat es im Abendland keine ausgesprochene, dem Denken des Abendlandes entsprechende, meditative Musik gegeben. Wir suchen diesen Weg. Wir befinden uns in einem Kreislauf: der Ton ist die Nachbildung einer Erfahrung. Die MOOG Maschine bietet die Perfektion des Tones schlechthin an. Wir gehen mit einer endlosen Summe an Erfahrung. Dadurch stellt die Maschine an uns die Herausforderung, diesen Weg zu gehen. Wir versuchen mit unserer Musik zu zeigen, wie eine bestimmte Form der Intensität beim Arbeiten zu erreichen ist und daß Elektronik nicht als ein technischer Vorgang spürbar wird, sondern sich als ein großes Feld an Empfindungsmöglichkeiten in Klängen manifestiert. So wollen wir zeigen, daß Technik in der Verbindung mit Fantasie eine neue Form wird, die der Elektronik gegenübersteht, denn nicht Elektronik wollen wir vermitteln, sondern die Summe an Erfahrungen, die in ihr enthalten ist. In Form des Mediums Ton. Wenn es hier um Farbe ginge, würde alles nicht so neu, so unverständlich klingen.

Wir befinden uns auf einer noch recht dionysischen Form zu leben. Wir vermitteln die Freude an dem was wir sehen. Wir machen es zu unserer Sache, wir drücken es in Musik aus. Somit hoffen

wir, daß es immer Freude ist.

POPOL VUH
Florian Fricke,
Frank Fiedler,
Holger Trülzsch

TANGERINE DREAM TRIFFT DEN MOOG SYNTHESIZER & POPOL VUH.

von Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, Flash, nr.11, 1972

Rolf Ulrich-Kaiser berichtet über die erste deutsche „Supersession“ von zwei der bekanntesten deutschen Popgruppen.

Bei der ersten deutschen „Supersession“ trafen sich die Berliner „Kosmische Gruppe“ Tangerine Dream und die Münchener „Kosmische Gruppe“ Popol Vuh. Innerhalb der Produktion des Doppelalbums „Zeit“ von Tangerine Dream spielten sie drei Tage zusammen. Dabei entstand die schönste Seite des Albums - „Birth of the liquid plejades“. Während englische und amerikanische Musiker bereits gewohnt sind, auch außerhalb ihrer Gruppen zu spielen, war diese Supersession für die deutsche Popszene ein erstes Experiment. Auch bei der Produktion von „Hölderlins Traum“ der Wuppertaler Folkgruppe Hölderlin hatten Musiker andere Gruppen mitgespielt, von „Bröselmaschine“ und „Witthüser & Westrupp“. Popol Vuh und Tangerine Dream arbeiteten auf eigenen Wunsch fast unter Ausschluß der Öffentlichkeit. Einzige Nicht-musiker: studioingenieur Dieter Dierks und Produzent Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser von der Ohr-Musik-Produktion. Rolf Ulrich Kaiser versucht im Folgenden, seine Beobachtungen aufzuschreiben und so einem zum Teil persönlichen Einblick in den komplizierten Ablauf der insgesamt fast zwei Wochen dauernden „Zeit“-Produktion zu geben. Sie hatten sich vorher nie gesehen. Sie kannten jeder nur die Platte des anderen. Aber als Florian Fricke (Popol Vuh) von Liberty zur Ohr-Musik-Produktion gewechselt war, da war eines seiner Motive, mit den anderen „Kosmischen Gruppen“ Ash Ra Tempel und Tangerine Dream zusammen spielen zu können. Und als Edgar Froese (Tangerine Dream) davon hörte, lud er Florian Fricke zu seiner nächsten Produktion ein zur dritten Platte nach dem „Album des Jahres“ (sounds) „Alpha Centauri“ und der ersten LP „Electronic Meditation“, zu seinem ersten Doppelalbum „Zeit“. In der Folgezeit verständigten sich Edgar und Florian über ihr gemeinsames Ziel: „Schöne Musik zu schaffen. Musik, die sich von den Affekten des Hasses, der Aggression und der Verzweiflung löst und dem Zuhörer Freude und Hoffnung gibt. Musik, die den Menschen zurückholt in den Zustand der Unschuld und den Zusammenklang der kosmischen Harmonie. Zu Möglichkeiten des Menschen, die verschüttet sind. (Mehr darüber bei Oskar Kiss Maerth, Der Anfang war das Ende, Econ Verlag.)

Sie spielten sich

Im Januar trafen sich dann zum erstenmal zwei bekannte deutsche Gruppen in einem Studio, um gemeinsam zu spielen und eine Platte zu produzieren. Es sollte zunächst schwere Arbeit werden für Florian Fricke von Popol Vuh und Edgar Froese, Chris Franke, Hanspeter Baumann und Steve Schroeder von Tangerine Dream. Denn sie halten keine Partituren und vorgefertigten Kompositionen; sie spielten sich. Um sich und dann miteinander spielen zu können, mußten sie sich kennenlernen und aufeinander hören, einander menschlich und musikalisch voll akzeptieren. Das ist ein grundlegendes Problem aller Gruppen, die in ihrer Improvisation eine ungefilterte Botschaft vom kosmischen Potential der Schönheit ausdrücken wollen. Schon in den ersten Tagen, noch bevor Florian kam, bestimmte es die Produktion. In den vergangenen Monaten hatte Tangerine Dream mit Christoph Franke (Synthesizer, Schlagzeug), Hanspeter Baumann (Orgel, Synthesizer) und Edgar Froese (Gitarre) gespielt. Da war kurz vor der Produktion der frühere Organist Steve Schroeder

(auf „Alpha Centauri“) wieder aufgetaucht. Edgar nahm ihn mit nach Stommeln. Und zunächst mußten sie sich wieder einander gewöhnen, vor allem Hanspeter an Steve, den zweiten Organisten.

Tangerine Dream lernt sich kennen

Nachdem die Instrumente aufgebaut und eingestellt waren, begann Tangerine Dream zunächst einmal, sich selbst kennenzulernen. Sie waren noch auseinander. Die ersten Sessions: Verzweiflung, Ratlosigkeit, Wettstreit, Durcheinander, Rivalität um die Prioritäten. Kennenlernen ist anstrengend. Die bisherige Besetzung mußte sich für Steve öffnen, er sich in ihr Bezugssystem hineinfinden. Am nächsten morgen ist er geschafft. Gleich das erste Stück. 20 Minuten, die weitesten, die ruhigsten des Albums. Das Stück heißt „Zeit“. Es ist frei von rivalisierenden Reibereien und von solistischen Ehrgeiz. Zusammenklingen in kosmischer Entfernung. Dann gibt es die erste Unterbrechung. Vier Cellisten, angeführt von Hölderlin-Musiker Jochen von Grumbkow, spielen einige Harmonien, die später von der Gruppe bearbeitet werden.

Tangerine Dream trifft Popol Vuh

Mittlerweile waren Florian und Bettina Fricke von Popol Vuh mit dem Moog Synthesizer eingetroffen. Zunächst hörten sie nur zu. Am nächsten Tag aber begann die „Supersession“. Das Problem des ersten Tages wiederholte sich. Während Steve schon früher zur Gruppe gehört hatte und sich nur neu orientieren mußte, trafen sich nun zwei einander persönlich kaum bekannte Gruppen. In das große Studio baute Florian die Kästen des Moog Synthesizers, einer Festung gleich, die Festung seiner eigenen Vorstellungen von Musik. Zwar haben beide Gruppen das gleiche Ziel vor Augen, zwar arbeiten sie auch beide improvisatorisch, aber dennoch unterscheidet sich die Art und Weise ihres Spielens. Florian Fricke spielt zusammen mit seinem Techniker Frank Fiedler und dem Bongo-spieler Holger Trulzsch zu Hause. Sie treten nicht live in Konzerten auf. Tangerine Dream dagegen haben seit ihrer Existenz (ca. 1996 [sic!]) immer vor Zuhörern gespielt. Ihre Musik ist maßgeblich durch die Live-Situation des Konzertes, durch Raum, Atmosphäre und Stimmung der Zuhörer geprägt worden. So arbeiten sie auch im Studio.

Denn die Studio-Situation entspricht bei improvisierenden Gruppen weitgehend der Konzertsituation. So mußte sich Florian erst einmal in der für ihn fremden Umgebung zurechtfinden, und so mußte er sich für Menschen öffnen, mit denen er noch keine Musik gemacht hatte. Er stieß auf etwas gänzlich Unbedachtes und Ungeplantes. Tangerine Dream dagegen wartete auf das ganz große Ereignis und übersah die Schwierigkeiten der unterschiedlichen Ausgangspunkte.

Warten auf die Erleuchtung

Der erste Tag der „Supersession“: Zunächst ein Abtasten, dann ein langes, langes Warten. Jeder wartet auf den anderen, daß es bei ihm losgeht und er ihn ansteckt. Und nichts geht los. Die fünf Musiker hatten sich in ihr privates Schneckenhaus verzogen. Die Session glich einem Geplänkel. Florian zum Beispiel beschränkte sich auf einen einzigen, rhythmisch monoton pulsierenden Ton. Am Abend setzten sie sich zusammen und besprachen den Tag; alle ein wenig unzufrieden, wenngleich sie bald verstanden, daß sie sich nun einmal aneinander gewöhnen mußten. Was war die beste Methode, das zu schaffen? Florian schlug vor, ein Stück zu konzipieren. Edgar setzte dagegen, sie müßten nur alle aus sich herausgehen. Florian wollte zunächst eine kleine Sicherheit der Orientierung, Edgar das völlige Wagnis. Das Gespräch half weiter. Die nächsten beiden Stücke richteten sich nach beiden Wünschen.

Die „Supersession“ findet statt

Der nächste Tag: Weiteres Suchen, ergebnislos. Dann spielt mal wieder die Gruppe allein. Ungeplant, konzeptionslos. Das Wagnis lohnt sich; Tangerine Dream findet das Stück „Origin of supernatural probabilities“. Die zweite Seite des Doppelalbum „Zeit“ (später als 3. Seite eingeordnet) ist fertig. Alle Beteiligten atmen auf. Am Abend einigen sich Tangerine Dream und Popol Vuh

auf das nächste Stück. Schon bei seiner Ankunft war Florian auf die Harmonien der vier Cellisten eingestiegen. Nun möchte er dazu spielen. Am folgenden Vormittag gelingt das Zusammenspiel. Das Cello-Band (etwa sieben Minuten lang) dient als konzeptionelle Grundlage, stimmt ein auf die folgende Improvisation. So gesehen schafft es den Kompromiß zwischen Konzeption und Wagnis. Florian setzt die Cello-Harmonien fort, dann steigen die anderen Musiker mit ein. „Birth of liquid plejades“ ist zwanzig Minuten lang - der seltene Brückenschlag zwischen Musikern, die sich wirklich etwas zu sagen haben. Und zugleich eine andere Art der Session als man sie von den amerikanischen und englischen Starsolisten kennt, die im Grunde nur vorgegebene Arrangements verzieren. Nach schwieriger Arbeit und mancher Minute, in der alles zu zerbrechen scheint, haben Popol Vuh und Tangerine Dream ein Stück geschaffen, von dem sie bei ihrer Fahrt nach Stommeln noch nichts wußten.

Die „Supersession“ hat Folgen

Solch ein Prozeß hat Folgen. Er verändert den, der ihn erlebt hat. Er ist eine Fülle von Erfahrungen, die die weitere Arbeit verändern. Die Öffnung der vier Tangerine-Dream-Musiker für Popol Vuh hat sie in ihrem Verhältnis untereinander verändert. Als Popol Vuh abgereist ist, setzen sich Edgar, Christoph, Hanspeter und Steve noch einmal zusammen. An diesem Tag entsteht die Seite „Nebulous dawn“, vielleicht die merkwürdigste Seite des Doppelalbums. Sie scheint sehr rhythmisch und ist doch darüber hinaus. Sie ist die komplizierteste Seite; man muß sie oft hören, um sie zu verstehen. Tangerine Dream hat in sie die ganze Kraft und die ganze Fülle der Studioerfahrungen getan. Die Gruppe war dicht beieinander und ist geradezu in dem Stück aufgegangen. Es ist tief, unmittelbar und dicht. Die „Supersession“ hat Folgen. Popol Vuh hat auf Tangerine Dream über das eine große gemeinsame Zusammenspiel gewirkt. Es hat als Katalysator ihr Verhältnis untereinander beeinflußt. Nun sind sie zusammen als eine Gruppe. Fast kann man sagen: Mit dem Letzten Aufnahmetag (die Mischung war zwei Wochen später) ist der Gruppenprozeß abgeschlossen.

MUSIK IST FÜR MICH EINE FORM DES GEBETS

von Rainer Langhans, Sounds, nr.49, 3/1973, p.35-37

Popol Vuh, Musikgruppe aus München, verzichtet auf den Moog Synthesizer. Mit dieser Musikmaschine hatte Popol Vuh (als einzige deutsche Popgruppe) zwei Langspielplatten produziert, zuletzt „In den Gärten Pharaos“, und die Musik für Werner Herzogs Spielfilm „Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes“ aufgenommen. Auf ihrer neuen Langspielplatte HOSIANNA MANTRA wurden die elektronischen Klänge durch klassische Instrumente wie Oboe, Violine und Fagott ersetzt, die zum Teil von Mitgliedern der Münchener Philharmoniker gespielt wurden. Eine koreanische Sopranistin singt dazu hymnische Lieder in deutscher Sprache.

Seit Jahren bin ich mit Florian Fricke befreundet. Es ist eine von den Freundschaften, die intensiv und in großen Intervallen sich ausdrücken. Man sieht sich gern und dann lange nicht - ohne sich zu verlieren. Ich sah Popol Vuh vor einiger Zeit im Studio bei der Arbeit an der Platte, die jetzt herauskommt - sie waren unansprechbar. Nun - Monate danach holten sie mich, weil jetzt über die Platte gesprochen werden soll. Ich sollte Vermittler spielen, etwas für die Medien schreiben. So ging ich hin und hörte und fühlte die Musik und sah, wo sie stehen. Florian ist ein hingebungsvoller Musiker und Intellektueller in wechselnder Einheit - Conny Veits mehr praktischer Intellekt wirkt dabei stabilisierend. Es bot sich uns als methode für große Genauigkeit kein verbales Interview, sondern ein Aufschreiben von Antworten auf Fragen, die als Reibfläche, Startlöcher vorgegeben wurden. Es sollten vor allem einfache, schematische Fragen sein, gängigem Bewußtsein folgend und ohne Einengung vom Frager her - zu deuten und füllen nach Belieben vom Antwortenden. Das ging gut, und die Teilnehmer dieses „Gesprächs“ waren zufrieden, denn man lernte sich staunend noch einmal ein wenig besser kennen. Vermittlung im Kleinen war es - mediale Information. Eine der Fragen wurde dabei nicht beantwortet: „Ihr habt einen Ausflug in die im weitesten Sinne östliche Geisteswelt gemacht und seid nun zurückgekehrt. Deutet das auf einen Versuch hin, unsere Hier-und-Jetzt-Situation Bewußter und ohne Ausweichen in Träume anzugehen?“ Doch vielleicht ist das folgende Interview eine Antwort als Ganzes - eine zögernd positive.

Wer ist Popol Vuh und wie hat sich die Besetzung der Gruppe verändert?

Florian Fricke: Es sind fast drei Jahre her, da habe ich meinem Vorhaben, eine neue, hymnische Musik zu schaffen, den Namen Popol Vuh gegeben. Zwei Freunde fühlten sich damals vor allem zugehörig“Holger Trülzsch (percussion) und Frank Fiedler (moog synthesizer mix-down). Wir haben zusammen zwei Langspielplatten gemacht, AFFENSTUNDE und IN DEN GARTEN PHARAOS. Holger ist danach eigene Wege gegangen - manchmal spielt er noch bei uns mit. Frank ist weiterhin dabei. Zunächst verwirklicht er jedoch eine eigene musikalische Idee. Er arbeitet jetzt unabhängig von mir am Moog. Die neue Popol Vuh-Formation sieht so aus: Conny Veit (E-Gitarre, 12-string), Robert Eliscu (Oboe), Djong Yun (Gesang), Klaus Wiese (Tamboura) und ich. Conny und ich arbeiten seit Frühjahr 1972 zusammen; jetzt, am Ende des Jahres - nach harter Arbeit - sind wir Freunde.

Dein Eigener Körper eine Kirche

Die neue Langspielplatte heißt HOSIANNA MANTRA. Deutet das darauf hin, daß ihr euch nun mit abendländischer Kirchenmusik beschäftigt?

Florian Fricke: Schon die LP IN DEN GARTEN PHARAOS ist eine irgendwie sakrale, ergriffene

Musik; sie zeigt das noch nicht so deutlich, da die Musik rein instrumental ist und niemand darauf ein religiöses Wort singt. Beim Komponieren von HOSIANNA MANTRA bin ich von christlichen Textinhalten ausgegangen. Wir haben lange nach einer geeigneten Sängerin gesucht. Es war ein Wagnis, das ich nur dem Text zuliebe eingegangen bin. Ein Freund aus Berlin hat uns dann eines Tages mit dem koreanischen Mädchen Djong Yun zusammengebracht und wir konnten nach vier Wochen Proben mit ihr ins Studio gehen. In meinem Selbstverständnis ist HOSIANNA MANTRA sehr christlicher Musik; Kirchenmusik kann man sie nicht nennen, außer du verstehst deinen eigenen Körper als Kirche und die Ohren als ihren Eingang.

Conny Veit: Auch ich nehme Abstand von der Klassifizierung „Kirchenmusik“, obwohl ich es durchaus für möglich und angemessen halte, daß HOSIANNA MANTRA als Kirchenmusik Anwendung findet. Eigentlich ging es mir bei der Realisierung dieser Platte um etwas anderes. Ich wollte mit meinen mit mir zur Verfügung stehenden Mitteln urchristliches Sein und Fühlen erfassen, um die Richtigkeit elementarer Wahrheiten im christlichen Wort zu vermitteln. Nicht als Prediger, sondern als einer, dem archaische Lebensformen wertvoller und richtiger erscheinen als unsere eigene Jetzt-Kultur.

Wie ist denn eine Musik, die du, Florian, „sehr christlich“ nennst?

Florian Fricke: Jede Zeit hat dafür natürlich ein anderes Gefühl. Vielleicht kann man sagen: Christliche Musik ist im Fühlen schmerzlich, im Ausdruck lächelnd - denk an unsere Rose als christliches Symbol - im Gegensatz zur Lotusblume des Ostens. Die Rose hat Dornen auf dem Weg hinauf - und oben thront etwas ganz Wunderbares, die Blüte - Kreuzigung und Auferstehung, Sterben, um geboren zu werden; dieses ist christliches Verständnis, das wir z.B. im Klang der Oboe finden, in der Dornenkrone des Cembalo, auch in der E-Gitarre, so wie Conny sie spielt, jubelnd und klagend zugleich. Unser „Kyrie“ kann dir zeigen, was ich unter typisch christlicher Musik verstehe. Man muß es hören.

Conny Veit: Für mich ist das sehr einfach zu beantworten. Es ist keine Musik zum Zwecke der Selbstbehauptung. Es ist Musik, die der Selbsthingabe entspringt. Nicht Behauptung des ichhaften Fühlens, sondern Hingabe an das selbstlose Fühlen was für mich notwendig [ist], um diese Musik machen zu Können - und das ist christlich.

Sich reinigen, verinnerlichen - ohne Technik

Der Moog Synthesizer, der gerade bei euch eine so große Rolle spielte, kommt nun nicht mehr vor. Warum?

Florian Fricke: Im Zusammenhang mit christlich religiöser Musik möchte ich den Moog Synthesizer nicht verwenden. Das hat mehrere Gründe. Einige davon will ich nennen: Entscheidend für den Wahrheitsgehalt einer Musik könnte sein, wie weit die Art und Weise der Herstellung identisch ist mit dem Inhalt, der am Ende, nach der Abmischung, auf dem fertigen Band ist. Ein Beispiel: Vor kurzem las ich auf einer Plattenhülle, daß eine Berliner Avantgardegruppe bei einer Platte, die eine elektronische Meditation beinhalten soll, eine Peitsche verwendet hat. Das ist doch ein Unding - und der Moog Synthesizer ist letzten Endes auch so eins. Er ist schwarz und äußerlich erschreckend, er ist ein überdifferenziertes, technisches Gebilde, das man z. B. sehr lange einstimmen muß, um in klängliche Bereiche zu gelangen, die nicht kalt sind und nur Technik vermitteln - was ja keinesfalls meine Absicht ist. Musik ist für mich im Laufe der Jahre immer mehr zu einer Form des Gebetes geworden. Man kann wohl mit Elektronik zunächst mehr als mit anderen natürlichen Klängen die Tiefe, das Unbewußte, das Zeitlose des Menschen erreichen - ich weiß das und es hat mich lange fasziniert. Ein schönerer und ehrlicher Weg scheint mir heute zu sein, sich selbst ohne technische Hilfsmittel zu reinigen und zu verinnerlichen und dann mit einfacher, menschlicher Musik diese Räume des Dunkels oder Lichts, den inneren Menschen anzurühren.

Gott ist hier, in unserem Tun, Sprechen, Fühlen

Die gesungenen Texte sind sämtlich aus der Bibel. Welche Beziehung hast du zu ihr?

Florian Fricke: Ein Freund hat mir vor zwei Jahren die Übersetzung des Alten Testaments von

Martin Buber, dem jüdischen Philosophen, geschenkt. Die, wenn ich das so sagen darf, sinnliche, mittelmeerisch-strahlende Sprache, die übersichtliche szenische Ordnung dieser Übersetzung hat mir das Wesen der biblischen Gestalten sehr nahe gebracht - die Bibel wurde Leben für mich. Immer wieder las ich das Buch Samuel - war es zu Ende gelesen, dann suchte ich in den Chroniken, den Geschichtsbüchern nach weiteren Angaben über diese Zeit. Ich würde meinen Ansatz beim Lesen damals gar nicht so sehr religiös nennen. Doch mit der Zeit hat sich das, wie es eben so geht, verfeinert. Textvergleiche mit Luthers Übersetzung haben mir dann nachträglich den hohen geistigen Rang der Lutherschen Sprache und seiner Deutung bewußt gemacht.

Warum diese Auswahl an Texten und was bedeutet die Textstelle „Sehr nahe ist dir das Wort“ und „es“, also das Wort „es zu tun“, und warum war dir diese Textstelle so wichtig, daß du sie ausgesucht hast?

Florian Fricke: Schon während der Arbeit am „Pharao“ komponierte ich an der „Segnung“ aus dem 5. Buch Mose. Für mich war es immer ein Liebeslied an meine Frau. Der Text, der heute auf HOSIANNA MANTRA „Nicht hoch im Himmel“ heißt, war damals auch schon bekannt - ich glaubte aber, seine Vertonung wäre zu schwer für mich. Andererseits hat er mich als klare, unmissverständliche Definition vom Religiösen tief beeindruckt. Ich habe das Lied dann doch kurz vor dem Studiotermin komponiert. Der Text erschien mir auch deshalb so wichtig, weil ich wußte, daß eine religiöse Platte hutzutage sicherlich vielen Mißverständnissen ausgesetzt ist - und dieser Text sagt doch klar, daß Religion keine Sache ist außerhalb der Reichweite des Menschen, sondern daß Gott hier ist, hier unten, in unserem Tun, Sprechen und Fühlen. Ja, das ist wichtig zu sagen. Dies sind die Texte der B-Seite. Die A-Seite ist eine kleine „Messe“ von Popol Vuh. Das erste Stück „Ah“ ist ein Staunen. Ich habe mit meinem Spiel am Klavier versucht, daß Rückgrat zu berühren, Terzenläufe rauf und runter, und Conny spielt so, als wäre er gerade aus einem tiefen Schlaf erwacht, schaut sich verwundert um und sagt: „Das gibt's ja gar nicht!“ Das anschließende „Kyrie“ ist ein in gewisser Weise klassisches „Kyrie Eleison“ und mehr noch als das erste Stück Vorbereitung für das große zentrale „Hosianna Mantra“. Da hatte ich die vor Augen, die dem Jesus auf dem Maultier beim Einzug in Jerusalem zujubeln: „Hosianna, Sohn Davids!“ Wenn ich das Stück spiele, dann stehe ich in dieser Schar der Bedürftigen und sage mir: „So jetzt bist du dran“, und dann spiele und singe ich zu dieser, wenn man so will, schäbigsten Krönung aller Zeiten.

Musik ist ein Dienst am Schönen

Will eure Musik Verbindungen schaffen zwischen abendländischen und östlichen Religionsvorstellungen?

Conny Veit: Das hieße, wir wollen eine Verbindung schaffen, die ohnehin besteht. Der in einem religiösen Begriffssystem Verhaftete ist sicherlich nicht in der Lage oder nicht willens, diese Verbindung zu sehen. Der Nicht-Verhaftete, leichtfertigerweise oft der „Ungläubige“ genannt, ist gezwungen, in den Extrakten der verschiedenen Glaubensbekenntnisse eine religiöse Wahrheit, den Ursprung zu erkennen.

Ist eure Musik eigentlich noch Popmusik, wie ja eure vorigen Platten und das Label, wo sie erschienen, nahelegen?

Conny Veit: Der Begriff Popmusik entspringt dem kommerziellen Bereich, und daher würde ich dich bitten, uns diese Frage in einem Jahr wieder zu Stellen: Vielleicht ist HOSIANNA MANTRA bis dahin Popmusik geworden. Ich halte das für möglich - die Musik ist begreifbar.

Wie verträgt es sich miteinander, Musiker und Komponist geistlicher Musik und Zulieferer der Plattenindustrie zu sein?

Conny Veit: Ich finde es nicht tragisch. Wir liefern keine zerstörerisch wirkende Produkte. Die Plattenindustrie ist für mich eine bloße Vertriebsorganisation, die nichts mit dem Inhalten unserer Musik zu tun hat. Wenn überhaupt Kommerz und Handel, dann Handel mit Waren, die nicht zerstören, weder den Menschen noch seine Umwelt.

Welche Beziehungen gibt es zwischen eurer Platte HOSIANNA MANTRA und einer Lebensweise?

Florian Fricke: Da kann ich natürlich nur für mich sprechen. Ich weiß, daß es wichtig ist, daß sich das Produkt nicht wesentlich von der Art und Weise unterscheidet, in der es hergestellt wurde -

ich habe das vorher schon gesagt. Selbstverständlich ist HOSIANNA MANTRA schöner, vollkommener, weicher, versunkener als ich selbst es die meiste Zeit bin. Beim Machen der Musik aber ist mittlerweile doch wenig individuelles Verhaftetsein, wenig Unschönes dabei. Doch darf man sich nie gleichsetzen mit seinem Produkt, das ja die Konzentration all dessen darstellt, was sonst noch recht im Wirbel begriffen ist. Musik ist mein Mittel, mich der Utopie realistisch zu nähern; sie ist ein Dienst am Schönen und man wird belohnt.

Nicht hoch im Himmel . . .

Nicht entrückt ist Es Dir
Nicht hoch im Himmel
Hoch im Himmel
Daß Du sagst:
Wer steigt für uns hinauf
Und holt uns.

Sieh, nicht überm Meer ist's
Nicht fern
Daß du sagst:
Wer fährt uns übers Meer hinüber
Und holt uns.

Nein,
Sehr nah ist Dir das Wort:
In deinem Mund und
In Deinem Herzen,
Es zu tun.

©Edition Intro

WORD, SONG, SOUND

by Florian Fricke, Year unknown/early 70's, <http://www.eurock.com>

I. A way back to God

In the triple rudiments of the architecture of Tibetan Cosmogony, - in which the highest stage is the eighth, for the void is included in the reckoning as the representation of the primeval, the unborn - the SENSE OF HEARING is understood as a manifestation of the eighth stage, the stage of the spiritual principal (Chi or Air). Man raises himself to the eighth, "divine" level, which is usually unattainable for Humanity, with the aid of the Word, of the Song or surrender to the Inner Sound, to the Word of God, OM.

Word is the power aspect; Song the love aspect; Surrender to the Inner Sound is the direct way to God.

The EAR is a feminine organ. "In the ears live the goddesses of the directions of space, of the governing of the element space, which is captured as a resonance in the muscle of the ear." (Ayuveda, III, 8). The ear is the womb of this resonance, which penetrates and immediately "tinges the spirit" as it says in an Indian adage.

Thus Word, Song, Sound exert a generative influence on the disposition of Humanity, they have the capacity to bring change.

In the most perfect way, allied to religious ritual, Word, Song, Sound lead Humanity near to God.

II. A healing power

A mystery which we are today slowly, and still groping in the dark, moving towards again : the psychic healing power of Word, Song, Sound - already known to earlier centuries. An example: "But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man who is a cunning player on a harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well." [I Samuel 16:14]. How renowned was the later King David to become, who was summoned to this task. How successful his labors were is related at the end of the 16th chapter of the Book of Samuel (this time not, as above, the Lutheran, but the masterful translation of Martin Buber) : "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

This is the most refined effect of Music: as healing power. It is no longer a Utopian idea to imagine that the relationships between pitch, interval, the structure of sound, rhythm and Cosmos, Mankind on the other side, could be structurally examined within the next ten or twenty years in the West. India has possessed for millennia a huge fund of analogies between Music and Nature, Music and the human body, Music and our planetary system; in the final composition, for example, of a Raga

it possesses the dramatic key to the mystery of the penetration of Music into the soul. If we should succeed in experiencing moreover internally these newly-found perceptions about Music and Sound - the East has at the moment an unending and great culture (we are still in awe of it) - then we would be in a position once again to turn to Music in a healing way.

For musicians a small, interesting table (after Indian modal musical teaching):

Key-note or root = Soul

Second = Head

Third = Arms

Fourth = Breast / Heart

Fifth = Throat

Sixth = Hips

Seventh = Feet

If you try whilst playing to connect simultaneously the struck note with the part of the body mentioned, you very quickly come upon - presuming the music is pure and tonal - an enormous vibration and bodily identity with the sound, which lends a great persuasive power to this.

III. A seducer

The deluding effect of Word, Song, Sound, the sense- disorientating of resonance we know all too well besides the example of the Pied Piper of Hameln. We are surrounded by it. Word as deception, Song as seduction - for a while, through the advent of electronics - external Sound as seduction. Is it not loathsome, how the greed of Man has exactly understood how to advance instinctively for its own pleasure the secrets of vibration, the suggestive power of Word, Song, Sound? This greed, gigantically represented by the Capitalist System, in its most repulsive manifestation in consumerist propaganda: here Word and Music are blended with image for the purpose of deception, often in diabolically cynical form. Foodstuffs, which we now know lead to an early death are offered with “swinging” music.

In propaganda for tobacco or pharmaceuticals Music likewise creates a triumphant mood. Music draws a veil over understanding. It is a deadly deception, a disregard for Humanity. As scent is less evident, less obvious, more secretive, industry has turned to it, in order to make preliminary influences on potential consumers through the means of perfume. Osmology (the science of perfumes) has also emerged much more in our time, as has knowledge of the psychic power of Word, Song, Sound.

We are not asserting, but considering, that a large part of American and English pop music might be sought in just this dark region, where Music is seducer and in conjunction with seduction. The volume of sound of some groups such as Deep Purple is destructive; it establishes aggression there, just where it wants to disappear. In a new generation: US.

IV: And as power/violence

Altamont: Rolling Stones

Jericho: whoever doubts the authenticity of the conquest of Jericho as it is described in the Book of Joshua should immerse himself once more in the sixth chapter of this book and will meet with a truly gigantic, multimedia power ritual, where it wasn't, as is generally thought, the blast of the seven trumpets which shook the walls of Jericho, but the power of the first sound from the mouths of the people, whom Joshua had commanded to remain silent for seven day in front of the walls of Jericho; one can imagine with what psychic power, similar to an explosion, the blast was used and how it must have affected the walls. This collection of colorful examples actually had a goal:

Leading to the following final observation: if we have discovered that behind the medium of Word,

of Music is concealed a region of unimaginable power and - in the negative case - violence, then this compels us to use this medium in conjunction with a new ethic. If we have once realized that one can kill and be killed by the power of Word, Song, Sound - how then can we decide not to take the utmost care in what we give of ourselves, if we do not try to bring ourselves to letting only those things pass our lips which are for our mutual advancement. The Egyptian merchant of the time of the Pharaohs, entrusted with the magic of Words, greeted his partner before every other word in the following way: He said 'Your undertakings prosper, they prosper, they prosper'. The other returned the same sentence. Yes, that's what we mean, in these many lines. What is true for Words, should be so a thousand times more for Music. Let us make Music which is beneficial to us, which leads us from the OUTSIDE to the INSIDE. There let us be united.

Peace and Joy!

FLORIAN FRICKE INTERVIEW 1989

by Ian Laycock

There are musicians and musicians. Many go in for flash displays and pyrotechnics. Others - much harder to find - are more concerned to bring about some very specific effects through their music; after all, in the major ancient civilizations music was used as a powerful means of bringing about personal change. Of the latter type of musician, the one who springs most readily to my mind is Florian Fricke, who has put out a steady flow of releases with colleagues in Germany under the name of Popol Vuh.

Since 1969 there has been a succession of striking recordings, all in a very powerful and uplifting vein. Florian has also provided the music to many of Werner Herzog's films, which have a very definite cult following throughout Europe. In Aguirre, Wrath of God and Fitzcarraldo there are wonderful scenes shot in South America, which are accompanied by music perfectly matched to the majesty of the image. Nosferatu has some stunning work which obviously got through to other musicians (more on this later!) whilst Cobra Verde from 1987 retains the visual theme of things South American and also African with haunting melodies and undercurrents written by Florian and played by Popol Vuh. Herzog comments: "For me Popol Vuh is a stroke of good luck. Florian Fricke's music always unveils something hidden in the images, something lost in the darkness of our very soul".

Born in 1944, Florian Fricke studied music in Freiburg im Breisgau near the Franco-German border. Since 1971 there have been numerous LPs with Popol Vuh and there are now some exceptional compilations appearing on compact disc via the devious routes of Norway, France and the USA.

A craftsman and also a man of great insight into the workings of sound and music, Florian rarely goes in for interviews; the last one in the UK (in English) before this was around 1981!

We sat in his house in Munich and drank tea and spoke of many things. The first question was about this working relationship with Herzog. How had it all started?

Werner Herzog had finished filming Aguirre and was in Rome doing the English sync for the film. He was desperately looking for suitable music. He tried with Morricone but couldn't find anything suitable for the film and was very unhappy about it. He was living in an albergo in Rome and was eating there one evening with a young actress from Germany. The conversation finally got round to this problem, that he couldn't get the right music and she said, "There's only one person, really, and that's Florian". So he rang me in Munich, I went to Rome and he showed me the film. I went home and wrote the music and from that point on I was the composer on Werner Herzog's films.

Was he living in Munich at the time?

Yes! But most certainly would never have thought of using the music!

Popol Vuh itself is quite a fluid structure. There have been many musicians involved. Is it a group,

a vehicle for ideas, or what?

When I began to make records in 1969 it was usual for one to give the whole undertaking a name which would convey something to the listener which would cause an association with the music, perhaps the spirit of what was behind it. There were three of us and I gave the name Popol Vuh to that whole.

Why?

That's quite difficult to say, but at the time I found an old 1910 translation of the book of the Quiche Maya Indians which isn't identical to the version that's around nowadays, it's quite different. The spiritual background of the book is comparable with the bible with us, the story of the origins of the world and all that and for me that was very meaningful because all the other books I'd read I could understand anew. The book Popol Vuh meant a great deal to me and I suddenly had the idea to call it that.

So one knows that something a bit different is coming up, on seeing that name?

A certain spirituality.

Which is to say that you are obviously interested in spirituality?

I wouldn't say "interested",, but rather that I think and feel in a spiritual way.

In a specific way or...?

No, not even that. On the contrary. The first records were trying to display a common kernel to different religions in their content. I was even trying to show that there is no real difference in content between the Popol Vuh and the bible or in the creation stories of the Indians or the Buddhists. All religions have something held in common at their heart.

So you're trying to go in this direction with the music. Is it right to say that, or...?

Well I would say "to express the Inner Man in music". Simply stated, "Music in which the soul vibrates (schwingt)".

Do you have definite philosophies for the music? Are you trying to bring about a specific effect in us, and if so, how do you approach it?

Yes, I would like it to be that when someone listens to the music they are elevated by it and enter into that Inner Man, not the "I" of the everyday, but rather that "I" which now and then is ushered in, and have the music speak to that.

Do you improvise much now, or is it all planned out and constructed?

Well, I've been making published music for twenty years now and there have been different stages. There was a period where it came out of improvisation and then there was the phase where I composed music from the instrument. Nowadays, when I make a lot of film music, which can't really come from my instrument, which is the piano, I sing from my heart. It starts off really small and a song develops from it. It doesn't matter where I am, whether I'm working in the garden or out for a walk or sitting in an inn; it's all the same to me. I put the song down on the instrument

in the final style.

Are you still putting albums out as albums or are you only making film music now?

I do film music specifically for Werner Herzog but also for others if it's right. If the film has the same kind of motivation (as Herzog's have) that is there when I'm making music so that you can see pictures afresh, then the two come together. If I make an album then I have something that I want to say, an idea that I want to put across, without finding that in a title, yet it is a kind of answer to the time in which we are living, or at least how I experience the time. I believe that music can provide a great contribution to what is happening in our time. Just as there is a contribution, though unseen, if say 6000 people around the world meditate and create a climate to which people in other fields are susceptible, say in politics or civil rights movements or Greenpeace or peace movements, so this climate can also be enhanced and strengthened by music. If I think something beautiful then it's never lost, never. Someone else - they might be in Buenos Aires or East Berlin, it doesn't matter - who is on a similar vibration will pick that up. That is the greatest responsibility then that one has, when speaking, when thinking, when singing, or when playing a note.

I agree entirely! I believe that music is for elevating people, and that's why I think your music will last, because that's what it does. And I can only see that influence permeating through to people who come after us.

Yes! It's a music which is never really destined for an enormous public, but in a strange way, the older it gets, the more it appears to be sold. I'm not the only one to be doing things in this area! But look at what Sting and McCartney are doing in terms of the environment. These are important influences. I prefer to put content and vibration into sound and the structure of music. For me it's a Tantric process, a definite science, and you have to see very clearly what you are doing.

You are still actively involved in music, then?

I do the albums and film music and occasional concerts from time to time...

I didn't know you played live!

Occasionally!

Where, then?

The last one was two years ago in Munich for a benefit concert for Ladakh, for a development fund to try to alter some of the bad effects of previous aid. Against all the concrete and such like being introduced. On the other side of that, it's difficult to get out that same sound that we can really watch over in the studio. So I'm really no fanatic for playing live!

Was it solo?

Daniel Fichelscher (ex Amon Düül II) on guitar - he has such a big heart that man! - and we worked with an assortment of female singers, but I suppose that you would say that the core is Daniel and myself. When I've composed the things, then he's the next one that I play them with. I love working with him - a spiritual man!

You spoke of singers. I wanted to ask who it was who sang on Hosianna Mantra because she has such a pure voice. On the sleeve in England there were no credits at all.

She is a young Korean, Djong Yun, and she's the daughter of the modern classical composer Isang Yung who's Professor at the Berlin Music School and wrote the Opera for the Munich Olympics. She

has an angelic voice, really. She then went to New York because her daughter had an extraordinary gift for the violin. After her, Renate Knaup (also from Amon Düül II) came over to us. She had been with us in the studio before and had listened and joined in. There was always a sort of exchange between the members of the bands in Munich; it was never quite as clear-cut as “Here are the Beatles and over here the Stones, and never the twain shall meet”. When you’ve been making music for 20 years then your style obviously changes. New musicians come along; some go. But the kernel is and remains the guitarist Daniel Fichelscher and myself.

In the beginning, on the first album *Affenstunde* and the second especially, *In den Garten Pharaos*; there was a great deal of promotion here in Germany. I traveled around from one radio station to another and realized that there was so much nonsense being spoken. Then the third album, *Hosianna Mantra*, came out and the record company had the cheek to put out the album (without asking me) with the description “7 Holy Songs from Popol Vuh”. At that point I said “No more!” And I’ve never done any promotion since! I don’t think it’s necessary. With Herzog’s film music I have enough external promotion. It’s enough, and I really have no inclination to do it any more.

Do you know Kate Bush?

Yes, well, she rang up and wanted to adapt and record a song from *Nosferatu*. At that time I didn’t know who Kate Bush was, so I said no! Today I know, of course, and would have helped in some way. She’s good!

There is a dedication to you on her “The Hounds of Love” album.

Really? I have to say that I’ve been a purist for many years and it’s only now when my son is old enough to be up-to-date with all the latest things that I know who Kate Bush is or Tracy Chapman. Before I was uninformed about any of those areas. I wouldn’t listen to anything for the reason that a composer is very easily influenced, without noticing it. Without noticing he copies and I didn’t want to do that.

So what are your influences?

I’ve traveled frequently around the world. I’ve been to Afghanistan, the Himalayas, India, Africa and this natural, human, non manipulated music forces its way into your being. Also early Greek music.

Have you studied those types of music, such as Greek music?

No, only heard them, just for myself, for pleasure. But I listen to very little.

Can we talk about methods of working? You studied at the Music College in Freiburg im Breisgau. Was that only piano?

It was piano and everything else that one needed, counterpoint and so on, but I didn’t learn composition there. I was never able to find a connection with modern classical music except that music is for me the image of the cosmic, just like a Pythagorean, and the deep experience of what a fifth is or what a third is, what an interval is, that was far more important to me than all my learning in the music college. The mathematical metaphysics of music opened itself up in me at some point and from that point on I could compose.

As for methods of working, before, as we said, there was originally improvisation, then what I would call composition, this mixture of idea, improvisation, construction, then forgetting all that again, and no longer composing from an instrument, but composing from song. I’ve got no piano

here. I sing it.

With a tape-recorder there or...?

No, with musicians there, or I stand in the studio and sing with a guitarist there or a keyboard player. Well, I have a piano, but it's in the country where I take myself off from time to time and then I play sometimes.

So there's nothing written down?

Oh yes, I have to do that as well! Particularly if I'm writing for choirs or for oboists or for people who can only play when they're reading notes. It's just that I like that the least because there's no real heart in it. When you sing a phrase as a composer then the musician can hear how you want the music. And he can get it on his instrument, in the way that he phrases it. If I note down in that way then I am not certain of what I may get. For example the big choirs in Fitzcarraldo. For me that was also a great pain, in part. Although I conducted it myself, it was hard to alter certain habits. When I come together with musicians to play, then I know that we are in tune with one another in terms of vibration and outlook. That's why I don't think my music is reproducible by others.

In the studio my methods of working are quite varied. I most often play just with guitar and piano and then synchronize further from there, for multi-tracking.

Do you use SMPTE and computers?

I haven't done for my own work, but when I'm producing for others, then yes.

You're producing for another group at the moment?

Yes an American group. Almost exclusively with a computer. I'm fascinated by this work but I'll never adapt it for my own work. It's the possibilities which are there which I find fascinating.

Do you ever do anything in just one take?

Yes. There are very different recordings, for example one of just piano alone, which was only released in America, and called Spirit of Peace which has an entire side of me alone on piano. Then there are some very beautiful recordings of just guitar and piano. But in the work with Herzog it became very obvious that the piano is a very bourgeois instrument, and you can't really accompany Indians pulling boats over a mountain with it. That was just impossible, so there's no piano part on that! So I was forced into this great archaic sound, choirs and kettle-drums and that type of thing. Nonetheless I've just about always managed to express with others what I've expressed on the piano. When I spoke of the choir before, about all those customs and traditions that I detest like the plague, I went after that with the tape and did something which would be doubted by any producer, namely, made the sound worse. And that way I would say that it's better.

You don't have your own studio and so you use various studios?

I never wanted to load myself down with technology. It's just an ideal with me to be able to do my work just as a person, without anything else. I always looked with pity on Pink Floyd if they could only play music when they were out with 4 or 5 trucks full of equipment. Perhaps that's the reason why I do my composing from singing now and not from the piano. I can't take a piano out under the trees; it might be easier with flute or guitar, but I'd still have to take those with me as well! I wanted to say earlier I don't just make records, film music and the occasional concert, I travel once a month somewhere in Germany and sing with people. I've been doing that for 8 years now, in a choir. You could label it as "Body-space Music" (Körperraummusik) where you

sing inside the body and take it in such a way that every cell in the body from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head starts to vibrate. In order to be able to realize this I have experimented to find where speech resonates in the body. The consonants vibrate at the body walls, the bones and the flesh and the vowels fill the body spaces. And that sounds like a gong-concert: it also has a great therapeutic effect. This singing with other people is for me just as important as making records which might be heard in San Francisco. So each month I do that, in Cologne or Aachen or Stuttgart or wherever.

Always with the same people or does it change from town to town?

It varies. Most recently I sang with over 50 people in Frankfurt at a Gestalt Therapy Congress. There is also a recording of this type of performance. It's called Die Erde und ich sind eins (The Earth and I are One).

Is it available?

Yes, but it's quite difficult to get hold of. It wasn't put out for the music business, but for therapeutics. The background to it is that I experienced early on that the original sense of music is not for going crazy, but that it has an enormous effect on the psyche and the physical aspect of Humanity. And originally it was only used in this way thousands of years ago. And in the bourgeois development of the Romantics suddenly we are shown that the melancholy of Brahms is important or the morbid side of Chopin. And I'm absolutely not interested in any of that. Egotism through music doesn't interest me, but rather the unbelievable active changing power of music. To go from speech to responsibility.

But it holds its own, this work that I'm doing "near" to composition, with music such as Hosianna Mantra or Spirit of Peace.

Have you worked with other mantras?

Occasionally. But never so that it could be heard outside! I have to say that a great deal in this whole New Age movement is just not serious at all. If I am a co-founder of this development then I would want nothing to do with it! People do it all so easily! They sell sounds and claim that they can open certain chakras as if they were a treasure store and they were selling the keys. This is a great misunderstanding, a great folly. I try to speak to the soul in the Man, and what the individual does with this then is his affair. He remains free. He can go and build a beautiful tree house or something. Or understand suddenly that he would like to plant some flowers in his garden.

Where do you have this knowledge from?

It comes from inside. And never from casual situations. It never comes by chance. And you can't really learn it. It comes when the individual finds his or her own way to what's inside. If I accept something, if I am a follower of Ouspensky then I can't really express it because I haven't found my own way to myself. It has a great deal to do with Love, does Tone, Sound.

And yet it's mainly misused.

Yes, if the vanity of people is used.

What are you working on currently?

Well, I'm working with a Broadway singer on a disco production!!! But it's very, very positive. Underneath, disco, but on top, "Good morning sunshine!" music. And it's also political work; we're hoping to have them dancing to it in the discos. I think we can't forget that the large part

of today's pop music works against it. I don't want to start moralizing but anything other than rejoicing for Humanity is tied up with brutality and harshness in people. If you analyze the backing, the basic sounds, drum and bass, of today's music, it's all very hard.

But you generally haven't used drums, or at least, very rarely.

In Popol Vuh music, never, or at least, only well down in the production. But never as hard as all that. But in disco music you need to have this presence. But above that, something very positive.

Is it already finished?

Almost. We're just doing the final lyrics and next week we're mixing. His music is very much "World Family". Players from Argentina, Iraq, New York.

That's an area that Peter Gabriel is involved in. Are you familiar with his work?

Yes he did the soundtrack for Scorsese, for The Last Temptation of Christ. If anybody had asked me which other films I would have liked to work on then I would have had to say "Last Temptation". And then there was Peter Gabriel!

But you obviously like working on film music!

Oh yes! If the film is good, then it's wonderful work. Now, as well, you have the video in the studio and you can play along with each movement. Very interesting, and very different from what it used to be.

It's a very precise type of work.

Yes, every camera movement, every catch of breath you have to be with. But I like doing it, love working with Werner Herzog. He's a fascinating worker. I'm working at the moment on an Italian film (not one of Herzog's, although he premiered the scenario at an international competition). I'm very happy to be doing it. Early next year I shall be taking a break from film music and will be doing my own music. This disco production happened because a young pianist from Munich came to see me and played for me and I heard that he had exceptional qualities. Then the singer came from New York and we got it all down.

So, is that the next project, or...?

We're just doing that at the moment. The next Popol Vuh album will be in the new year. It's almost finished.

Does it have a name yet?

Not yet. But an idea. Something like "Hab Mut bis dir die Sonne wieder scheint" (Have courage until the sun shines for you again). Remember that music should be an example. If I express my doubts and depressions that's not right. If you think that people put on a record in their home in the morning then it's good that it should be something beautiful for them to listen to.

Do you know how many records you've made?

No, I haven't been counting. There have been some compilations. There's been a lot lying around in the cellars of the big companies who don't exist any more, like United Artists, Metronome, but

they're just about all to come out on CD.

I wondered if you could identify them all, as it's quite difficult to know what's what. The situation was somewhat complicated by a Norwegian group having the same name. They produced two albums, Popol Vuh and Quiche Maya, before changing their name to Popol Ace. All their work (including 3 albums as Popol Ace) was on Polydor.

Let's see:

- Affenstunde
- In den Garten Pharaos
- Hosianna Mantra
- Aguirre
- Seligpreisung
- Einsjäger, Siebenjäger
- Hohelied Salomos

What about Die grosse Ekstase des Bildschnitzers Steiner, Herzog film from 1974?

No, unfortunately that wasn't ever released. Werner Herzog has got that. There was some good music in that film. So, back to the list:

- Letzte Tage, Letzte Nächte
- Sei still, wisse, ICH BIN
- Agape, Agape
- Spirit of Peace
- Tantric Songs
- Herz aus Glas
- Nosferatu
- Fitzcarraldo
- Cobra Verde

and several compilations.

There was also a Christmas single with an orchestra, which is now forgotten, after Hosianna Mantra.

Then certain record companies put together records for which I am not responsible, for example Yoga, in Italy. It's not easy to spend 20 years and more working in this branch of music. You have to select a very definite route in order to make a lifetime of music. A lot of people have tried to reproduce successful records and have folded because of it.

For me, composition is top, then recording and everything else comes after that.

Do you intend working again with Herzog?

Oh yes! Next year again. In between films he's been producing operas, in Italy and at Bayreuth. He's living in Vienna now, not Munich. He also spends a lot of time in Bologna. He's very busy

these days. We only meet privately when it's a question of film music. He rings up when something big happens in his life. It's great working with him.

At this point we had to get moving, Florian to the studios, me to the airport.

(Thanks to Florian and Bettina Fricke for their hospitality, Popol Vuh for the music and Carl Suttland and Jan Erik Sölo in Norway for details on Popol Ace)

FLORIAN FRICKE INTERVIEW

by Gerhard Augustin, Feb 1996, <http://www.eurock.com>

As the year 2001 came to a close Florian Fricke passed away. Thanks to Gerhard Augustin in Germany, Florian's good friend and mine, I was one of the first in the USA to hear Popol Vuh's music way back in 1970 when he sent me a copy of AFFENSTUNDE. There's a story I like to tell about Popol Vuh from the days of Eurock's initial incarnation as a FM radio program in Central California.

In late 1972 I aired a long 1 hour set of Popol Vuh music that featured one side each of AFFENSTUNDE, IN DEN GÄRTEN PHAROAS, ending with HOSIANNA MANTRA. Near the conclusion there came a phone call from a woman who wanted to pass along a heartfelt thanks to the station for playing that music. She said her young daughter was teething and had been fussing all day, unable to nap, and in general miserable. As the show progressed and HOSIANNA MANTRA came on she said the baby calmed and drifted off by shows end. She was eternally grateful and asked that we please play it again in future.

That story illustrates the true power of great music, and Florian's magical musical talent in particular. When I passed along the news of his death, I got many people telling me of the special place some of his particular albums had played in their lives as well. They all had once again dug them out and were engaging in their own little personal memorials to the beauty and joy his music had brought them.

This Interview done by Gerhard is incredibly rare. I had tried a couple times myself to arrange something, but have never seen any interviews with Florian. In fact, at times Popol Vuh was referred to as a "phantom band out of Munich" by people in the music business in Germany for Florian was a very private person. Therefore I consider it a wonderful gift to present here the first known English interview with him. Read it, listen to your favorite album of his, and remember him fondly.

All these many years later I wouldn't think that long ago woman in California knows about his passing. But I and many others will continue to play his music, remembering him through his works until the end of our days.

His music will continue to eternally be an invocation of the Spirit of Peace for all who listen...
Archie Patterson

GA: You have done a lot of music for the films of Werner Herzog; do you know him personally very well?

FF: Yes, I am a good friend with Werner Herzog for many, many years. We don't see each other too often anymore because he is very busy with his films and I am very busy with my music. And that is the reason why we see each other, or meet each other, only for our mutual work. There are some things that I do admire about Werner Herzog. The thing I admire most is his consequence in following through the things that he is planning to do, and he is actually doing them. Werner Herzog is one of my few friends that are very famous and have, regardless of their fame, not changed at all. Their personality has remained stable and he is in no way different from the way I knew

him 25 years ago. He still drinks his beer from the bottle.

GA: By reading the old Mayan book “Popol Vuh” you must have gotten the idea of the band’s name. What kind of inspiration, what kind of feelings did you have when you were reading the book?

FF: When I read the book for the first time, I got ideas all of a sudden by which I was able to define other old books. I found a key in the book of “Popol Vuh.” I was able to understand the way people in the very early days described the creation of Earth. And the way of human evolution. I was touched like by a thunderstorm. In those days, in the late ’60s, when musical groups were looking for names, they were usually looking for a name that was expressing their music within the name. Otherwise it doesn’t have any particular meaning.

GA: But also, do you think that your feeling, or the inspiration that you got from the book “Popol Vuh” was also based on the counterculture movement on the ’60s?

FF: In a certain way, yes. In those days the society was not only a political society, in Europe we had the ’68 revolution which started in Paris, but also was part of the German change in culture and society, and music was a great part in this change. But there was also a spiritual revolution. We have discovered the Eastern part of this globe, of this world, over and over again. The culture of the old Maya, of the book “Popol Vuh,” was one way for us to find ourselves, re-define our ideas in early days. So we were actually looking for these kinds of inspirations, where we could refer to holy books, whether it was The Bible or the “Popol Vuh” (the book of the Maya culture), or the Bhagavad-Gita, like this. Different sources of information were coming to us.

GA: Now, tell us about your gigantic Moog Synthesizer III, the system of the late ’60s, which was only used by very few musicians. What sort of ideas did you try to express with the electronics of the Moog synthesizer?

FF: It was a great fascination to encounter sounds that were until those days not heard before from the outside. It was the possibility to express sounds that a composer was hearing from within himself, which in many cases are different from what a normal instrument could express. Therefore, this was a fantastic way into my inside consciousness, to express what I was hearing within myself.

GA: Why did you stop playing the synthesizer in ’72?

FF: I always had this great desire to find an instrument that could express a human voice, of vocals or the singing of a girl for instance, by electronic means. When you listen to IN DEN GÄRTEN PHAROAS on the A-side you will find this voice. And all of a sudden this voice that I felt was in myself, really came into my life when Djong Yun appeared. I wanted to do something really new, in those days, and the synthesizer was part of what I wanted to do. You should know that over the last 25 years I have always tried to create new music and new styles of music. I think otherwise it would be too boring.

GA: Did the title AFFENSTÜNDE have a double meaning for you? Like a first step for the band’s genesis of the book “Popol Vuh”?

FF: Yes, it had a double meaning. Each title has to be open for associations. That is a creative offer. What I, myself, really understand from AFFENSTÜNDE, is that it is the moment when the human being becomes a human being, where man becomes man. When a human being becomes a human being and is no longer an ape any longer. So that is my double meaning for AFFENSTÜNDE, that is the moment where the human being of a monkey turns into the human being of a human kind.

GA: I have thought that AFFENSTÜNDE could have been a kind of ’trip-music’ for you, and you

were inspired by your own drug experience. Is this right, or how do you feel about that?

FF: We were all, in one way or another, involved in some sort of excitement, which you may call drugs, whether it was taking LSD, or smoking hashish, grass or marijuana - minor experiences. But you know that the way electronic instruments could be used in those days offered such fantastic opportunities to express oneself. There's no doubt about it that my music has delighted a lot of people who were into drugs or smoking or taking trips or whatever, that was part of our musical culture in those days. And my music was especially geared towards this clientele. I did not make music for classical music lovers, but for people that were into contemporary, new music. But I did not make the music because of that.

GA: There are two songs in *IN DEN GÄRTEN PHAROAS*. Please tell me what idea did you have before making these tunes, and were these tunes improvised in the studio?

FF: One is a song that was recorded live in a church, "Vuh." And the A-side, "In Den Gärten Pharaos," Frank Fiedler and I, who had already worked on the *AFFENSTÜNDE* album, created this song actually in our home studio and later went into another studio to do the mastering for it. The last part of the song was recorded in the studio actually, like most of our music has been recorded in studios, this was the Fender piano in the end.

GA: It is said that *HOSIANNA MANTRA* is a musical Mass.

FF: Yes, in a way it was a Mass, a church Mass. But not for church! A conscious reflection upon religious origin is included in this music, but not in particular to any religious groups.

GA: In *HOSIANNA MANTRA* there are some new personnel, such as Conny Veit and Djong Yun. How did you meet them, and how did you come to play with them? Let's first talk about Conny Veit. How did you meet him?

FF: Actually, most of the musicians have always sort of found their way to me to play with me. I met Conny Veit at United Artists, my record label at the time, in the office of somebody I knew there (actually GA himself).

GA: But this is how Conny started playing with you, he came to your house and you guys just sat down and played?

FF: Yes, and he has did this every day. And that is how we actually prepared for almost half a year to records the album *HOSIANNA MANTRA*.

GA: And then Djong Yun, how did she come into the picture?

FF: Djong Yun came to Munich; she is the daughter of a famous composer. She got the melodies, she was listening to what we were playing and she heard the melodies and started singing with us. Yeah, we called it rehearsal! [laughs]

GA: Did you, Conny Veit and Djong Yun ever perform as a band, publicly?

FF: Yes we did, actually, in Lieberkosen and Munich.

GA: Tell us, what was the theme and how did you get the ideas of recording *HOSIANNA MANTRA*? And then can you tell us something about the artwork?

FF: In creativity there are not always reasons. Some of the things are just flying straight through

the window. But at that time I was especially interesting in using first the words, and then making music to the words, in other words there were existing lyrics that I wanted to add music to. I wanted to convey the depth of meaning contained in a word, and then transform this into musical sounds, a form of musical expression. That is one way of composing music for me. I don't always do it, but on and off I keep having an interest in composing in such way.

GA: The name HOSIANNA MANTRA, where does it come from?

FF: HOSIANNA MANTRA is actually a combination of two different cultures, two different languages, two different lives. It has a dual meaning, "Hosianna" which is a religious Christian word, and "Mantra" from the Indian religion of Hinduism. Behind all of that I was convinced that basically all religions are the same. You always find it in your own heart. And the music of HOSIANNA MANTRA is really touching your heart. It is made to touch your heart. That is why you can call it a Mass. A Mass for your own heart.

GA: Can you remember any episodes in making the album HOSIANNA MANTRA?

FF: I do remember when you ask me about episodes. One of the episodes was that Djong Yun was combing her hair more than she was taking time to rehearse our music. It was much more important to her personally to be pretty and beautiful for all of us. To look the way she felt comfortable in order to sing comfortably. We had absolutely nothing against that because she had very beautiful hair. Her hair is as beautiful as her voice. She was really a very nice, comfortable part of the group. Her behavior and everything was very soothing. But in general this production was no different from all the other productions. We'd go prepared into the studio having a certain amount of ideas and music available, and then improvise in addition to what we had already constructed. I've always looked for the fact that whenever we make music, or we were producing music, that whoever is part of the group playing, is responsible for their own playing within that formation. Groupies were not allowed. [laughs]

GA: How did you really get to meet Djong Yun, the very first time? Have you heard about her from other friends?

FF: In those days I was living in Munich in Halachein. Musicians from other towns and cities that came to town came to Munich, by recommendation or desire or whatever, came by my house, and we were just jamming. One day Djong Yun came there. I was playing with Andy Fix, the guitar player, and he was talking about this incredible girl from Berlin, this singer from Berlin, and he said that I had to meet her. That she was fantastic. I was working with Esther Ofarim in those days, but it didn't work out because she refused to sing Christian lyrics, being Jewish I guess, so she didn't want to interpret this kind of song. Which I did understand. In those days there was not this competitive feeling among musicians, and the contacts were loose and open. People were just visiting each other for the sake of music, and not to discuss their recording contracts. In a certain way we were all hippies in those days.

GA: I feel that this album HOSIANNA MANTRA is one of the greatest albums that German rock has produced in the '70s. What, in your opinion, does this album mean to you, and what position does this album take in the career of Popol Vuh for you?

FF: When HOSIANNA MANTRA was released we had a great feedback from the press and the public. There were these voices that said HOSIANNA MANTRA was certainly the most beautiful record that had been made until that day. Personally, I still consider this music as incredibly beautiful. But very rarely do I listen to music that I have made in the past. I'm always living with the music that I'm now realizing, or producing, or making, whatever. So I don't really dwell in the past, and I don't think too much of the past, I think more about tomorrow, the future, and what's

happening right now.

GA: Why did Djong Yun not join SELIGPREISUNG?

FF: She was in America, and only returned for the record following SELIGPREISUNG, EINSJÄGER & SIEBENJÄGER. So actually it was because she was in America in the days when we made SELIGPREISUNG. I do regret that today, because I think I haven't really done a good service with my own voice to my record. So it would have been nice if Djong Yun had been there.

GA: Can you tell us the concept, or the theme, the basic ideas of the albums EINSJÄGER & SIEBENJÄGER, DAS HOHELIED SALOMOS and LETZTE TAGE, LETZTE NACHT?

FF: EINSJÄGER & SIEBENJÄGER is finishing, or closing of the cycle. DAS HOHELIED SALOMOS is the beginning of a new cycle. In addition to the guitar player Conny Veit, I invited Danny Fichelscher, the drummer and guitar player with Amon Düül, to play with me. And that was the beginning of an extremely fruitful collaboration. We have practically made music since then without interruption, we have been playing together since then. For example, the A-side of EINSJÄGER & SIEBENJÄGER was really played and recorded in the first try, in one piece in the studio, and that was it. We didn't change anything at all. Actually I was giving in so much on this album to the style of Danny Fichelscher, the music of Danny Fichelscher, that we have sort of stuck to this formula for the following seven years.

GA: I have a feeling that EINSJÄGER & SIEBENJÄGER and DAS HOHELIED SALOMOS were recorded in the same studio, and at the same time.

FF: No, they were not recorded at the same time. Quite to the contrary. I think we made DAS HOHELIED SALOMOS one year later, after EINSJÄGER & SIEBENJÄGER. In between there were studio dates and recording dates and tours. There were a lot of things happening. So it was not really at the same time.

GA: You often change a melody that you used before, and you use it again in a different tune. But the melodies in EINSJÄGER... seem to appear for the very first time there.

FF: This is what you could say about Mozart as well, because this is the individual style of an artist, that you identify the artist with a certain melody, sound, feeling or whatever it is. You are right insofar as that we have been using these melodies as sort of a trademark in the different works that we created. And we have been playing this in various ways, different ways. And sometimes we even like these new, different versions. Compared to the other albums, SELIGPREISUNG and HOSIANNA MANTRA, we felt that this music, with Danny and Djong in EINSJÄGER... was a more contemporary, modern sound and music. But whatever we were doing in those days was really hermeneutic music. It's one way of jubilation; it's our expression of jubilation.

GA: Please tell us, is DAS HOHELIED SALOMOS your homage to the Old Testament, or is it dedicated to Djong Yun?

FF: DAS HOHELIED SALOMOS was taken from the Bible, yes. It's a mystic love song. The whole album was dedicated to love, that's all.

GA: Around the period of IN DEN GÄRTEN PHAROAS, did you write the type of tune of AGUIRRE, and the album, why was it released in 1976, but the film was made in 1972?

FF: Don't ask me about those confusing facts about my musical record career. I'm not a part of that. The music industry has created these unfortunate circumstances. And if I would start talking about this in detail, I would have to mention names and persons and people, so I'm trying to avoid

that. Insofar that some of these are not even living in our country anymore.

GA: Tell me something; are you actually playing on the album YOGA?

FF: This is part of the same chapter. YOGA is an unauthorized release. Some Indian musicians visited me in my studio, and somebody else took the tapes and sold them under the name of Popol Vuh, but it had nothing to do with Popol Vuh, really. I'm playing harmonium, and organ. I think it was released in Italy.

GA: I saw the film "Herz aus Glas" ("Coeur de Verre") and I found that not very much of your music was used. In the album with the same name of the film, COEUR DE VERRE, is Popol Vuh's original album to be the soundtrack for the movie?

FF: It was different. Sometimes they're produced for Werner Herzog's work. Sometimes he came to my house and he asked please open your box, where I have my tapes from my productions. When we are listening to music, sometimes he lifts his finger and says this part of your music would be great music for a film. Sometimes we have done in a very short day and night, time in studio at the end of production from his movies, chosen the music like this. The special music for COEUR DE VERRE ("Herz aus Glas") is Popol Vuh, but sometimes he needs music from Richard Wagner. But Richard Wagner never made film music for Werner Herzog.

GA: Now we come to a question about the French Egg release of NOSFERATU. This is a compilation of already-released materials, and unreleased old materials, with new songs. Did you choose the tracks?

FF: It actually was Part Two of the original soundtrack. The actual film music, the way it was composed for this movie, is on the record BRUDER DES SCHATTENS, SOHNE DES LICHTS. And when Werner was already almost finished with his film, he came to me and asked, "Florian, do you have music to be afraid by?" And I thought no, no, no, no. But I remembered some electronic pieces in my big, big, big, box of old material from the early years, and in this box I found 'angst music.' And so we made a second record, besides BRUDER DES SCHATTENS. . . we made "music to be afraid by," NOSFERATU, part two, released by a French company.

GA: Would you please tell us something about Maya Rose and Guido Hieronymus, who have played on recent Popol Vuh albums? What kind of background do they have, and what were they doing before they joined Popol Vuh? First Maya Rose, the singer.

FF: Maya lived in Yucatan in Mexico, and at different occasions she sent me some tapes where she was singing freely. I had listened to them and I had put it to the side, because in those days I was working with Renate, the Amon Düül singer, on the record FOR YOU AND ME. After many years I listened to these recordings again and I found the voice for an idea that I was working on which became the album CITY RAGA. To be precise, my son Johannes, he actually gave me this tip to do this kind of record. He said that this voice would please everybody.

GA: So this is how you met Maya, on tape. Did you ever see her personally?

FF: Yes, many years before in Köln. She was a member of the Breathing Therapy Society group, but moved to Yucatan and stayed in touch with me by sending these strange, wonderful cassettes, with her voice on there. When my son was hearing this voice he felt that it was really special.

GA: Guido Hieronymus, who has played on all the recent Popol Vuh Albums, what kind of background does he have?

FF: Guido is a bit younger than Frank and I are. He has studied music at the Conservatory in

Munich. He is producing and playing with many different musicians in Munich, in the music scene. And when we started to work together, it was not clear from the beginning that Guido would eventually become a member of Popol Vuh. But by working with him over the last couple of years we have come to a point that Guido is very important to Popol Vuh. We are friends, we have a great understanding.

GA: Your work on CITY RAGA seems to be very different from your previous works. Do you feel that this is a drastic change, or a natural extension from your previous work?

FF: I have answered this question before; I always find new styles, different forms of playing, that I'm incorporating into the music of Popol Vuh. The essence of my music remains the same. The forms are changing, but the essence remains the same.

GA: Thank you very much for your interview.

FF: I want to tell you one more thing about what I feel to be the essence of my music. Popol Vuh is a Mass for the heart. It is Music for Love. Das ist alles (that is all)...

INTERVIEW KLAUS WIESE (POPOL VUH)

Dolf Mulder, 2007

<http://www.popolvuh.nl/archwiese07>

Klaus Wiese: To say it shortly, the phenomenon 'Popol Vuh' was only Florian Fricke himself. What he wanted to be played was exercised mostly by Conny and Daniel, who were the only 'members' of 'Popol Vuh'. The others, including me, were temporary 'guests', like Holger Trültzsch on 'Affenstunde', and Bob Eliscu (oboe) on 'In the Garden of Pharaohs'.

Dolf Mulder: How did you get into contact with Popol Vuh?

Klaus Wiese: I met Florian in the early seventies and he asked me to get a folding tambura from the music-shop of FAZAL INNAYAT KHAN in London, where I worked temporarily in these days. Later on I played this tambura on some (invisible) tracks in an endless recording session in a church in eastern Bavaria near Peterskirchen, where Florian had temporarily a studio in a old castle, owned by the Duchess of Lehnendorf.

Klaus Wiese: Florian, as a typical 'piscis' was very much addicted to 5-liter bottles of white wine, big Lebanon-joints for practical inspiration - and a medieval christian background of all kinds of inner experiences and visions. Additionally he had some interest. for Hinduism with all its 'gods' and 'goddesses', as it was quite common these days. Later on he made a year long overland trip to Nepal. All music came out of his inner 'vision' and formed itself in many, many rehearsals - sometimes (10- times in one afternoon) - until the final 'form' was found .

Klaus Wiese: The disc I liked most from 'Popol Vuh' is an untypical one: 'Affenstunde' and second 'Hosianna Mantra'. I see 'Affenstunde' as a neutral pace-maker for a form of ambient-music, that came later into existence.

Dolf Mulder: What made you leave the band?

Klaus Wiese: As I explained, I never 'left' the group as I never 'joined' any form of group. I kept in touch with Florian over the years until about 5 years before his death.

Dolf Mulder: How do you judge their importance from the present? Or, what do you perceive as the relevance of this group?

Klaus Wiese: Today I see Florian as a solitary pioneer of this age (60-s, 70-s). He was a visionary and his music is still 'alive' and beyond all pseudo-esoteric bullshit (a term Florian used) ,like for example from Georg Deuter. They of course met in the small scene of music these days, consisting also of Peter Michael Hamel, Al Gromer and some other - lesser known - artists). He was authentic in his form-principles of his music and never interested in cheap compromises of wordly gain. He was always short of money in the typical artist-cliché, borrowing here and there, to make his 'work' go. Beyond wine and joints, he was always crystal clear (directed to the DIVINE, how he 'saw'it. On the piano there was always the old testament lying and he read there quite often, before he started playing. We had quite often lengthy discussions about so-called 'christian' and 'old-testamentical' differences in accepting gods guide-lines. This happened only with me as I was not one of the musicians but had another background and my interest in music was not music

Dolf Mulder: Could you specify what in your experience makes up the religious quality of the music of Popol Vuh?

Klaus Wiese: The vibration-level of an old soul, that Florian was. It automatically actualizes in the 'music'.

INTERVIEW WITH RALF HÜTTER

by MOJO magazine – August 2005

MOJO: When you first met Florian, did you have any inkling that this kind of partnership would ensue?

Ralf Hütter: No, but we talked the same language. We were “Einzelgänger” - loners, mavericks. Mr Kling and Mr Klang. Two Einzelgänger produce a Doppelgänger.

MOJO: You seem inseparable. Have you ever considered splitting up, creatively at least?

Ralf Hütter: No. In a way that’s unthinkable. We often have different opinions about many, many things, and that makes the music of Kraftwerk over 35 years interesting, because if everybody agrees about everything it’s very boring. Florian is a sound fetishist. I am not so much, I’m maybe more a word fetishist, idée fixe. These roles are not an obligation, they have just developed over the years as our preferences.

MOJO: In the late ’60s you played improvised music in jazz clubs, but were soon making minimalist music, with an anti-rock look. Was there a specific point where you felt you had made a break with contemporary hippy culture?

Ralf Hütter: When Florian and I stopped playing at parties and exhibitions on the art scene and got our own space, the first Kling Klang studio room, where we could be alone with our thoughts and work on our music. The first Kraftwerk album came out of that impulse. We were able to shut out the distractions and define our own identity. Very lucky. We were in our studio, with the doors closed and there was silence. Now what is our music, our language, our sound? We realised we had to start from zero. It’s an amazing opportunity. . . We didn’t have to reject anything. It was an empty space. And that same feeling was everywhere. The different art forms, literature, film and painting were everywhere in Germany in the late ’60s. They were blossoming.

MOJO: I hear you went to a Stockhausen concert on LSD.

Ralf Hütter: It was all part of that moment of trying to discover your own form of expression, your own voice. We had seen so much music on paper. So many notes, and we wanted to hear something else. We were like a painter struggling to find his image, an author looking for words. The LSD, that was just a part of the late ’60s.

MOJO: You filled the post-war cultural vacuum in Germany with music that looked for inspiration to the Berlin night life of the ’20s, the ideas of the Bauhaus architects and film-makers like Fritz Lang, just as acts like Faust, Can, Neu, Tangerine Dream and Giorgio Moroder were revitalising

German popular culture. Was it a unified scene?

Ralf Hütter: We crossed paths with Can a lot. It would happen spontaneously at exhibitions or parties. One of our fond memories of the late '60s is a gallery party where we did a jam session with Can. Florian and I were doing a long improvisation and we didn't have a real drummer then, just our little drum machine, so Can's rhythm section joined us - Holger (Czukay, bass) and Jaki (Liebezeit, drums). Sadly we didn't record that. We had a very friendly connection with them.

MOJO: It seemed very important for you back then to distance yourselves from the "cosmic" tendencies of contemporary Krautrock.

Ralf Hütter: We weren't trying to distance ourselves from anything. Germany was very decentralised, there were little scenes in different towns, even though they weren't always far apart. We were driving around Düsseldorf, and everything was very black and white to us, very industrial. We were terrestrial, not cosmic.

MOJO: Have you been aware of the recent rise, in England at least, of Krautrock's influence?

Ralf Hütter: No, and this is a word we would never use. Nobody in Germany knows this term. We don't eat sauerkraut. It simply doesn't exist. If you find it in Germany, it has been brought in from outside.

MOJO: Was there an affinity with others in the rock avant-garde like Pink Floyd?

Ralf Hütter: Absolutely. We would listen to Beethoven, Pink Floyd, and many different musics from all fields, from the rock field, the avant-garde, the classical, from street sounds, from the environment, from nature even. They were one column of cultural energy among many on our musical landscape.

MOJO: How important was David Bowie's infatuation with you?

Ralf Hütter: That was very important for us, because it linked what we were doing with the rock mainstream. Bowie used to tell everyone that we were his favourite group, and in the mid-'70s the rock press used to hang on every word from his mouth. We met him when he played Düsseldorf on one of his first European tours. He was travelling by Mercedes, listening to nothing but Autobahn all the time.

MOJO: Is it true that on the Autobahn US tour you used to carry scissors to cut the wires in lifts playing musak?

Ralf Hütter: Yes. In those days there were more cables than nowadays, where everything is panelled. One of the computer engineers who worked with us on the sequencers was a specialist in identifying where these cables are. It was funny. We want to listen to the elevator. It's more interesting to listen to the sound of the elevator * zwiiiiit, pwhrrr! - than to some muzak, which is sound pollution.

MOJO: You say you never listen to music at home. Is that because you have a partner telling you to turn the racket down?

Ralf Hütter: No, I turn theirs down. In the morning it's impossible. I listen in the car, sometimes I put things on or flick through the stations. But not so much. I try to fantasise music, to imagine what new music might be like, and for that you need silence, or interesting sounds - the environment, or different languages, different people, like from New York The Ramones, or from Detroit the MC5

and The Stooges' sound.

MOJO: Is it true that the metronomic intro "Eins, zwei, drei, vier" was a pastiche of the Ramones' "onetwothreefour"?

Ralf Hütter: That's correct. That's another sculpture. It's a painting, a sculpture, a short story. It's a musical, it's a sound with a cultural energy and identity.

MOJO: You talk a lot about "energy". Isn't that just a little new agey for Kraftwerk?

Ralf Hütter: No, it is inside the word 'Kraftwerk' - power, energy. Power in the English language, as I understand it means very strong, overpowering. Energy to me is more like a presence. All forms of energy, mental, intellectual and so on channel into our activities.

MOJO: A casual fan might not guess that you liked The Ramones. What is the scope of your musical taste?

Ralf Hütter: From silence to everywhere.

MOJO: What is the worst misunderstanding about Kraftwerk?

Ralf Hütter: The enormous prejudice of the outside music world in the '70s about our coldness or lack of emotion. We were machine-like to a certain extent, man-machine-like, but these prejudices about the supposed emotional frigidity of electronic music when actually it is the most sensitive form of music there is. The sensitivity goes across the full hearing range from 20 to 20,000 hertz.

MOJO: You've described the Kraftwerk sound as "singing fingers"... What do you mean by that?

Ralf Hütter: It's my fingers on the synthesizer keyboard, singing melodies like Trans-Europe Express or Neon Lights. They move of their own accord sometimes. I'm watching a film or reading the newspaper or a book, and my fingers just start to move automatically, subconsciously. On Tour De France, I was reading (French sports mag) L'Equipe, or contemplating reading L'Equipe or Velo magazine, and my fingers started doing electronic exercises. It's like cycling, which is best when you hear nothing - it rolls on its own accord. You're doing it, but it's automation. Certain compositions were really composed upfront, conceptually, and then others came to us like gifts from the musical machines. That was the case with Trans-Europe Express, which came like a train going through the studio. This is the type of music I like best, music which speaks for itself, which comes to us.

MOJO: Computer World still seems your most prescient album, conceptually. But what could you have known about computers in the late '70s?

Ralf Hütter: When the album was finished we didn't even have computers. When we went on tour we got our first computer, an Atari. The Mac didn't even exist then. So it was vision and the way we conceived the music. There was already a lot of synchronisation, analogue sequencing and automation in our music. Not as much as today, but we were thinking ahead of the actual record, which was an analogue recording. We were very interested back then in the creative energy of computers, the idea of everybody being able to make music.

MOJO: Computer World was created in an atmosphere of terrorists paranoia all too familiar to us today.

Ralf Hütter: Of course. We were searched several times, often at machine-gun point, apartments were seized. It was the time of the Red Army Faction in Düsseldorf, and we were riding around

in cars late at night, studio doors, police in our studio with guns. Maybe it was through the noise in residential parts where we had been carrying our posters. Then suddenly they'd be climbing through outside balconies on the second and third floors, and we'd have to calm young special forces troops down - this is just music, it's art! In the street it happened a lot, because we travelled at certain times of night. In Düsseldorf there's a regional government and a training camp, so these people are very nervous. We went through some very strange situations where we had to calm them down.

MOJO: In 1976 you rejected Bowie's offer of a support slot on his Station To Station tour. Is it true that also spurned Elton John and Michael Jackson, and an invitation to advertise Coke?

Ralf Hütter: Those are all just so many rumours. We don't have the time to... we're always late with our own releases, and our focus is on Kling Klang studio and Kraftwerk. All the rest is fantasy.

MOJO: So it was surprising to find you providing a theme tune for Expo 2000. Isn't that just a jingle for a business fair?

Ralf Hütter: No. We were in the middle of working on an album, and weren't able to play a one-off concert to open EXPO. While I was talking to the artistic director, he asked Kraftwerk to produce an electronic sound for EXPO, for computers, phones and all electronic communications. I think he had something like the Windows opening signature in mind. The history of EXPO I knew from Paris, which was the beginning, when European composers such as Debussy and the like were confronted with ethnic music from Bali, Africa and elsewhere for the first time. It was cultural as well as technological. So the whole idea in the spirit of the musical world and history came to our mind. Let's work with languages and computer languages, Russian, Japanese, Latin, German, and just make it an idea: (imitates electronic voice) "EXPO 2000". But then we liked it and didn't want to just do four seconds, so we made a whole composition.

MOJO: What do you remember of the time Kraftwerk lived together in a flat in Düsseldorf, almost a commune...

Ralf Hütter: That it never happened. Two people shared a flat, and people would come round for coffee, but we never all lived together, and it certainly wasn't a commune. That's nonsense, it comes from Flür, who wasn't even there. It's part of this story where he claims to have invented the electronic drum machine, which is as strange as you could ever go. I had an apartment with Emil (Schult, Kraftwerk's art director and co-lyricist) and another friend, and that was that.

MOJO: Since then, you appear to have become more and more reclusive.

Ralf Hütter: We still see a lot of people, friends. There is no isolation.

The evening sunlight renders Ralf's tanned, smiling face almost beatific, and he has much to be chuffed about beyond the delivery of the DVD master. Kraftwerk are touring again, playing places they missed in 2004 - from Istanbul to Stradbally, the Olympic Beach Volleyball Centre in Athens to the Greek Theatre in LA - with a host of new releases on the horizon. Their royal flush of classic albums - from Autobahn to Computer World - plus Electric Café, The Mix and Tour De France Soundtracks, are being remastered and reissued with everything they hated about the earlier CD versions rectified (including reverting Electric Café to its original title, Techno Pop). Emil Schult has researched extra contemporary drawings, graphics and photographs to go with each individual album and a booklet for the box set. That will be followed by a special edition Minimum Maximum package, with the DVD, album and a separate book full of photos from the shows.

And such shows. As much as the passing of time has normalised their ideas, sound and general modus operandi, live Kraftwerk still bestride the world like a magnificent sciencefiction robot, dis-

pening a stylishly idiosyncratic vision of globalism and harmony. With an almost invisible PA system of gut-churning, heart-reprogramming power, minimal stage clutter and an enormous expanse of dazzlingly-lit screen, Kraftwerk's current live show is less a rock gig, more a dance party and art installation rolled into one. From Riga to Ljubljana, Kraftwerk make most sense when they are in motion, and even Hutter can still be surprised by what they encounter on the road.

"We have great recordings from Santiago, Chile, but couldn't incorporate them into Minimum-Maximum because we'd already mixed the album," says Ralf. "The Chileans were the only audience in the world who clap in time, in perfect synchronisation."

MOJO: Your setlist hasn't changed wildly in 24 years, but it's still a radical experience.

Ralf Hütter: Basically we're playing the mobile Kling Klang studio 2005 at this moment, the men - Ralf Hutter, Henning Schmitz, Fritz Hilpert, Florian Schneider - and their machines.

MOJO: You've always played with kitsch post-war iconography as on the cover of Trans-Europe Express. And during Neon Lights, on the live DVD, the screens fill with images of old ads for eau de cologne, 4711, Klosterfrau, etc.

Ralf Hütter: We're Rhineland boys, that's parts of us, of our humour. Those images are taken from original 16mm colour film we shot ourselves in the '70s, driving around Düsseldorf filming the neon signs using double exposures. Many of the signs are gone, but we've digitised those images and worked them into our show, so the past is moving forward. We look forwards as well as backwards at the same time. The French call it retro-futurism.

MOJO: Last summer I heard a strong rumour that Florian was being a pain about touring. So how can you do so many shows?

Ralf Hütter: That's another rumour. He is a sound perfectionist, so, if the sound isn't up to a certain standard, he doesn't want to do it. With electronic music there's no necessity ever to leave the studio. You could keep making records and sending them out. Why put so much energy into travel, spending time in airports, in waiting halls, in backstage areas, being like an animal, just for two hours of a concert? But now, with the Kling Klang studio on tour with us, we work in the afternoon, we do soundchecks, we compose, we put down new ideas and computer graphics. There's always so much to do, and we do make progress.

MOJO: The whole idea of a live album is terribly traditional. Once you were going to send the robots on tour in your place.

Ralf Hütter: We did it recently in Bonn, Cologne and Paris, at the Musée de la Musique for six months. The robots were a moving exhibit behind glass, but then we were touring in Japan and other places, and we missed them. I think they missed us too. And the audience missed them, so we had to reunite. But they're only appropriate for use during The Robots. You can't have them playing the other songs and, if we sent the robots out on the road, it would be a fully mechanised show, which is very different to what we're doing now (mimes fingers playing instrument). It's the man-machine after all. That would be the machine-machine.

MOJO: Tour De France, seemingly a one-off hit in 1983, was in fact the first salvo in a long gestating concept album. What is it with cycling?

Ralf Hütter: Cycling is outside and it's a free dynamic and you find your own rhythm, your own breath. When we work in the studio it's mostly late at night, indoors with air conditioning and artificial light, so it's a change for us, recharging our battery and now we're full of energy. We only developed this in the late '70s, and I knew right away that we had to do an album. I was writing ideas. I fantasised the album, but I didn't know what it was called, nor what the music would be

like, but I had the concept. In '83 we did the single and then, with the 100th year of the Tour de France, we finished the script.

MOJO: You and Florian regularly cycle 125 miles a day, and some of the reports of your passion for the sport make it sound maniacal - like asking first about the well-being of your bike after a near fatal accident.

Ralf Hütter: Cycling is the man-machine, it's about dynamics, always continuing straight ahead, forward, no stopping. He who stops falls over. There are really balanced artists who can remain upright at a standstill, but I can't do that. It's always forwards.

MOJO: In casual conversation, you've described Flür as an idiot. Why the anger still? Don't they have the right to tell their story?

Ralf Hütter: Of course. We don't care. They can do their thing. It's just that we're more interested in facts, and his book is non-intellectual nonsense, rubbish quite frankly. We have never given out much background information or personal details about ourselves, as it's not important. But then somebody else talks into that void, and trying to justify themselves, and, Well, what can I say?

MOJO: You work at Kling Klang every day from 5pm to 1am, often longer, which makes your limited output over the last 20 years baffling.

Ralf Hütter: Because we are such a small unit, working to our own rhythm of perfection. Now maybe we will have more output.

MOJO: Great artists - Scott Walker, Brian Wilson, Stevie Wonder - also seem to release very little. Isn't releasing records the ultimate artistic statement?

Ralf Hütter: Yes, it's an artistic statement, of course. Autobahn took 28 years to make. Now, by comparison, we're very fast, and we might be getting faster. We have no obligation, it comes from personal freedom, from our wish to make it.

MOJO: Mabe work turns you on more than releasing it?

Ralf Hütter: No, it's just that we wait until it's finished, and sometimes it takes us that long to be happy with it. We have to be able to bid farewell to the work.

MOJO: You've said that each musical piece is born out of the old ones, like branches of a tree.

Ralf Hütter: We are musical workers in the electronic garden.

MOJO: How close are you to constructing the perfect pop song?

Ralf Hütter: That will never happen. Perfection is a process of striving towards a goal, but you never achieve it. We do our best in our Kraftwerk Kling Klang context.

MOJO: What's the theme of the new studio album proper your're planning?

Ralf Hütter: I could tell you if we were actually working on it and close to completion. We have so many ideas running in parallel. Tour de France, we started working on in the '70s, from Man-Machine days. When we were making Autobahn, we were already composing and developing the concepts of Trans-Europe Express and Man Machine, they were sleeping with us. So there are a couple of other concepts sleeping at the moment. We have a lot of musical tracks, scripts and

ideas already, which have to be idée fixe for the album.

MOJO: And there will be less of wait for this album?

Ralf Hütter: Yes. I promise.

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL ROTHER

by Jason Gross (March 1998) for Perfect Sound Forever

Michael Rother, a former member of three of the most influential German bands (Kraftwerk, Neu! and Harmonia), is one of the justly renowned members of the current 'krautrock' revival. David Bowie (who he turned down for work) and Brian Eno (who he didn't) among others have been among his fans. The Neu! catalog is in the process of being legally reissued (it's now out as bootleg imports) so that some of Michael's greatest work can be heard again all over. Happily, after going on his own for a solo career, he found that his gentle, melodic work was well-accepted. In addition, a Neu! tribute CD is going to be out soon with a contribution by Michael (and liner notes from PSF) as well as Autechre, System 7 and Legendary Pink Dots. Another measure of the influence of Michael's work has been on non-participants who themselves had been very influential to others: Sonic Youth (who named a song after Neu!), Stereolab (who sound like Neu! tribute band at times) and Negativland (whose name and record label came from Neu! songs). Special thanks to THOMAS ZIEGLER for being tolerant, helpful and having a good sense of humor.

PSF: What kind of music were you doing or involved in before Kraftwerk?

Before I joined Kraftwerk in 1971, I played guitar in a band called Spirits of Sound, whose members included (at times) amongst others singer Wolfgang Riechmann (Sky Records released his only solo album Wunderbar shortly after his death in 1978) and drummer Wolfgang Flür (later on Kraftwerk, now solo). The music of S.o.S. in the mid 60's first was the English pop and rock music of the times (Beatles, Kinks, Rolling Stones). As a fan of those bands and the guitar players Harrison, Clapton, Hendrix I learned the basic concepts of pop music by imitating their ideas. As a self taught artist I had no musical education whatsoever, apart from listening to the piano my mother (who had a classical training) played and I am quite sure that I picked up something unconsciously and internalized it. S.o.S. developed in the course of time and so did my musical ideas towards independence. The development of my own personality demanded to create something individual. Imitating or interpreting other musician's ideas wasn't satisfactory any longer and that is why the English pop & rock music clichés had to be abandoned and overcome.

PSF: What was the German music scene like at this time (late '60's)?

Back then and later on when I was in NEU! and Harmonia I was too much preoccupied with my own music to be aware of the German music scene, let alone following it actively. But changes which were happening with S.o.S. (namely the development of individual ideas and the effort to distinguish from the Anglo- American rock patterns) also helped me recognize other musicians within my immediate vicinity. In Europe it was the time of huge social disturbances, political demonstrations (Berlin, Paris, Prague), the reflection upon overcoming of existing structures in general and the desire for a new beginning. In German politics this was symbolized in the person of Willy Brandt (overcoming of the east/west conflict, reconciliation with the victims of the Nazi dictatorship). The Vietnam war and the radical arguments in the U.S.A. also had a strong impact on us. Jimi Hendrix, who "burned off" the American national anthem in Woodstock with his guitar

was one of the biggest musical experiences in my life. This Zeitgeist is reflected in our music.

PSF: How did you get to work with Florian and Ralf (Kraftwerk)? Could you talk about the work you did with them?

As a conscientious objector I did my community service in 1971 in a psychiatric hospital and a friend there, who also was a guitar player, invited me one day to join him recording film music with a band named Kraftwerk which I didn't know at the time. I came along and jammed at this session together with Ralf Hütter and a drummer (I believe his name was Charly Weiß). Florian Schneider and Klaus Dinger were present as listeners and everybody liked the spontaneous music we did together.

Ralf and I immediately clicked, we exchanged phone numbers and a few weeks later Florian Schneider and Klaus Dinger called me and asked, if I was interested in working with them as Kraftwerk. A little earlier, Florian and Ralf had separated and Florian wanted to take the Kraftwerk concept into a live project, since the first album had been released and success was increasing from week to week. Initially there were five musicians, but soon after the line-up was reduced to the trio Schneider/Dinger/Rother.

In the period following there were exciting months of many concerts (occasionally together with Can), festivals, TV shows (e.g. 'Beat Club') and studio recordings for the second Kraftwerk album with Conny Plank in Hamburg. The music with Florian and Klaus was radical and "primitive" in an exciting way, i.e. absolutely spare and at times brutal. The live shows on were sometimes really intense, both for the audience as well as for us. I remember the feeling of riding on a big wave and being thrown forward. It is very hard to describe that feeling, but it definitely had something magic. The collaboration of Schneider, Dinger and myself very often was anything but relaxed. An unbelievably strong state of aggression sometimes prevailed between Schneider and Dinger, which made me very much dissatisfied and unhappy. After learning that we couldn't realize the live magic in the studio and therefore breaking off the studio sessions with Conny Plank, we went separate ways. Klaus and myself decided to keep on working together in a duo called NEU!.

PSF: How did you and Klaus decide to work together to do Neu! ? Was there any plan or idea behind the group ?

After the split of Florian and Kraftwerk it was obvious for Klaus and myself to realize our ideas together. With Conny Plank as co-producer we rented a studio and recorded the first album in 4 nights (the studio rate was cheaper at night). Almost everything happened spontaneously, beforehand Klaus and I only had roughly sketched ideas, melody, sound or instrument ideas, which only were put in concrete form in the studio. With NEU! there wasn't a pre-phrased concept in theory, which was to be transformed into music, but the music was always kept together by the spontaneity and emotionality. Our experience from the live shows with Florian certainly left their marks, too and in addition the financial scale (we were broke) forced us to work quick and spontaneous.

PSF: Your songs seemed to be lot different than his. How did you reconcile this?

Klaus and I always had completely dissimilar characters and temperaments. His background was being a drummer and he laid into that drumkit like nobody else I ever knew. At some shows blood splashed, when Klaus hurt himself with a broken cymbal. The audience was very much impressed by this radical and ecstatic performance. I never felt the need for this kind of performance and always tried to come across with just the music. So I sat behind my few effect devices and pedals and focused on the developing music and not so much on the audience. In good moments the opposite worlds of Klaus and me came together at our recordings, with the help of Conny Plank, which should not be forgotten. I guess the tension of bringing together incompatible elements is

what is fascinating people with NEU!

PSF: What kind of influence was Conny Plank on work that you recorded with him?

Conny Plank had a lot of enthusiasm and understanding for our music, which was something rare at the time. He had a share in the financial risk with our first production and due to his personal authority, he was a most respected co-producer in the studio. Apart from his manual skills, Conny had a tremendous sensitivity for the music and psychological fine feeling, which especially in the case of Klaus Dinger and myself was absolutely necessary. In the course of the years we learned a lot from each other, at least I learned a lot from him. With my first three solo albums it happened quite often, that Conny with his first run of the mix (which he did when I left the studio on purpose to turn my mind off) came very close to what I had in mind. It was amazing, how precisely Conny sensed our ideas and in critical situations he helped me in an unobtrusive and effective way.

PSF: Could you talk about the first (self-titled) Neu! album? How did that come together with you, Klaus and Conny? Do any of the songs hold special meaning?

We knew Conny from the Kraftwerk recording sessions, so that provided a collaboration. As to the personal special meaning of the songs: Each composition, each title has an emotional past history and quite often this is pretty confused and it is not a simple task to name it. I can't and won't speak for Klaus, and as far as I am concerned, the following answer has to be good enough: I always understood and used music to express my deepest feelings. If music was just an intellectual exercise without this deeper meaning, it would not have any importance in my life.

PSF: Is it so that you ran out of money for the 2nd album so you had to do remixes of certain songs?

The situation which led to the radical B side of the second NEU! album was the following: We had rented an expensive studio and had already spent a lot of time and money with the tracks which turned out to be the titles for the A side of the album. This probably was partly due to our desire to show more details than on the first album, but also a sign for a weakness in orientation (which shortly after led me to find a new way, a new musical approach with Harmonia). When we realized how expensive the production would be if we went on with the same speed, i.e. the advance from the record company wouldn't even be good enough to cover the studio rent, we knew that something drastic had to happen. Klaus and I had recorded the single "Super/Neuschnee" a few months earlier and we were not happy with the sales figures and felt, that those two tracks were sort of wasted. So it suggested itself to release those songs again on the album. Klaus then started to "treat" the record-player in the studio, the titles we had recorded already were extremely alienated by mixing them again and again. I had a cassette recorder which used to eat the tape and howl really bad, but in the context I really liked it - this is how "Cassetto" came about. Since then listening habits changed towards this direction, but in 1973 a lot of critics and fans were irritated and felt as we had made fun of them, which wasn't intended by us at all. In retrospect some material of that B side of NEU! 2 features the most interesting music, NEU! ever made, although you can't listen to this material on a daily basis.

PSF: Did Neu! do many live shows? If not, why do you think this was so?

We didn't succeed with the attempt to transfer the NEU! music from the studio to the stage. First Klaus and I did concerts in twos in which I used pre-recorded material from a cassette recorder. In the studio I had recorded additional bass, guitar and other sounds and I was trying to manage to get a similar sound impression as in the studio. This procedure, which nowadays is very common, was then unknown and completely frowned upon. It was considered dishonest to work like that, but apart from the lack of appreciation from the audience, it wasn't a lot of fun, because a cassette recorder - compared to today's use of samplers - just wasn't flexible enough. So Klaus and me tried to integrate other musicians in our concept of performing live. But then it became apparent, that

others didn't understand or comprehend our musical ideas of how NEU! music had to sound. So, after doing a few concerts with Uli Trepte (Guru Guru) and Eberhard Kranemann (Kraftwerk, Fritz Müller) we were pretty frustrated and by the end of 1972 we gave up on our plans of performing live.

PSF: Why did Neu! go on a hiatus after this? How did Harmonia come together?

The first NEU! album was released in 1972 on United Artists in Great Britain and was, like in Germany, an immediate success. United Artists wanted us to invite to tour England in the beginning of 1973 and we started again to think over a solution to the problem of live performances. I already knew Cluster musicians Hans- Joachim Roedelius and Dieter Möbius, I really liked the title "Im Süden" from the second Cluster album. So I figured Achim and Möbi might be a good reinforcement for NEU! live performances. I took my guitar, drove to the Weserbergland Easter 1973 and Achim Roedelius and me improvised in the studio. Apart from the fact that I was fascinated by the whole ambience (I am still living there), this encounter was a musical discovery, which suddenly meant a lot more to me than the continuation of the NEU! concept. Achim Roedelius and Dieter Möbius also were convinced of our collaboration, so in June of 1973 I finally moved from Düsseldorf to the Weserbergland and we founded Harmonia.

PSF: How did your work with Cluster and Harmonia have an effect on your own work / writing - playing?

It is hard to tell, which experience has a specific effect on oneself. All I know is that I cannot imagine my development, not just the musical one, without the experience of living together and working with Harmonia. This is where I found the depth and magic, which I missed in my recent work with Klaus Dinger. Turning to more free and more silent sound experiments was as important as the musicians Möbi and Achim, whose personalities I got to know during this period. It was only working with Harmonia that I could move on and develop and this enabled me later on to compose titles such as "Isi", "Seeland" or "Flammende Herzen."

PSF: Brian Eno seems to have been a big fan - could you talk about your work with him? What did you think of his own work at the time (Another Green World seems heavily influenced by Harmonia)?

In 1974 Brian Eno came to a Harmonia concert and we liked each other immediately. He wasn't at all the eccentric pop star you might believe him to be from the Roxy Music era. Everybody in Harmonia was really fond of the first Roxy Music albums, but we didn't want to draw from those for our own music, we just like to listen to them quite often. We also checked out Brian's first solo projects (Here Come the Warm Jets and No Pussyfooting - with Robert Fripp), but I never really liked them a great deal. Brian's later albums (Another Green World, Before and After Science etc.) I liked a lot. But I always had the rule, that my own work shouldn't possibly be influenced. Especially during periods, when I work on new music, I barely listen to anything else, at least not from the pop music world. But of course an exertion of influence never can be ruled out, even if it is not desired. Brian often enough explained to us and journalists that he knew the "new music" from Germany back then and that he liked it a lot (Can, NEU!, Cluster, Harmonia, Kraftwerk...), but I don't want to speculate about a possible influence, that his preoccupation with our music might have had on him. Fact of the matter is, that nobody lives by himself on an island and creates his music out of a vacuum. And this applies to all of us.

The meeting with Brian led to the sessions in the Harmonia studio in 1976, out of which recently the album Harmonia 76 - Tracks & Traces has been released. It was a very special experience to listen to that music after all those years and to realize how fresh I emotionally had kept it in my memory. The relaxed work with Brian was very exciting and productive for all of us.

PSF: How did Neu! get back together for Neu! '75? How was this different from the older band? Was material recorded for another album? What was this material like (maybe very different than

other Neu!)?

NEU!'s recording commitment with Brain/Metronome was three albums. In order to fulfil this contract and because I felt a musical interest working again with Klaus Dinger to realize certain ideas, which weren't possible in the Harmonia context, I composed some tracks and Klaus and Conny Plank went to the new Conny Plank Studio in 1974. It was my agreement with Klaus, that we would record one side of the album in the classic NEU! style just the two of us, and the B side would be recorded in a four piece band, in which two drummers would take over Klaus' drum part: Thomas Dinger, Klaus' brother and Hans Lampe, who had worked as an assistant engineer with Conny Plank. Klaus back then insisted on performing live and for this purpose he had trained both of those musicians with his style. For me this line-up wasn't musically satisfactory for a live performance, but in the studio we did alright. "Hero" is one of my favourite NEU! tracks (when I am in the mood). After recording NEU! '75 I moved on with Harmonia and Klaus started his project La Düsseldorf, still working with both drummers.

PSF: I've also heard that David Bowie was interested in Neu! Did you get to meet or work with him?

David Bowie never made his enthusiasm for NEU! a secret, that really speaks for him, although I found it kind of odd, that he quoted our title "Hero" (which was one of his favourite tracks at the time, as he once explained in an interview) for his album Heroes. In 1977 Bowie asked if I was up to participate in his new album, which he recorded with Brian Eno in Berlin. Back then my first solo album Flammende Herzen had just been released and was a major success in Germany. We never ended up working together, one might speculate about the reasons. I once told Bowie and his manager that I could imagine me participating in a more experimental and silent music like on the B side of Low and less in a rock oriented project. I think the management and the record company wanted to see Bowie change to a rock music sound for commercial reasons.

PSF: Why did you and Klaus part ways?

It only came natural for me to work alone in 1976 after the successful, but also very exhausting collaboration with Klaus in NEU! and after the end of Harmonia. At least then the concept of both of those bands seemed to be exhausted. I wanted to realize my ideas without compromises and find out, what kind of music would (with the support of drummer Jaki Liebezeit and co-producer Conny Plank) come out of this.

PSF: How was your solo work different from what you were doing with Neu! ?

Based on an understanding of the group concepts of NEU! and Harmonia as the meeting and reacting people with each musician bringing in his own artistic identity in the joint music, it is evident that solo work always appears more unified, with all possible advantages and disadvantages. The enormous tension that prevailed in NEU! was a special fundamental basis which is reflected in the music. Even I feel tension in myself, which is expressed in my solo music, maybe the listener has to keep track of the nuances to a bigger extent. At any rate working as a solo artist comes pretty close to the working method of a writer or a sculptor. You have full control over the work to be created, but you also carry the psychological burden and the responsibility all by yourself. In a band everyone is taking the part of the active person once in a while to help someone else to overcome a hurdle or blockade. That's how it worked in NEU! and also in Harmonia.

PSF: How do you look back at the work you did With Neu! ? What do you think of the music now?

NEU!'s music will always ("für immer") be a part of me and I absolutely stand to what we've created. Of course I have changed since and I judge my contributions to NEU!'s music of the 70's in a historical context. They were both a description of my feelings back then as well as an

expression of my musical abilities and limitations. It would be a mistake to ignore the time factor and it would be an artistic shortcoming to pick up on the old concept without doing any changes. There is no way this is going to happen anyway.

During the recording of my contribution to the A Homage to NEU! compilation which I called "Neutronics 98 (A Tribute to Conny Plank)" I very much enjoyed dealing with the NEU! concept and feeling and mixing the track reminded me of working with Conny Plank.

PSF: Would you consider working with Klaus again?

The situation with Klaus has been tense since years, because he has been blocking all constructive attempts at re-issuing our NEU! albums. Instead of releasing NEU! music in a joint effort with me, Klaus preferred to take legal action against the record company the result of which is bootleg pirates selling our music (often in lousy visual and sound quality) worldwide.

The illegal NEU! releases Klaus initiated in Japan further irritated me very much and it's not just about money, it primarily is about his efforts, to turn the NEU! project in a sort of Dinger project. He carried this to extremes with the misleading project La! NEU?. Klaus first has to resolve these incomprehensible ego trips and illegal actions, before I can and want to start considering any kind of collaboration with him. Then we will see. "Never say never"...

Some of Michael's favorite music

- Traditional "classical" music: Chopin (quiet piano pieces) / Japan: Kodo drummers / Portugal: Fado / India: a variety of instrumental and vocal music (tip : listen to Jeff Greinke's version of "Im Glück" [from the A Homage to NEU! album] and then check out Salamat & Nazakat Ali [Ryko, HNCD 1332] / Bulgaria: Chants (Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices etc.)
- '30s: Comedian Harmonists
- '40s: Benny Goodman
- '50s: Chuck Berry / Little Richard
- '60s: Beatles (e.g. White Album) / Cream (e.g. Disraeli Gears) / Jimi Hendrix (all Experience albums)
- '70s: Can (e.g. Monster Movie) / Cluster (e.g. Cluster II, e.g. "Im Süden") / Holger Czukay ("Persian Love") / Kraftwerk (Ralf & Florian, "Die Roboter") / Moondog / Terry Riley
- '80s: Möbius & Plank (En Route) / Laurie Anderson
- '90s: Seefeel / Tricky / Asmus Tietchens

There is no way I could deliver a "Top Ten" list of my all time favourites but maybe this absolutely incomplete list of music and musicians which come to mind right now helps. My musical taste is rather wide and I see a lot of interesting music all over the place in all kinds of genres, be it an electronic experimental sound from Hamburg or Manchester, "dirty" guitars from a L.A. garage, Fado music from Portugal or chants from Indian classical music, the critical issue is the genuineness and sincerity of the artist. In general I like to listen to music rather seldom, but then very intense. Last year I had a chance to see Tricky in concert and I was really impressed.

INTERVIEW WITH KLAUS DINGER

by Michael Dee/ London, for "POP"/ Stockholm/ Sweden/ Oct. 1998

(This reprint with kind permission. This reprint was once more edited by Klaus Dinger in order to get rid of all mistakes, so...: There might be some minor differences between this text and the version printed (in Swedish language) in the "POP"-magazine.)

"Krautrock is the blackhole of rock music." That headline was used last year in dozens of publications. To the casual observer, it seemed almost as if the daily papers had joined forces with the rock press in order, to once and for all, define the exact nature of Krautrock and its influence on the sprawling history of rock music. Needless to say, hapless hacks were falling over themselves to interview members of Can, Kraftwerk, Amon Düül, Faust and Tangerine Dream.

The curious thing about last year's mediablitz was that one of the most important groups, or rather two groups: NEU! and La Düsseldorf, with Klaus Dinger as common denominator, were conspicuous by their absence.

This wasn't a minor omission. It was like documenting New York rock while leaving out The Velvet Underground, like covering Detroit rock while failing to mention MC5.

What made this omission even more peculiar was the profound influence that NEU! and La Düsseldorf had had on mainly English rock music, from David Bowie's trilogy of Berlin-albums: "Low", "Heroes" and "Lodger", where the NEU!-beat ran like a pulse, to Ultravox, Simple Minds and assorted post-punk groups, then on to Acid House, to Stereolab and Tranquility Base.

But perhaps this was to be expected. Despite having read thousands of magazines over the years, I have never encountered an interview with the members of NEU! and La Düsseldorf. To me, and many others, it seemed that these groups had chosen to engulf themselves in mystery, and communicate with the outside world entirely through their records; as if the records were communiques from their own magical universe, Düsseldorf as seen through a laughing glass.

NEU! was formed by Klaus Dinger and Michael Rother in 1971, emerging from an early line-up of Kraftwerk. Over a course of three albums, they developed a music which stretched from beautiful, minimalistic, trance-like grooves to meditative ambient pieces, which were abstract but still rich and contained extraordinarily wide range of emotions, from a child-like sense of wonder to an almost surreal darkness. And then of course there was the beat, the now classic NEU!-beat, invented by Klaus Dinger, drummer and multi-instrumentalist extraordinaire.

It was essentially a 4/4-beat, the most standard of all rhythms in rock music, but Dinger gave it an entirely new dimension through his approach. Instead of breaking it up, by adding fills or creating tempo changes, he quite simply kept playing it, often creating pieces that would last 10-15 minutes. In Dinger's hands, it was no longer a beat, more like a pulse, a very human pulse, that sounded as if it had gone on since the beginning of time and would continue for all eternity. It was like the rhythm of life itself. Over this beat, the pair constructed simple but beautiful soundscapes with melodies, which were often hinted at rather than played.

Listening to NEU! was a bit like finding yourself in a roadmovie, not an American, but a very European road movie, with a slightly naive outlook, as when a child presses its face to the windscreen and gets lost in dreams about the landscape and the clouds swishing by.

And all of it was packaged by Dinger in his very own version of Pop Art, with NEU! painted on the front of the sleeves, in large bold strokes. And inside the sleeves were the credits, written either in his own handwriting, or banged on an old typewriter, alongside cellotaped polaroids, photobooth photographs or silver stars.

Dinger and Rother went their separate ways after “NEU! 75” and Dinger formed La Düsseldorf, with his brother Thomas and Hans Lampe who had worked as a tape-op with producer Conny Plank. Dinger brought the NEU!-beat with him to La Düsseldorf but the melodies were now allowed to fully take shape. And while NEU!’s music was mainly instrumental, La Düsseldorf’s was largely based on songs, with lyrics written by Dinger. Among the songs were “Cha Cha 2000” and “White Overalls”, a celebration of the band’s own, and highly individual look.

La Düsseldorf disbanded 1983 after their maxi single “Ich liebe dich (Jag älskar dig)”, which was released in 1982. Over the last few years, the cult around the two bands, or rather, their records, has grown considerably.

Julian Cope, who in 1995 published the book “Krautrock sampler”, appeared for a while to be conducting a one-man promotion campaign for NEU! and appeared on Top of the Pops, wearing a NEU! t-shirt, and I have lost count of the dozens of people that have mentioned them in interviews that I’ve done over the last few years; Primal Scream, Ride, Midge Ure, Jim Kerr, Flood, Ed Buller, Sonic Youth.

But despite the admiration, none of them seemed to know anything about the groups, apart from what could be gleaned from the information on the sleeves.

When I interviewed Ralf Hütter in 1991, I took the opportunity to ask him if he was in touch with any of the NEU!-La Düsseldorf members, but he shook his head, with a rather worried look on his face, as if I had reminded him of a part of Kraftwerk’s history that he’s rather forget.

A few years later I met Karl Bartos, who by then had left Kraftwerk and formed Electric Music, I once again inquired about the various members but he laughed at the question, commenting that the various members of NEU!-La Düsseldorf had always existed on another planet.

Over the last couple of years, more than a few magazines have tried to interview Klaus Dinger, but according to rumours flying around London, these requests were always met with a blank refusal. “Dinger won’t talk to anyone”, was the word on the grapevine.

I was therefore not particularly hopeful when last July, I sent a fax to Captain Trip, the Tokyo-based record label which has become an outlet for various Dinger-projects. Two weeks later, however, I received a fax from Düsseldorf, written in Dinger’s unmistakable handwriting. More than six months later, we finally get to talk over the phone.

I ask him to start at the beginning, and how he got into music in the first place.

I don’t come from a particularly musical background. I’m more of a “working class hero”, if you know what I mean by that. The music teachers at school were very authoritarian. It was only when I got older that I began to find music interesting again. I started to play drums and joined a school band called The No.

In a photo taken in 1966, The No look like a bohemian art/mod band.

We played our own music but our songs were heavily influenced by the Beatles, The Kinks and The Stones. There was also a splintergroup which played jazz/noise and I remember seeing Florian Schneider in the audience at one of the festivals we played. He had a face I will never forget.

Dinger studied architecture for three years but abandoned his studies to concentrate on a career as a professional musician.

I borrowed money to buy myself a new drumkit and I withdrew for six months in order to practice and become more proficient. After that I joined a band called The Smash. We were a coverband really, but we played live a lot, mostly in southern Germany, so at least I could make a living from playing music. Then in the autumn of 1970, I got a call from Ralf Hütter and I guess you know the rest?

Well, there are several versions of how Klaus Dinger ended up in Kraftwerk, so I ask him to put the record straight.

Kraftwerk were recording their first album but they were having problems with their drummer. Somebody had recommended me to Ralf and he called me up and asked if I was interested. He picked me up the same day and we travelled to the studio where I recorded the drums on side 2. Ralf and Conny Plank, the producer, were very pleased with the results. Florian was away on holiday at the time and when he came back, he didn't like it at all. I recorded the same tracks again and they sounded exactly the same. Florian, however, was very pleased but that's another story, a "Ralf & Florian story".

Dinger joined Kraftwerk on a permanent basis and this new line-up played live extensively until Ralf Hütter suddenly quit.

Yes, in February of 1971 he made decision that he couldn't play anymore and he went off by himself somewhere, isolating himself from the world. Florian and I needed to replace him if we were to continue. We tried several people and had a floating line-up but in the end, Michael Rother was the only one of the replacement candidates that remained.

Kraftwerk now consisted of Florian on flute, electric flute, bass flute and electric violin, Dinger on drums and Michael Rother on guitar, and the group once again returned to a regular schedule of live concerts.

It was a very successful line-up, much more than with Hütter.

And Dinger and Rother gave the music a distinctive flavour of their own. According to some versions, the pair more or less came upon their NEU! music while still in Kraftwerk, by chance and through improvisation, and during an inspired session which took place on live TV. It supposedly happened in June of 1971, on a programme called Beat Club where the Kraftwerk performed "Truckstop Gondolero", eleven minutes of trancelike, intensity, with strong characteristics of classic NEU! tracks such as "Hallogallo". Except it didn't happen quite like that, says Dinger.

The real title was "Rückstoß Gondoliero", not "Truckstop Gondolero" which is how it's referred to everywhere. It's difficult to say when Michael and I found our music but it didn't happen on live TV. It was, however, heavily influenced by the live-concerts we had played with Florian.

The NEU!-beat is sometimes referred to as "the motorik". I ask Dinger if there was a moment of discovery, when he thought "mm, now there's something else entirely".

No, there wasn't a moment when I thought "mm". It was more spontaneous than that, and it had more to do with how the audience reacted when we played live. I have never called the beat "the motorik" myself. That sounds more like a machine and it was very much a human beat. Instead I called it "lange Gerade" or "endlose Gerade". It's a feeling, like a picture, like driving down a long road or lane. It is essentially about life, how you have to keep moving, get on and stay in motion. To be driven by the drive, breaking on through. Since "Néondian" [his solo album, released in 1985], I call the beat "Apache".

The first NEU!-album was recorded over four days, with Conny Plank as producer.

After two days we hadn't recorded anything that we could use. On the third day, we started recording "Negativland", with me playing drums, and Michael playing bass. Then I overdubbed a heavily electrified Japanese banjo and that got the whole record rolling. After that we had a recording approach which consisted of putting down some kind of basic track, and then deciding who was going to play what.

Dinger and Rother were both multi-instrumentalists but they were very different, both as people and as musicians.

Michael was a very good guitarist but a bit on the sweet side. He was also very conventional and traditional in his thinking. He was basically against all the things that made NEU! groundbreaking and revolutionary. In those days I took a lot of LSD and he didn't, and as you can imagine, that made a big difference. We never had any loud arguments but he was always so reluctant, always saying: "Do you really think so?" Conny Plank was invaluable as a mediator. He gave me the freedom to fly high and wild. Michael was also very reluctant about the name. He didn't want to call the project NEU!, but it was perfect to describe our music which really was "new".

The name and the Dinger-designed sleeve must have hit the krautrockscene, which was fairly cosmic, like a bomb. Over a white background, Dinger had painted "NEU!" in big, bold strokes. It looked

like home-spun Pop Art or an ironic protest against the consumer society which had emerged in West Germany after the second world war. NEU! was, and still is, the most common slogan in German advertising. It hits you in the eyes everywhere you go.

Yes, it was a protest against the consumer society but also against our “colleagues” on the Krautrock scene who had totally different taste/ styling if any. I was very well informed about Warhol, Pop Art, Contemporary Art. I had always been very visual in my thinking. Also, during that time, I lived in a commune and in order to get the space that we lived in, I set up an advertising agency which existed mainly on paper. Most of the people that I lived with were trying to break into advertising so I was somehow surrounded by this NEU! all the time.

Dinger’s ambitions with NEU! weren’t the usual run of the mill, i.e., musical and career orientated.

I suppose you could say I “abused” the project to fulfill my romantic dreams. One of the main reasons for NEU!’s existence, at least from my point of view, was a relationship that I had with a Swedish girl. Her name was Anita. I lived for a while in Florian’s room in his parents’house after he himself had moved out, and his sister and Anita were best friends and that was how we met. On the first NEU! -album you can hear the sound of a rowing boat. I recorded that sound in the summer of ’71, when Anita and I were travelling around Sweden in an old Ford Transit. We were “Im Glück”, (in happiness); she is the honey in the song “Lieber Honig”.

The first NEU!-album was a fair sized hit in Germany.

It sold about 30,000, which was more than most krautbands.

The follow-up, “NEU! 2”, was recorded in Jan.-Feb. 1973 and caused considerable problems for Dinger and Rother. Halfway through the recording they ran out of money. Dinger however, got an idea.

We had recorded a single, “Neuschnee/ Super”, but our record company (Brain Records), didn’t understand it and didn’t want it. Bands on our scene just didn’t make singles. When the money ran out, I got the idea of taking the single, play around with it and put the results on side 2 of the album.

“Play around with it” in this case meant that the tracks were put on side 2 at normal speed and also in versions played at 16 and 78 rpm. “Hallo Excentrico” with its crazy, swerving sound, was created by Dinger by playing “Super” out of center, and by hand. “A Pop Art solution to a Pop problem”, in other words?

Of course, and it was absolutely my idea. I came from that world, Pop Art thinking. Michael did not like the idea. These days he claims that everything in NEU! was 50/50. Financially: yes. Creatively: no. He was always very conventional.

NEU!’s third album, “NEU! 75” is by many regarded as their finest. The first side is the more lyrical, with many beautifully constructed layers of simple but effective melodies, melting into each other. Side 2 contains, apart from “E-music”, a rhythmic trance-like piece, with swirling guitars and keyboards, and also two tracks, “hero” and “After Eight”, which are pure punk, or rather pre-punk, since these tracks were recorded late ’74, early ’75. I ask Dinger if he had heard The Velvet Underground or The Stooges.

I had heard The Velvets in ’69 but The Stooges I still know only by name. The music in those tracks didn’t come from other bands though. They came from my own emotions. 1974 was a difficult year. I had started my own record company and had produced a band called Lilac Angels. I pressed to many records and around the same time I also organized two free concerts in Düsseldorf and received no help from the industry or the press. As a result, I went bankrupt, to the tune of 50,000 marks, an enormous sum for me. On the top of that, the relationship with Anita, my honey, ended. So all the emotions that I had about these experiences I put into the music.

On “Hero” Dinger sings “Fuck the business/ Fuck the press”. He also sings something like “Going back to Norway”. So who went back to Norway?

Anita. Her father was a businessman and he didn’t at all like the thought of us being together so he moved the family to Norway in order to split us, which despite my many attempts, it finally did.

I realize the full importance of Anita to Dinger only after the interview, when I receive a 14-page fax from him where he explains how he tried to keep the relationship going on, how the hope of them being together was translated into the NEU!-beat, indeed was the foundation of it. "Driving on to get that girl!" Though they split up more than twenty years ago, he never forgot her. "She was the love of my life" and throughout his work there are references to her, perhaps most clearly and directly on the track "Jag älskar dig" ('I love You' in Swedish) on "Néondian". On "NEU! 75" the duo was joined by Klaus' brother Thomas and Hans Lampe, with the pair playing drums on side 2. They also joined Klaus for his next project, La Düsseldorf. According to Klaus there was never really a point when NEU! split.

It was more the case of me and Michael drifting apart. He hated the city life and decided to go and live in the country, while I loved the city.

La Düsseldorf's debut-album, released in 1976, is in many ways a glorious celebration of their beloved city. On the front of the sleeve is a panoramic view of the city's air terminal. On the back, there's a shot of the trio, seen against a gleaming wall of corrugated iron. They all wear big, happy mischievous smiles, as if by adding La in front of Düsseldorf, they had accomplished a Pop Art coup and made the city their very own, laying bare its wonderful secrets and fantastic possibilities. La also sounds more than a little camp.

We felt very glamorous in those days. Düsseldorf is a small city but there's a lot of fashion, many photographers and advertising agencies.

There is an abundance of photos on the inner sleeve of their second album, pictures of the trio in their La Düsseldorf-look. "The three of you must have stopped traffic in those days?"

Oh yes, and we were very conscious of it. The look with the white overalls was an idea that I came up with for NEU! and it can be seen in the only official NEU! publicity shot. The others were a bit hesitant at first but we ended up using it as a uniform in La Düsseldorf. It clicked, it functioned. I realized at a very early stage in my life that I would never be able to afford expensive clothes so I had to create my own style. Besides, I never liked the idea that you could just buy "good taste". I had the same attitude to clothes as to sleeves. They had to be based on cheap things, everyday things.

There are many similarities between NEU! and La Düsseldorf but also many differences.

My projects are always about my own vision but also about the people that I work with, what they can do.

NEU!'s music was more geared towards instrumentals, minimal and trance-like, whereas La Düsseldorf's music was more based on songs, with lyrics and clever melodies by Klaus.

During the recording of NEU! 2" I realized that I had done everything that I could do with drumming. Before the recording of the first La Düsseldorf-album, I spent a lot of time trying to make the music more melodious and I also began to write lyrics. It was a conscious decision on my part. I wanted to be more concrete and to reach more people.

Unlike NEU!, La Düsseldorf really looked like a gang, a heavenly gang.

Yes, we were. We didn't live together but we were always together and we felt the same.

And after "Individuellos" it started to fall apart.

Yes. The problem was "too much, too fast". Big money was coming in and we had no one to advise us on how to handle it. How to handle big money had never been a problem in our family.

When I asked Karl Bartos about NEU! - La Düsseldorf he laughed and said, "I think Klaus went slightly crazy. Michael moved out to the country and became a hippie. And Thomas and Hans vanished off the face of the earth. Gone. In the hazy shade of winter".

I don't know what Bartos meant by that. I've only met him once, at a time when he had realized that he wasn't Kraftwerk. And Thomas and Hans have not entirely vanished from the face of the earth. We have met many times in court because of the disputes over money... Yes, it's sad. The dispute between me and my brother became a family tragedy. It killed my father. I made up with Thomas about a year ago but sadly not with Hans.

And the disputes do not only concern the back catalogue for La Düsseldorf but also the NEU! - back catalogue. Klaus relates the details of the now many strange turnings in the negotiations for the NEU! - back catalogue.

Polygram tried to release the NEU! - albums on CD without my consent and I managed to win the CD-rights, which they never had in the first place, away from them through a court decision which was groundbreaking.

But there is still no deal between Klaus, Michael and Christa, heir of Conny Plank who died in 1987. Consequently the back catalogue is still waiting for an official CD-release. In its absence, there is a lucrative market which is exploited ruthlessly by bootleggers, operating under the name "Germanofon".

I have tried to trace the bootleggers through my lawyer but the trail leads to a post box in Luxembourg and no further. That's why I am mad at Julian Cope. He didn't mention in his book that these CDs are bootlegs and that's also why I don't do many interviews because they are almost promotion for the bootlegger's products. I don't know when they will receive an official release. There is so much psychology in this. Right now it seems rather hopeless.

However, over the last few years there have been two official NEU! - CDs. . .

They are semi-official. Michael is still very angry about them.

. . . released by Captain Trip. "NEU! 72 live", a rather rough recording before an early tour, and "NEU! 4", with recordings that Klaus and Michael made in 1985-1986. Unlike the original three, "NEU! 4" is hardly the stuff that dreams are made of. Klaus agrees.

I am not very happy with it but the good thing about it is that Michael and I at least did something together again.

And despite the various bizarre turnings in the negotiations, there is a possibility that there will be another NEU! - album.

It has been suggested during the negotiations that we should record a new album. I am keen on the idea. Michael is not. So we'll see. It has also been suggested that the old NEU! - tracks should be remixed which I am absolutely against. There is something deeply unethical and immoral about it.

Despite this, Klaus gave his permission to a remix that appeared three years ago, when Steve Hillage's System 7 based their "Interstate" on a sample of "Hallogallo".

It's a decision that I regret now. You can say that once is never but still. I gave my permission mainly because Steve Hillage wrote me two very nice letters.

Captain Trip is these days the main channel for Dinger's music.

Since "Individuellos" (1980) I refused to appear on TV shows. Since the release of "Néondian" (1985) I'm totally boycotted in the west (Listen to "Pipi AA" and to "America"), and the so-called "Big Five" have branded me as being difficult - which I am.

Apart from the already mentioned NEU! - CDs, the Japanese label has also re-issued "Néondian" and two titles with Die Engel des Herrn, plus three CDs from la! NEU?, his current project, "Düsseldorf", "Zeeland" and "Rembrandt" plus the three La Düsseldorf classics plus Thomas Dinger "Für mich" on CD. Also, released in May was "Cha Cha 2000 live in Tokyo 1996 Vol. 1" and "Die with Dignity: Kraut?". Operating under the banner of "electro hippie punk", la! NEU? takes the Dinger vision into the future, while merging with the musical ambitions of his cohorts, of which three are half his age, and the fifth member, Renate Dinger, is his mother. Some of la! NEU? 's music is sad, gentle and moving. On other tracks, such as "Hero '96", Dinger sounds angrier than ever, and perhaps also more bitter. But hope is always present, not the least in the shape of "Cha Cha 2000", a song first featured on the "Viva" album and which has been reworked on "Néondian", by Die Engel des Herrn and now again by la! NEU?.

I find that people of my own generation haven't got very exciting ideas anymore. In 1994 I felt fairly blocked because of all the things that were going on but then I met new, much younger people to work with. As I had invented two fairly successful names, NEU! and La Düsseldorf, I decided to combine the two, and out came la! NEU?.

Klaus, who is 52, is aware of the impact that his groups have had over the last 20-25 years but hasn't heard half of the bands that have incorporated his ideas into their music. He chooses to take a rather philosophical view on the influence that he's had on Bowie, Ultravox, Stereolab and many others.

I can't say that I mind, as long as people mention where they borrowed their ideas. I haven't heard Stereolab. People often send me CDs and cassettes, but quite frankly I don't listen to them. It seems I am always busy with my own projects. I prefer to listen into myself which is quite difficult in an extremely stressed, tense and chaotic life.

LANGER ATEM

Robert Young speaks with Michael Rother of Neu! for Junkmedia, September 2001

After defecting from Kraftwerk, Michael Rother and Klaus Dinger made three albums back in the early to mid-1970s. Their sound was unique, it was something new. But they never really achieved any popular success. The albums have been out of print longer than they were in print and had never (until this year, that is) been officially released on CD, making them hard to find at best. Yet they've still managed to influence a bevy of musicians, ranging from David Bowie and Brian Eno to Sonic Youth and Squarepusher.

Dinger and Rother aren't dumb. They both knew they had to get their albums reissued. The duo made several attempts to get the albums released, but their personal differences, which also helped break up the band in the first place, kept getting in the way. So it wasn't for lack of trying. They knew there were plenty of musicians out there claiming Neu! as an influence, and the fans of these groups (myself included) were just waiting to devour and deconstruct Neu! in order to excavate the roots of their favorite Nue!-influenced band.

So Dinger and Rother were finally able to get their music released this year on Astralwerks records, 30 years after their first album was released. And, unless you've been on an interstellar vacation or just asleep for the last four or five months, chances are you've seen the hype. You've read the reviews, perhaps bought the albums and either loved or hated them - there's not much room in between.

But love or hate them, if you're any kind of music fan at all, you probably haven't had much trouble understanding how they've been an influence. Stereolab fans have heard the blueprints for the band's early records played out on recordings 30 years old. Tortoise fans now know where those strange drum sounds came from on their first album. It's a music geek's Unsolved Mysteries finally coming to an end.

So Neu! have been busy this year. They've got records to promote. Recently, Michael Rother took time away from his busy schedule to tell Junkmedia a thing or two.

Junkmedia: What made you and Klaus Dinger decide to leave Kraftwerk and begin the Neu! project?

Michael Rother: When Klaus Dinger and I played live with Florian Schneider as Kraftwerk, we were often able to create a very intense and fascinating music. But the three of us were - and probably still are - very different personalities, and that led to a great amount of friction between us.

In summer 1971, we booked a studio to record the second Kraftwerk album with Conny Plank as co-producer, and we tried hard to recreate the atmosphere of our live performances but failed completely. We quit halfway through the recordings. This frustration added to the conflicts we had already had, and it became clear that Florian was going into a different musical direction than Klaus and me, who felt we had a similar goal.

By comparing the second Kraftwerk album to the first NEU! album, both of which were recorded

shortly after our separation, I think one can easily hear the reason for the split.

Junkmedia: It amazes me that Neu!'s sound is like nothing else that was being made in the early 1970s. Where did you and Klaus Dinger draw influence from to make such a unique sound?

Michael Rother: The influences Klaus and I had drawn upon before we started creating our own music are numerous. I'll leave it to Klaus to tell about his musical background.

As a small child, I listened to my mother, who had received training as a classical concert piano player. She often played pieces of her favorite composers at home, especially Chopin. When I was nearly ten, my family went to live in Pakistan for three years, where my father worked with Lufthansa.

I started being interested in making music myself, and I remember being attracted [to] the Arabian and Indian sounds, which continue to fascinate me. Back in Germany after 1963, I picked up all the English and American pop and rock music and soon started playing guitar in a band called Spirits of Sound (after '69, Wolfgang Flür, who later was to join Kraftwerk, became our drummer).

I learned the techniques of pop music by copying the guitar heroes of the time and trying to sound like George Harrison/The Beatles, Eric Clapton/Cream and later Jimi Hendrix. Soon I grew bolder and started to add more and more of my own ideas to the interpretations of other musicians' work.

But eventually it became clear that it was necessary to overcome and drop all of the structures with which I had grown up with to be able to develop my own musical identity. This was my "hour zero" [which] meant: no more heroes, only concentration on my own ideas, going back to the most simple structures of music and start anew.

The instruments with which we played were still the normal rock instruments of those days. In my case, it was electric guitars, bass guitar, fuzz boxes, wah-wah pedals, equalizers and echo machines. But the way we used these instruments, some of which had been modified (i.e., my dehgitarre), was so different that people often didn't recognize the original instruments any longer. When I met Kraftwerk's Ralph Hütter in early 1971 and jammed with him, I realized I was not alone on this path.

The late 60s/early 70s were a time of great changes in all fields of political and cultural life when - especially in Germany - many young people felt the necessity for a reformation of society. This desire also led to the development of new expressions in art. My goal was to be unique, not only as a person but also in my music, to be as different from everybody else as possible.

Junkmedia: How much did producer Conrad Plank have to do with the Neu! sound?

Michael Rother: It is fair to say that Conny Plank played a significant part in the creation of the NEU! sound and that not only NEU! but also the early Kraftwerk, Cluster, Harmonia, La Düsseldorf and my first three solo albums (not to mention several other bands and musicians of the 70s and 80s) owe him very, very much. He was completely enthusiastic about our music, interested in all kinds of crazy experimental sounds and also had a great personality.

In the case of NEU!, this enabled him to act as a third pole in the studio, preventing Klaus and me from locking in confrontation by helping us move forward all the time. Without Conny's participation, his technical skills at the mixing desk and his ability to easily pick up our intentions, NEU! would definitely have sounded very different - if we had succeeded in recording our albums at all. I am thankful to Conny Plank, who unfortunately died in 1987, for all the wonderful work he contributed to our music. It is impossible to tell the story of NEU! without giving a lot of credit to Conny Plank.

Junkmedia: Did you ever think that the music of Neu! would have the influence that it's had? How does it feel to know bands are still inspired by the music you made 30 years ago?

Michael Rother: At the time when we developed the NEU! sound and recorded our albums, I never thought about the future and what could possibly happen 30 years later. I always was and

still am living in the present, not in the past or the future. It is a bad idea, and definitely not helpful for your music, to spend too much time thinking about one's future role in history books.

Of course I'm happy to hear all the praise our music is getting these days, but I haven't forgotten that the very same music once was torn apart by some of the critics. The reception was not always as favorable as today. An artist is better off trying to be as independent from critical acclaim as possible. He himself has to believe in his music and just do it and keep on doing it, even if he seems to be the only one interested in it.

You need what we in Germany call "langer Atem", a long breath - determination and endurance. With Harmonia, [Hans-Joachim] Roedelius, [Dieter] Moebius and I faced a difficult time in the 70s. We had only a little commercial success, but I am glad to have made the albums and to have had the opportunity to learn by working and living with Roedelius and Moebius. Looking back, I see that the radical approach NEU! and Harmonia took towards music in the early 70s led to some unique results. The direction we went offered us a lot of space and open frontiers to discover.

There were no road [signs] to lead our way, but, on the other hand, also no fences to block the view. Maybe it is this feeling of freedom and a new beginning that many musicians and listeners nowadays still love in our music of the 70s. Much of the experimental ground has been charted and commercialized by now making it much harder to find an utterly new approach these days.

Junkmedia: David Bowie made no secret of his interest in Neu! and his wish to work with you in the 1970s. How come no collaboration ever took place?

Michael Rother: David Bowie called me in 1977 and invited me to work with him and Brian Eno on Bowie's album in Berlin. Brian Eno had been at my place some months earlier and had recorded sessions with my Harmonia colleagues, Hans-Joachim Roedelius and Dieter Moebius and me. (These recordings were released by Rykodisc in 1997 as Harmonia 76 Tracks & Traces).

Both Brian Eno and David Bowie enjoyed listening to the albums Kraftwerk, Can, NEU!, Cluster and Harmonia had been creating, and so I was not really surprised to hear from David. At that time, my first solo album (Flammende Herzen) had just been released in Germany and was doing extremely well. David and I both were enthusiastic to collaborate, but somehow it did not happen. The success of my album left me quite busy, and I concentrated on my second solo album (Sterntaler), which I recorded in the same year, again with Can's Jaki Liebezeit on drums and with Conny Plank as co-producer.

Recently David and I exchanged some e-mails after I had read in an interview he had given to Uncut magazine that he remembered me politely declining his invitation, which isn't true. I think that Bowie's management or record company back then desperately wanted him to concentrate again more on his rock sounds than on the experimentations he had started on "Low", because his sales were going down. David's management knew about my experimental orientation and probably feared that I would influence him accordingly. I guess he and I were eventually tricked by his management. Maybe some day we'll find out what really prevented us from collaborating.

Junkmedia: Are you working on anything right now?

Michael Rother: We are still in the process of spreading the NEU! music around the world, and that involves a lot of work, interviews, etc. Recently, our albums have been released in Japan and there is interest in South America too. Next month the Grönland Records team and NEU! will meet to discuss the release of a box set containing the three NEU! albums plus a lot of extras, like historical NEU! photos (by Peter Lindbergh) and new ones (by Anton Corbijn), some remixes, a filmed interview with NEU!, special historical items, documentation and so on.

I hope Klaus and I can agree on the concept as I am sure many NEU! fans would love to have that just as much as I would. When the NEU! re-release project has been properly wrapped up, which has taken up most of my time in the past 11 months, I will go back to my solo album, which is almost finished and should be ready by the end of the year.

I'm in no big hurry, but as this is also a very special and important project for me, I am looking

forward to giving it all my attention soon. The music on my next album may surprise some people, I guess, but I'm not giving away anything right now. Apart from my solo album, Dieter Moebius with whom I have been doing several tours in recent years (to the US, to Japan, through Germany and to England) and I may be doing some more live appearances. One festival in support of the victims of police violence and injustice in Genoa/Italy recently during and after the demonstrations against (uncontrolled) globalism is being set up, and we have been invited to participate. People can check news on my website, where there is also an English section with information concerning NEU! and my solo activities.

Junkmedia: Is a Neu! reunion totally out of the question?

Michael Rother: The expression "reunion" does not apply [to] NEU!, because we have always considered NEU! to be more of a studio project than an actual band that is disbanded and then reunified. With Klaus and me, it is like this: whenever we decide to make music together, then that is NEU!. But a new collaboration is not very likely, seeing the problems Klaus has kept on creating in recent months - but still: We know that many people would love to see us perform together again or at least release a completely new album. I can understand them, as it would be interesting to find out whether Klaus and I could add something new and convincing to the classicNEU! albums. The idea and feel of NEU! is always with me, it still is part of my choices of musical expressions and so I don't rule it out completely that we may try to get together for an album again. This mainly depends on whether Klaus and I can agree on the circumstances and arrangements.

Junkmedia: Can you please list your top five favorite albums right now?

Michael Rother: Sorry, no top five albums. What I enjoy listening to depends on my mood in one specific moment. But, generally, I like to hear very different kinds of music from all over the world and from different times. This can be Portuguese fado music, experimental electronic dirt sounds, pop music, Serbian folk music or the sound of silence.

BLEEP INTERVIEWS MICHAEL ROTHER OF NEU!

Ein Augen- und Ohrenflug zum letzten Himmel by bleep on September 3rd, 2010

This week sees the legendary NEU! have their classic albums re-released, including never before released material. You can see all of the catalogue here. To mark this occasion, we decided to talk to NEU! co-founder, Michael Rother.

Bleep: The late 60's was a turbulent time politically in Germany, but exciting musically, as this era marked the genesis of elektronische musik or krautrock. Can you give us an insight into this period?

Michael Rother: I think the best that I could do is tell you about my own situation. I was born in 1950 and when Paris 1968 [student riots] came around, I was 17 or 18. There were political upheavals and the students demonstrating at the universities. Me and some older friends had problems at school - I was a good pupil - but the conservative teachers were surprised by this this previously 'nice guy Michael' suddenly coming up with strange ideas in his mind and my relationship with them at school slowly worsened. We did have one or two 'progressive thinking' teachers, but they were a minority. I finished school in 1969 and I knew that, then, I could no longer cope with this very conservative situation at school.

Seeing all the changes around the time, like the Vietnam War, even the changes within the media of film and art; this compelled me to develop my own personality further. My friends and I thought that these changes were like some kind of 'virus' that was in the air, and looking back, this was the reason why it felt so natural to develop who I was and detach myself from the background that I grew up in; especially growing up within the clichés of American and British rock music at the time.

Bleep: Was there a mutual decision amongst your peers to react against these clichés?

Michael Rother: I think that there's a misunderstanding here, and I think that this might be a bit of a myth! I hope I'm not going to be disappointing people, but I felt quite alone with the idea of "not continuing with this old style of music" and by the time that 1970 arrived, I wanted to do something new. It's not like we were all connected then like we are today as people. Back then, I wasn't aware of what people were doing in musically in Munich, Berlin or other cities. At the time, I didn't even know that Kraftwerk were in the same city! I went into the studio for the first time without even hearing their music, or even knowing them, and after chance meeting in the studio with Ralf Hütter [Kraftwerk], which led me to start jamming with them, I realised that my thoughts were not unique. We thought about leaving those blues-rock structures behind and having this idea of a more European-based music. From then on, I drew inspiration from and exchanged ideas with the musicians that I worked closely with; firstly in Kraftwerk with Florian Schneider; then Klaus Dinger in Neu! and then with Moebius and Roedelius in Harmonia.

Bleep: Before Neu!, you were involved with Florian and Ralf of Kraftwerk. How did this come

about and can you tell us more about the work that you did with them?

Michael Rother: I didn't know Kraftwerk. At the time I was doing service in a hospital as a 'conscientious objector'. I refused the military draft. The alternative after a court ruling was quite tough at the time - these days you can refuse via sending in a post card, or something like that! Anyway, at that time, I didn't know the music of Kraftwerk, and, as mentioned earlier, my initial meeting with Ralf and Florian was purely chance after a friend invited me to the same studio. I picked up a bass and started jamming with Ralf Hütter, and from that moment, things started to develop. The melodies and the music that we created were really quite interesting. Everyone in the studio had the same idea; Florian and Klaus were sat on a sofa listening and then at the end of the session, we exchanged numbers and they called me a few weeks later when Ralf decided to go back to university, leaving Kraftwerk for a few months. So I actually met those guys after jamming with Ralf but started performing live with Florian and Klaus as Kraftwerk. A very exciting time!

Bleep: Can you tell us how Neu! started?

Michael Rother: Contradictory to myth, Klaus and I were not friends - as strange as it might sound - but I thought Klaus was a fascinating drummer and I had never known anyone with that power, energy and radical approach to drumming. I guess that he was attracted by my style of guitar playing; approach to music and where I was heading. We had this immediate similarity of where we both wanted to go creatively, and when we stopped collaborating with Kraftwerk, in the summer of 1971, we decided to go our own way together. As much as we were very productive together, Klaus was a very difficult guy to work with from the beginning. He wasn't very pleasant and the way that he drums tells you the story of Klaus! Once when we played with Kraftwerk, he cut his hand badly on one of the broken cymbals that he preferred (he liked the sound) and blood was literally squirting all over the stage! He didn't stop for a moment and I could see jaws dropping! This approach to drumming was how he would treat his own body and this would get worse in later years. But as an artist, this behaviour would be the extension of his creativity. This was the core that we needed in the studio. I had no idea what to expect in Autumn 1971 when we booked the studio with Conny Plank and took all of the little amount of money that we had to pay for production costs. It was a very stressful time. After recoding for four nights (the studio was a little cheaper at night) and mixing for a few more days as was at home with Hallogallo and other tracks. This was a great moment that I remember so clearly.

Bleep: Neu! has a very unique sound, synonymous with the motorik rhythm structure of tracks such as Hallogallo and Negativland. This highly original sound has influenced the likes of Stereolab, Sonic Youth and countless others. What influenced you at the time?

Michael Rother: This is another opportunity to contradict the a myth! A lot of people try to understand and analyse Neu! as the beat created by the drums. There's no understanding of the music of Neu! if you only look at the drums. Try to imagine ten minutes of simple drumming - nobody would want to listen to that. The magic is the relationship between the drums and the harmonic and melodic instruments. If the drums are taken away from the guitar/piano parts that I played and vice-versa, you are left with something totally different. Neu! is about the relationship between the two. The time that I spent in Pakistan, I listened to a lot of music and I was fascinated by how hypnotic it was, and also the idea of music that went on forever fascinated me. Klaus and I never discussed theories. We were never talking about music, we were making music. The harmonic structures that I put together, I guess, were based around European folk and classical music, but without the song structures of that kind of music or the approach to classical music. It's basically the ideas of which notes go together and which don't. Combining these ideas with the hypnotic music that I listened to in Pakistan somehow lead to Hallogallo and what followed. I'm always surprised when people talk about the drums and think that this is the essence of Neu!. It doesn't make sense if you just listen to the drums and think that's Neu! If bands are inspired by us are only picking up on the drums, then, in my opinion, are quite far away from understanding what really made Neu! You can hear this effect if you listen to Oasis' The Shock Of The Lightning - it

works if you combine their 'Beatles-style' with Hallogallo.

Bleep: Legendary producer, Conny Plank, was involved with the production of Neu!'s music. What was it like working with him and how was this relationship started?

Michael Rother: I met Conny when I tried to record the second Kraftwerk album with Florian and Klaus in the summer of 1971. He was the obvious, and natural partner for Neu! when we wanted to record our album. Conny was an amazing character and I guess that he was similarly crazy and special in his approach to music as we were. He was the only sound engineer that I knew who was willing to listen and to work with us crazy guys! Kraftwerk were very popular at the time and we were a minority and very underground; I think that it took years for people to understand us. I remember that we once did a concert with a very popular jazz player and he said, "Why do these guys get as much money as I do and they only play one note!" Conny was very capable of handling the studio technology; at that time it was so simple, making what he created even more amazing. It was fascinating to see him work. He was a strong character and also very gentle. He didn't try and impose his ideas and I guess he understood that when he started working with Klaus and me - we weren't the kind of musicians that wanted a 'total' producer role i.e. "do this, or try this". He was attentive and picked up our ideas very, very quickly and offered us all these possibilities towards creating our music. That was the understanding of his role. He had this amazing capability of memorizing the good parts of a session.

Of course, we did the mixing without any computer aid, and many of our fuzzy ideas were scattered over the tape and he had this quality of remembering where all the good parts, the nuggets, were, and while the tape/mix was running, he would focus on these moments. I try to make people remember Conny and to give him enough credit because he was so important for Neu! and Harmonia and, also, the first three solo albums of mine that he recorded. Conny left his mark, and without him, it's hard to imagine us releasing anything similar. A man with a great open mind that was looking for people to work with like we were all looking for him. It was logical for both sides, really, he was looking for these new musicians with a new approach and that's where he nurtured his inspiration - we were so lucky to have him in our production team!

Bleep: Last week saw the 'official' release of the fourth Neu! album, entitled '86'. Can you tell us about this record?

Michael Rother: There's a difference between the first three albums and this one, and that is that Klaus and I did those together. In the mid-80s, we tried to record our fourth album, but the record companies whom we approached with some tracks that we made were not interested in Neu! at this point. The Brain label had stopped pressing our first three albums - and only recently, after sitting in an interview with Steve Shelley [Sonic Youth], I found out that he and the rest of Sonic Youth were listening to Neu! in the mid-80s - I had no idea .

I think labels were not convinced about what we were doing because the music scene in the 80s was a lot different. Klaus and I, had to accept that this album was not going to be released. Klaus was taking substances that he believed would enhance, not only the music, but his perception of what was going on in life. He really believed this, and as a result, things became more and more difficult; he became more and more isolated and seemed to be on a different planet. In the early 90's, things started changing and Daniel Miller [Mute Records] wanted to release Neu! and suddenly people were starting to talk about us.

But Klaus, in the end, and I don't want to be unfair as he's not around any more to explain his motives, but he always said "no" to all the record company offers. He wasn't prepared to compromise with them, and being such a strong and stubborn guy, he always wanted to 'run through the wall instead of taking the door that was opened for him'! I had a very different understanding of the situation, even though we were equally as unhappy about bootlegs that were circulating, but he just wasn't willing to sign the contracts that were offered and he would not trust anyone who was trying to negotiate with him. He was very paranoid, short of cash and thought that no-one wanted to work with him any more; which was quite understandable being the person he was at the time.

My mother liked Klaus a lot; she thought that he was a crazy guy, but she really had a soft spot for him! Many people thought that he was very interesting. But sooner rather than later, his behaviour made sure that he was left more-or-less alone. He sent me a fax once saying that there was a label in Japan that was willing to work with him and had decided that this album that we had been working on 'Neu! 4', or 'Neu! 86' as it is known now, was to be released. He had finished his own version of the album from the tapes that he had and, basically, took the money and ran!

Of course I didn't find this very amusing at the time and the artwork for the album had Klaus Dinger all over it! He even started a project called 'La Neu' which used our original logo. . . These were the darker and more bitter times of the 90's and at this time, Klaus was so far 'away' from everyone. I decided not to take court action against him and my girlfriend said that if I did, we may never ever reach an agreement and if I did, that would be the end of Neu! and I wanted to keep this music alive.

I had worked so hard on getting things together all the time while Klaus was getting more and more paranoid, and to him, even I was one of the 'gangsters' that was trying to cheat him! It was a terrible and depressing time; I was trying to find an agreement between Klaus to release 'Neu! 86' as a better version because I didn't like what he had done to it and all the crazy ideas that he added!

We were lucky that superstar actor and owner of Grönland Records, Herbert Grönemeyer, decided to re-release our back catalogue in 2001, but it was still impossible to find an agreement with Klaus. . . a few years later he died. I had a meeting with Klaus' widow and the Grönland team in Berlin to discuss the situation with Neu! and what to do. I was very, very relieved and happy that Klaus' widow was prepared to compromise and she also knew that 'Neu! 86' could not be released in the way that Klaus had recorded it. I offered to rework the music, which I did last year, over a period of six months, transferring all the tapes. It was such a great experience and very important to, as the whole experience that had passed was like a wound that had never healed. I felt that it was important that the ideas Klaus and I had in the 80s were correctly documented. With this album, I tried to the best of my ability, present my understanding of his vision of music at that time, and when I presented my final version of 'Neu! 86' to Klaus' widow and the people at Grönland, everyone was very happy with it.

ZWEI EGOS MÜSST IHR SEIN

von Dallach, Christoph, SPIEGEL 25.06.2001

Das Düsseldorfer Avantgarde-Duo Neu! hätte die wichtigste deutsche Rockband aller Zeiten werden können. Doch daraus wurde nichts: zu viel Streit, zu viel LSD. Nun will Herbert Grönemeyer, inzwischen auch Besitzer einer Plattenfirma, die beiden Genies nach fast 30 Jahren wieder zusammenbringen.

Es ist nicht so, dass wirklich Schlimmes zu erwarten gewesen wäre. Keine Schlägerei beispielsweise und auch kein lauter Streit. Trotzdem wollten die Verantwortlichen der Kölner Plattenfirma, als sie Anfang Mai Journalisten eingeladen hatten zu Interviews mit dem deutschen Avantgarde-Duo Neu!, jedes Risiko vermeiden. Also setzten sie den einen Musiker in den achten Stock, den anderen in den sechsten. Sicher ist sicher.

Beispielsweise Klaus Dinger, 55, die eine Hälfte von Neu!: einerseits eigentlich ein netter Zeitgenosse; andererseits fühlt er sich öfter mal ungerecht behandelt. Dann sieht er sich von Menschen umzingelt, die ihn übervorteilen wollen und „mit einer Schmutzkampagne überrollen - das finde ich Scheiße“. Ganz besonders schlimm findet er, dass „der, der immer vor Neu! und unserem Erfolg davongelaufen ist, nun so hochgejubelt wird“.

Michael Rother, 50, ist die andere Hälfte von Neu! und sitzt derweil zwei Stockwerke tiefer und gibt sich, Typ Religionslehrer, den Anschein, als wüsste er noch nicht mal das Wort Streit zu buchstabieren - was Dinger erst recht auf die Palme bringt. So still Rother auch wirkt, in einem scheint er wild entschlossen: Er wolle sich von dem „egozentrischen“ Dinger nicht mehr länger auf der Nase herumtanzen lassen. Zusammen mit ihm in einem Raum Interviews zu geben, das kann sich Rother genauso wenig vorstellen wie Dinger. Immerhin ringt Rother um versöhnliche Worte: „Klaus sagt leider viele ärgerliche Dinge, aber es ist doch ein Ereignis, dass unsere drei Neu!-Platten nun wieder regulär zu haben sind.“

Denn die Neuauflage und Wiederentdeckung der Musik des Düsseldorfer Avantgarde-Rock-Duos Neu! gilt allen Zwigigkeiten zum Trotz als musikhistorische Sensation. Ein freudiges Ereignis, das von Feuilletonisten und Musikern von New York bis Berlin gefeiert wird; vor allem in England und den USA gelten Dinger und Rother als Helden und Pioniere und die Musik, die sie in der ersten Hälfte der Siebziger aufnahmen, als Blaupause für modernen Rock'n'Roll.

Neu's „enormen Einfluss auf die Entwicklung der Popmusik“ („The Independent“) bestätigen euphorisch all die Musiker, die heute als kreative Elite des Genres gelten: Der US-Musiker Beck lobt die „zeitlos aufregende Musik“; Thom Yorke, Sänger der britischen Band Radiohead, fühlt sich, wenn er Neu!-Songs hört, als fahre er „eine brandneue Autobahn entlang“; und David Bowie hatte schon 1975, nachdem er seine erste Neu!-Platte gekauft hatte, keinen Zweifel mehr: „Die Musik der Zukunft kommt aus Deutschland.“

„Krautrock“ taufte Engländer durchaus höhnisch die avantgardistische Musik, die Anfang der siebziger Jahre eine junge Musikergeneration in Deutschland produzierte - Bands wie Can, Amon Düül, Kraftwerk, Faust und eben Neu!. Eine vernetzte Szene, die sich vor 30 Jahren in Deutschland dranhachte, gemeinsam die Rockmusik neu zu erfinden, wie es sich ausländische Journalisten gern mal ausmalen, hat es nie gegeben, die Bands hatten kaum etwas gemeinsam - außer ihrer Lust auf musikalische Abenteuer. „Wenn ich heute immer wieder gefragt werde“, sagt Rother, „was

damals so in anderen deutschen Städten wie Berlin musikalisch los war, kann ich nur antworten: keine Ahnung.“ „Wir hatten nie etwas mit den anderen Bands zu tun“, sagt Dinger, „wir hatten ja schon als Neu! nichts miteinander zu tun.“

Dinger, laut selbst verfasstem Lebenslauf ein „Total Artist“, hat in den Sechzigern in Krefeld Architektur studiert, in Düsseldorf eine Werbeagentur (zumindest auf dem Papier) gehabt und Schlagzeug in verschiedenen Bands gespielt wie etwa bei Kraftwerk, wo er auf der zweiten Seite ihres Debüt-Albums trommelte. Michael Rother, in Hamburg geboren und über England und Pakistan in Düsseldorf angekommen, war damals, Anfang der Siebziger, gerade Zivildienstleistender an einem Krankenhaus, als er eingeladen wurde, auf einer Kraftwerk-Session Gitarre zu spielen.

Eine Freundschaft sei damals nicht entstanden, sagt Dinger. Das sei korrekt, sagt Rother. Aber als Musiker und Künstler waren sie durchaus voneinander beeindruckt: Dinger, der leicht wahnwitzige, aber sagenhaft präzise und erfindungsreiche Schlagzeuger (Brian Eno hält ihn für einen der drei besten Schlagzeuger der siebziger Jahre), und Rother, der eher disziplinierte, aber phantasievolle Gitarrist, mit dem sogar David Bowie zusammenarbeiten wollte.

Die drei Alben, die Neu! in den folgenden Jahren mit dem legendären Produzenten Conny Plank einspielte, überwiegend instrumentaler minimalistischer Avantgarde-Rock, klingen auch 2001 immer noch so seltsam losgelöst wie in den Siebzigern. Eine Musik, der man den Willen zum radikalen Neuanfang anhört, anstatt wie damals der Rest der Welt die Bestseller und Ikonen des Rock nachzuäffen. Dabei haben die beiden „nie groß theoretisiert, aber nachdem auch ich durch die Beatles-Schule gegangen war, hatte ich nicht das Bedürfnis, diese angelsächsische Geschichte fortzusetzen“, sagt Dinger. „Ich wollte alles Gelernte über Bord werfen, um endlich eine eigene musikalische Identität zu schaffen“, sagt Rother. Die Abkehr von Blues und Beat fand statt unter dem Einfluss von 68. „Das hat mich geprägt und beschäftigt“, sagt Rother.

Die Neu!-Musik sei jedenfalls unter irrem Druck entstanden, sagt Dinger. Zu viel Streit, zu viel Ego, zu viel LSD. „Bestimmte Elemente unserer Musik würden ohne LSD fehlen“, sagt Dinger, „und Leute wie Rother, die diese Erfahrung nicht gemacht haben, sind eben ganz andere Menschen.“ „Ich amüsiere mich über die Anmaßung von Klaus, sich über meine Drogenerfahrungen zu äußern“, sagt Rother, „das geht an der Wirklichkeit vorbei!“

Die drei Alben von Neu! verkauften sich in Deutschland anständig und wurden sogar in England wahrgenommen. Doch 1975 beendeten Dinger und Rother ihre Zweckgemeinschaft: Dinger hatte danach mit seiner neuen Band La Düsseldorf größeren kommerziellen Erfolg, Michael Rother mit Soloplaten wie „Flammende Herzen“ und „Sterntaler“. Neu! aber war in Deutschland schnell vergessen - und ist bis heute weitgehend unbekannt geblieben. Das musste auch David Bowie feststellen, als er das Saalpublikum einer „Wetten, dass ...?“-Sendung fragte, ob sie je von Neu! gehört hätten, und kaum Resonanz erhielt. Das „Hamburger Abendblatt“ erklärte die Düsseldorfer Veteranen zur „Nachwuchsband“. „Je weiter man von Deutschland wekommt“, sagt Rother, „desto größer ist die Wertschätzung für diese Art von Musik aus den Siebzigern.“

Mitte der Achtziger ging das Duo Dinger/Rother erstaunlicherweise doch noch mal ins Studio. Aber weil das Interesse der Musikindustrie an einer vierten Neu!-Platte bei null lag - es gab laut Rother nur „ein armseliges Angebot, das man nicht ernst nehmen konnte“ -, wurde das Projekt begraben.

Wahrscheinlich waren die beiden nur ein paar Jahre zu früh dran, denn mit Beginn der neunziger Jahre hatte sich die Lage im Musikuniversum radikal verändert. Eine junge Szene von Techno- und Elektromusikern schuf nicht nur ein neues europäisches Selbstbewusstsein, sondern sorgt bis heute von Barcelona bis Helsinki für überraschend hohe Umsätze. In Deutschland sind es Bands und Musiker wie To Rococo Rot, Mouse On Mars oder Oval, die gut gelaunt das weiterführen, was die so genannten Krautrockers vor 30 Jahren begonnen haben. „Die personellen Möglichkeiten für aufregende Musik“, sagt Dinger, der auch schon mit Musikern der jungen Düsseldorfer Band Kreidler zusammengearbeitet hat, „sind heute besser denn je!“

Seit 1990 wurde so auch mit den beiden immer wieder über Neuauflagen der Klassiker verhandelt. Das Ergebnis: ein wahnwitziger Streit zwischen Dinger und Rother um Geld und Eitelkeiten, eine Tragikomödie, die bis heute kein Ende gefunden hat. Währenddessen überschwemmten illegale Raubkopien den Markt oder wurden die Originale für horrenden Summen auf Flohmärkten und Plattenbörsen gehandelt.

Bis dann im vergangenen Jahr der Sänger Herbert Grönemeyer einen kaum für möglich gehaltenen Waffenstillstand erreichte. Grönemeyer, der die Musik von Neu! vor einigen Jahren in dem Studio eines Londoner Fotografen erstmals hörte, überzeugte Dinger und Rother in langen Verhandlungen, ihre legendären Platten auf seinem Label Grönland ein zweites Mal zu veröffentlichen.

Und wenn es überhaupt etwas gibt, auf das sich Dinger und Rother einigen können, dann ist es ihr Respekt für Grönemeyer. „Herbert“, sagt Dinger, „ist selbst Musiker, versteht unsere Sicht der Dinge und hat damit bessere Voraussetzungen als jeder Plattenmanager.“ „Herbert“, sagt Rother, „kann zwischen uns vermitteln, weil er für Klaus und mich gleichermaßen glaubwürdig ist und weil er nicht im Verdacht steht, der einen Seite näher zu sein als der anderen.“

Inzwischen hat Grönemeyer den beiden sogar ein sehr anständiges Angebot für ein neues Neu!-Album gemacht. Rother, sechster Stock, still, vorsichtig, ist interessiert, will aber erst mal abwarten, wie sich der Zwist weiterentwickelt. Dinger, achter Stock, temperamentvoll, unberechenbar, sagt: „So ein Album machen wir in vier Tagen und dann: Feierabend.“

KRAUTROCKER HARMONIA

„Das ist ja so geil“

Von Stefan Krulle, SPIEGEL 27.11.2007

Deutschland war mal Pop-Exportweltmeister in den Siebzigern: Mit Progressive Rock, auch Krautrock genannt. Jetzt spielen dessen Urväter Harmonia ein Reunion-Konzert - und befeuern so das Revival eines ganzen Genres.

Als vor ein paar Jahren Karl Bartos für ein Konzert in London gastierte, fingen nicht wenige der 2000 Besucher im ausverkauften Saal vor Freude an zu weinen, weil er „Transeuropa Express“ anstimmte. Zu der Zeit wurden seine Konzerte hierzulande wegen mangelnder Nachfrage abgesagt. Bartos konnte sich da mit Holger Czukay die Hand geben, denn dem war dasselbe widerfahren. Bartos musizierte von 1975 bis 1991 bei Kraftwerk, Czukay war 1968 Mitbegründer von Can. Beide Bands zählen zu den wichtigsten Fortschritts-Motoren der elektronischen Rockmusik weltweit. Doch in der Heimat wollte sie niemand mehr hören.

Die Vorzeichen für die beiden Pioniere sind heute andere, auch im eigenen Lande. Das haben sie der Rückkehr einer Musik zu verdanken, auf die noch vor ein paar Jahren keiner einen Pfifferling gesetzt hätte. Doch plötzlich zogen neue Bands wie The Mars Volta oder Porcupine Tree das inszenierte Epos dem formatierten Radio-Song vor und zelebrierten die von den Sendern aussortierten „Irritating Moments“, also etwa lange Gitarren-Soli oder redundante Rhythmik. Und die ausgehungerten Musikfans liefen ihnen - allen Marktforschern zum Trotz - scharenweise zu.

Am heutigen 27. November wird nun in Berlins Haus der Kulturen der Welt eine Reunion der ganz besonderen Art stattfinden. Die Band Harmonia, im Mai 1973 vom kurzzeitigen Kraftwerk-Mitstreiter Michael Rother sowie Dieter Moebius und Hans-Joachim Roedelius von Cluster ins nur zwei Jahre währende Leben gerufen, wird zum ersten Mal seit 1975 wieder gemeinsam auf einer Bühne stehen. Für die Fans von Prog und Kraut ist das imposanter als der Auftritt von Led Zeppelin am 10. Dezember in London.

„Ein kommerzielles Debakel“

Was die Fans indes erwarten dürfen, lässt sich trotz des soeben erschienenen Albums „Harmonia Live 1974“ auf Herbert Grönemeyers Grönland-Label, das schon die legendären Alben der von Rother als Harmonia-Nachfolge gegründeten Band Neu! wieder zugänglich machte, nur vermuten.

„Was kann man schon in Proben proben?“ Michael Rother nippt am Kaffee und wirkt so ausgeschlafen und eloquent wie stets: „Nein, proben werden wir nicht. Das haben wir nie getan, schon damals nicht.“ Das Damals liegt mittlerweile gute drei Dekaden hinter ihm, aber er redet davon, als sei es gestern erst gewesen. Doch was unter seiner Ägide entstand, klingt heute noch nicht alt. Es geschah Anfang der Siebziger, es war eine Zeit der Experimente und es schien alles möglich. Rother, ein Jungspund mit Ambitionen als Künstler und Gitarrist, was kein Gegensatz war, fielen popmusikalisch Dinge ein, die noch heute Nachahmer zeitigen.

Vielleicht wird ja alles noch einmal so schön: „Wir haben jedenfalls vor, unseren Methoden treu zu bleiben. Vielleicht spielen wir uns vor dem Gig ein paar Sachen vor, vielleicht gehen wir aber auch einfach auf die Bühne und sehen mal, was da dann so passiert.“ Popstars neuzeitlichen Zuschnitts dächten sich so etwas nicht einmal im Traum aus.

Zusammen mit Roedelius und Moebius nahm Rother zwei Alben auf, „ein kommerzielles Debakel“, wie er heute sagt. Und dann beschwert er sich über die Ungenauigkeit der Medien, wenn es um die Beschreibung seiner Historie geht. Das hat er mit Klaus Schulze, mit Edgar Froese von Tangerine Dream und auch mit Holger Czukay gemein. Bloß dass sie alle selbst nicht mehr so genau zu sagen wissen, was damals wann mit wem passierte.

Gelobt sei, was Widerstand leistet

Hessen, in die Nähe des Kirchheimer Dreiecks, vor ein paar Monaten. Dort ist ein Festival zu Hause, das bereits 1970 begründet und seither oft verlacht, oft tot gesagt und doch nie begraben wurde. Nahe Fulda treffen sich seither die Fans progressiver Klänge beim „Burg Herzberg Festival“. Auch dieses Jahr im Juli war es wieder so, fast 10.000 Gäste fanden sich ein. Eng umschlungen stand ein Paar auf einer Wiese und wippte leicht in den Knien.

„Das ist ja so geil“, raunte er ihr ins Ohr, „so geil, geil, geil“, und meinte damit die Musik dreier Männer, die ein paar Meter weiter vorne auf der Bühne standen. Einer von ihnen hatte erst kürzlich den ersten Herzinfarkt überlebt und sang gerade geschredderte Verse im kakophonischen Auf und Ab zu vertrackten Rhythmen und Orgel-Kaskaden. „Tierisch geil“, sagte sie und lächelte selig.

Dabei ist Peter Hammill nicht gerade ein Freund radiotauglicher Klänge, sogar musikalische Freigeister erklären ihm nur selten ihre Liebe. Als der mit 58 Jahren kaum mehr juvenil zu nennende Musiker vor zwei Jahren seine alte Combo Van der Graaf Generator wiederbelebte, ging kein müdes Zucken durch die Musikszene. Es freuten sich zunächst lediglich ein paar alte Herren, die Musik eher als Diskussionsbeitrag denn als Unterhaltung sehen. Und jetzt fanden also dieser Jüngling und auch seine Freundin Hammills Eskapaden „einfach geil“.

Sie stehen damit nicht allein in ihrer Altersgruppe. Der Progressive Rock der Siebziger, für den neben Hammills Van der Graaf Generator Bands wie die frühen Genesis, Yes, Emerson, Lake & Palmer oder King Crimson standen, feiert seine Rückkehr - und zwar ohne dabei allein auf die überlebende Klientel früherer Tage zählen zu müssen.

Mehr noch: Beim „Burg Herzberg Festival“ im hessischen Breitenbach zieht das dort stets vertretene Genre mittlerweile beachtliche Kreise. Der Idee des freien Musizierens, vorbei an allen Formaten und Schemata, verschreiben sich mittlerweile nicht mehr nur Bands des Psychedelic Rock oder Krautrock, auch Trance, Ambient und sogar HipHop haben das Boot bestiegen. Gelobt sei, was inhaltlich Widerstand leistet gegen Mainstream und Pop-Globalisierung.

Ernstzunehmender Nachwuchs

Ein paar Jahre lang schon generiert das Genre nicht nur leise beklatschte Reunions, der Progrock hat inzwischen ernstzunehmenden Nachwuchs. Bands wie besagte Porcupine Tree und The Mars Volta, aber auch Archive oder Spock's Beard gelten in London, New York oder Hamburg längst als Cool Cats, ihre Konzerte werden von Söhnen und Vätern gleichermaßen frequentiert.

Hauptsächlich als Live-Attraktionen verbuchen die Erben ihre Erfolge - eben dort, wohin sich wahre Musikfans vom Radio-Popeinerlei und der TV-Ignoranz in Sachen Musik bereits länger zurückziehen und der letzten Zuwachs-Sparte im siechen Musik-Business volle Kassen bescheren. Als Dekoration oder gar Sinnbild juveniler Selbstdefinition hat die Rockmusik damit ihre Funktion eingebüßt - jenseits von Tokio Hotel und Musikantenstadl muss überall mit jeder Generation gerechnet werden.

Und auch bei Harmonia in Berlin wird das kaum anders sein. Michael Rother lächelt und nennt die Materiallage seiner alten Band „höchst überschaubar“. Nur ein paar wenige Aufnahmen seien so gut wie das gerade veröffentlichte Live-Album. „Der Rest“, sagt Rother, „ist inzwischen verrottet.“

Macht nix. Es gibt ja jetzt Neues zu hören. Die Progrocker und die Krauter feiern, endlich mal aus

gutem Grund.

AGITATION FREE - PORTRAIT EINER BAND

von Agitation Free c/o Michael Günther, <http://www.agitation-free.de/>

Die alten Zeiten

Angefangen hatte die ganze Geschichte eigentlich schon 1965. Zu Beginn des Jahres hatte einerseits Lutz „Lüül“ Ulbrich zusammen mit Christoph Franke (damals spielte er noch Schlagzeug), angeregt durch die Beatles, eine Gruppe namens The Tigers gegründet. Diese Band wurde später in The Sentries umbenannt. Andererseits rief mein Freund Lutz „Ludwig“ Kramer mit mir, Michael „Fame“ Günther, und einigen anderen Freunden eine Rockband ins Leben, die hauptsächlich R&B-Titel nachspielte. Diese Formationen - Schulbands - hielten bis Ende 1966.

Das Jahr 1967

Lüül, Christoph und ich besuchten die Waldschule in Berlin-Charlottenburg. Wir waren also zwangsläufig oft zusammen. Anfang 1967 trennten sich die Sentries von ihrem Bassisten, Klaus-Jürgen Niemitz, und ich half mit meinen Fähigkeiten aus.

Als auch bei meiner Band Mitglieder ausfielen, schlossen wir uns zusammen. Das war etwa im September oder Oktober 1967. Die neue, zunächst namenlose Gruppe bestand aus „Lüül“, Christoph Franke, Ludwig und mir sowie zeitweilig dem Sänger Michael „Micki“ Duwe und war zunächst namenlos.

Aus der Band The Sentries wurde noch der Roadie Roland „Rolli“ Paulick mit übernommen (Wozu eigentlich? Es war ohnehin kaum etwas zu schleppen oder anzuschließen da.). Er war mehr ein guter Freund von uns und vor allen Dingen ein Organisationstalent. Wenn etwas gebraucht wurde, schaffte er es in kürzester Zeit heran. Zwischenzeitlich versuchte er sich als Führunternehmer. Da er aber damit scheiterte, wurde er letztlich Roadie bei Tangerine Dream.

Weiterhin gehörte Folke Hanfeld, Bruder des alten Sentries-Bassisten, als Freund und Mentor zu uns. Er ist Schöpfer des Namens Agitation, d.h. er hat ein Wörterbuch aufgeschlagen und den Finger irgendwo hineingehalten. Er landete bei dem Wort Agitation = Bewegung, Unruhe, Veränderung. Das fanden wir als Bandnamen akzeptabel und nannten uns zunächst The Agitation. Folke begann sich intensiv mit Lightshows, Filmemachen und Mixed-Media zu beschäftigen. Ende 1967 fingen wir an, angeregt durch ihn, mit Flüssigkeitsprojektionen, Dias und selbstgedrehten Schmalfilmen zu arbeiten.

Doch vergessen wir nicht die Musik. Damals spielten wir noch Stücke fremder Interpreten und Komponisten, hauptsächlich R&B oder Popstücke nach. Allerdings war das musikalisch meistens unbefriedigend. Nur die in fast jedem Stück vorkommenden Improvisationsstellen fanden bei uns allen Gefallen. Deshalb haben wir diese Stellen nach und nach immer mehr ausgeweitet. Ich erinnere mich da an ein Stück von den Rolling Stones, 2120 South Michigan Avenue oder so ähnlich, das wir sehr gerne gespielt haben. Im Zuge unserer Spiellaune wurde dieses Stück immer länger. Später stand unser Freund Rolli mit der Stoppuhr in der Hand neben der Bühne und gab uns

begeistert Signale: Zehn, zwölf oder mehr Minuten spielten wir manchmal, und seine Begeisterung kannte keine Grenzen. Ich glaube, wir haben es gelegentlich auf zwanzig Minuten gebracht. Junge, waren wir glücklich. Eines Tages kam Ludwig zur Probe und fing an auf der Gitarre das berühmte Stück aus Carmen zu improvisieren. Seine Mutter (Opersängerin) hatte es vorher zu Hause geprobt. Dies war wohl die Geburtsstunde unserer freien Improvisationen, unabhängig von irgendeinem Songschema. Das Thema aus Carmen floß nun immer bei unseren Auftritten ein.

So lange zu spielen und vor allen Dingen zu improvisieren machte uns am meisten Spaß, war es doch so anders als die meisten Platten, die man hören konnte.

Das Jahr 1968

Anfang 1968 gab es Streit mit „Ludwig“ wegen der weiteren musikalischen Ausrichtung unserer Band. Er wollte bei der absolut freien Musik bleiben, wir waren aber dafür, gute Stücke von uns wenigstens halbwegs zu wiederholen und er wurde kurzerhand gefeuert. An seine Stelle trat ein Gitarrist namens Eckhart Kühn, der etwa drei Monate bei uns blieb. Dann hatten wir wieder Sehnsucht nach Ludwig, fanden einen musikalischen Kompromiß und holten ihn zurück.

Kurz darauf lernten Ludwig und ich Volker Cornelius kennen. Volker war ein ausgeflippter Architekturstudent, der in einer kleinen Ladenwohnung in der Nähe des S-Bahnhofs Charlottenburg wohnte. Er war, genau wie Roland Paulick, ein Organisationstalent und wurde für uns so eine Art politischer Guru. Er übernahm unser Management, machte irrsinnig gute Fotos, druckte Plakate und eigene Eintrittskarten. Durch seine Vermittlung wurden wir Hausband im ersten Berliner Underground-Laden ZODIAC. Zu dieser Zeit war auch schon Michael „Höni“ Hoenig als Mitherausgeber der Underground-Zeitung LOVE in der „Szene“ aktiv.

Im ZODIAC lernten wir die Bands Cluster, Curly Curve und Tangerine Dream kennen, mit denen wir uns beim Spielen abwechselten. Als das ZODIAC wegen der dort sich breitmachenden Drogenszene geschlossen wurde, wechselten wir in einen anderen Laden, in das Beautiful Balloon am Lehniner Platz, in den 20er Jahren Domizil des Kabaret der Komiker über. Wir verbrachten eine wirklich tolle Zeit dort, spielten meist bis in die frühen Morgenstunden und bekamen logischerweise Ärger in der Schule, weil wir manchmal im Unterricht einschlieften.

Folke Hanfeld hat im Beautiful Balloon maßgeblich an der Lightshow gearbeitet, und hatte zu dieser Zeit schon Ideen zur Intermedia, einer Mixed Media Show. Doch darüber später mehr.

Mitte 1968 entdeckten wir Pink Floyd für uns und begannen, Themen dieser Band als Improvisationsgrundlage zu benutzen. In einem anderen Berliner Underground-Laden, dem SUN, lernte ich zusammen mit „Ludwig“ zu dieser Zeit einen flötenspielenden, rothaarigen, zottelmähnigen und ziemlich ausgeflippten Typen kennen. Es war John L., bürgerlich Manfred Brück, der von der Berliner Springerpresse gerne als „Der Hippiekönig von Berlin“ titulierte wurde. Wir haben ihn zu unseren Proben mitgeschleppt und fortan war er bei uns Sänger.

Das Jahr 1969

Das heißt, eigentlich konnte John L. gar nicht singen. Meistens aber spielte er seine Maultrommel und gab irgendwelche Laute von sich. Er war eigentlich immer stoned und nach kurzer Zeit trennten wir uns wieder von ihm. Seine einzige Qualität war, das er ausgeflippt war, nackt mit bemaltem Penis auftrat oder sich von Karl-Heinz Pawla (der einst während einer Gerichtsverhandlung seine Notdurft auf einem Tisch verrichtete und seine Akte als Toilettenpapier benutzte) auf offener Bühne mit einem Gürtel auspeitschen ließ. Just bei diesem Auftritt im Berliner Quasimodo 1969, wir spielten umsonst, quasi einen Probegig, sollte noch eine einschneidende Aktion passieren. Im Norden Berlins, so hörten wir, gab es eine Gruppe, die sich den gleichen Namen wie wir zugelegt hatte. An der Tür des Quasimodo stand mit Kreide unser Namen Agitation, darunter das Wort FREE für freien Eintritt. Wir fanden das grandios und beschlossen, unseren Namen in Agitation Free zu ändern. Was John L. betraf, konnte er nicht an sich halten und mußte unbedingt eine von der Decke hängende Lampe als Schaukel benutzen, die sein Gewicht nicht aushielt und mitsamt John L. auf den Tisch eines verdutzten Pärchens und in deren Biergläser krachte. Selbstverständlich

durften wir uns im Quasimodo dann nicht mehr sehen lassen.

John L. war also auf einem ganz anderen Trip als wir, er war auch der erste in unserer Band der gefixt hat, und so flog er Herbst 1969 bei uns raus. Irgendwann später tauchte er bei Ash Ra Tempel wieder auf und hatte danach eine eigene Gruppe namens Scarecrow.

Mitte 1969 zog „Ludwig“ von zu Hause aus, in die Kommune I, wo er mit Karl-Heinz „Kalle“ Hausmann im Erdgeschoß hauste. Bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt hatten wir im Haus von Christoph Frankes Mutter (Berlin-Eichkamp) im Keller einen Übungsraum. Irgendwie wurde es ihr aber zu laut und so haben wir Rainer Langhans breitgetreten, damit wir in der Kommune I üben durften, die in der Moabiter Stephanstraße eine Hinterhoffabrik bewohnte.

Rainer hat dann mit seinem VW-Bus unser Zeug aus Eichkamp geholt und „Kalle“ Hausmann, ein Mitbewohner der Kommune I und späteres Mitglied von Amon Düül übernahm den Part des Electronic-Roadies und teilte sich einen Wohnraum mit „Ludwig“. Wir hatten dann auch das zweifelhafte (Lüül meint, ich soll das zweifelhaft streichen) Vergnügen, Uschi Obermeier und Amon Düül kennenzulernen. Die Schlagzeugfelle, die sie uns bei ihrem damaligen Aufenthalt in der Kommune I kaputtgedroschen haben, sind bis heute noch nicht bezahlt!

Kurze Zeit später hatten wir unsere ersten Gigs in Westdeutschland. Wir traten im „Underground“-Club in Frankfurt und Darmstadt auf. Beide Clubs gehörten demselben Besitzer, der uns gut bezahlte. Die ersten Anhänger der Gruppe sind uns dasmals nachgefahren und besuchten uns in Darmstadt.

Ende 1969 arrangierte Christophs Mutter eine interessante Sache für uns. Sie war Geigenlehrerin und hatte Kontakt zu E-Musikern (Musikern der sogenannten „Ernstern Musik“, eigentlich nur eine Sparte der Verwertungsgesellschaft GEMA, Einstufung als „E“- Musik hat eine höhere Tantieme zur Folge, wird aber nur dann gewährt, wenn man Aufführungen in den entsprechenden Rundfunk-sendungen oder Auditorien hat, was soll der Schwachsinn??). Eines Tages hatte sie ein Gespräch mit Konrad Latte, dem Direktor der Volksmusikhochschule in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, und der erzählte ihr, daß er noch überschüssiges Geld vom Ankauf eines Flügels hatte. Mit diesem Geld hätte er gerne für die Volksmusikhochschule eine neue Rockgruppe zusammengestellt. Mit viel Geduld und Worten brachte also Frau Franke ihm bei, daß er doch lieber sein Geld in eine schon bestehende Band (nämlich uns) investieren sollte, indem er einen Übungsraum zum Studio ausbaut und einen Lehrer engagiert. So wurde schließlich Thomas Kessler in die Schule geholt und Agitation Free zog ein. Ash Ra Tempel und Tangerine Dream kamen schnell nach. Wir freunden uns mit Tommy Kessler an und bauten mit ihm das Studio auf. Es sollte übrigens als das Beat-Studio in der Pfalzburger Straße in Berlin-Wilmersdorf in die Geschichte eingehen.

Im Winter 1969 wurde dann Folke Hanfelds Intermedia gestartet. Die Intermedia war eine Mixed-Media-Show, mit allem drum und dran, und war Folkes Abiturjahresarbeit im Fach Kunst. Wir führten die ganze Sache in der Aula der Waldschule in Eichkamp auf, weil es der einzige Raum war, in dem wir schon einen Monat vorher kostenfrei arbeiten konnten, denn die Aufbauten waren immens: Die Gruppe spielte in einem Kasten aus durchsichtiger Kunststoffolie, auf der Projektionen zu sehen waren. An den Wänden und der Decke waren Leinwände befestigt, auf die Dias und Filme projiziert wurden. Flüssigkeitsprojektionen gehörten ebenfalls dazu. Eine Wand aus Fernsehgeräten war aufgestellt worden, vor denen sich durch kleine Elektromotoren angetriebene Scheiben mit Löchern drehten, so daß sich bewegte Muster ergaben. Der Boden war mit halb aufgeblasenen LKW-Reifenschläuchen ausgelegt, und in einem Projektor verschmorten, für alle auf einer Leinwand sichtbar, Mehlwürmer und Ameisen. Es war ein Riesen-Happening!

Die erste Vorstellung, das mußten wir vorher zusichern, war nur für Lehrer, den Direktor und geladene Gäste. Am nächsten Tag war dann die zweite Vorstellung und das Chaos begann. Mindestens 1500 Leute waren gekommen und nur 400 passten in den Saal. Draußen herrschte also Belagerungszustand, ab und zu ein versuchtes Stürmen, der Schuldirektor Riemer, gleichzeitig mein Französisch-Lehrer, war sauer. . .

Nach einer Stunde wurde es ihm zu laut und er ließ den Strom abschalten. Das hätte er besser nicht machen sollen. Er wurde mit Autoreifen beworfen und mußte unter Polizeischutz das Gelände verlassen. Seither liegt die Waldschule in tiefem Schlummer und es gab keine derartigen Veranstaltungen mehr. . . Schade. Wiederholen konnten wir die ganze Sache nicht, denn sie hätte zuviel Geld gekostet. Nur unsere armen Mehlwürmer durften sich ein paar Wochen später, bei einer Ver-

anstellung im Audimax der Technischen Universität Berlin am 13.12.69, wieder unwohl fühlen. Bei dieser Veranstaltung spielten Paul & Limpe Fuchs, Tangerine Dream, Amon Düül und wir. An diesem Abend stellten wir zum ersten Mal einen Kurzwellenempfänger auf die Bühne, um mit unvorhergesehenen Einflüssen zu improvisieren. Das Ganze war eine Idee von Thomas Kessler. In einem Artikel in der Zeit regte sich damals ein Journalist ungeheuer über unsere Mehlwürmer auf - zur gleichen Zeit wütete der Vietnamkrieg!

Am 29.11.1969 hatten wir ein Konzert im Audimax der TU, für den „Zentralrat der umherschweifenden Haschrebellen“ um Bommi Baumann, das mit einem in der Pförtnerloge eingesperrten Hausmeister, einem Polizeieinsatz und dem Aufruf zu einer Hausbesetzung endete. - Stürmische Zeiten! Wir waren durch unseren Bandnamen, aber wohl auch durch unsere Musik, eine Band der Subkultur und der APO. Wir versuchten die Grenze zwischen Publikum und Band durch unsere Art von Kommunikation aufzulösen. Wenn z.B. im Takt Ho Ho Ho Tchi Minh gerufen und geklatscht wurde, sind wir eingestiegen und haben mit dem Publikum ein Stück daraus gemacht. Bei kleineren Gigs haben wir Instrumente verteilt. Wir spielten immer, wie wir uns gerade fühlten und erklärten die Systemlosigkeit zu unserem System (s. Pressebericht über das Beatstudio).

Das Jahr 1970

Im Februar 1970 war dann der „Zinnober“, der Berliner Studentenfascia, der leider in jenem Jahr schon fast eine kommerzielle Veranstaltung war. Daneben gab es eine Gegenveranstaltung in einem Nachbargebäude mit dem Namen „Inis Reise“. Veranstalter war, glaube ich, ein gewisser Klaus Freudigmann, der mit Cluster und Conny Schnitzler zusammengearbeitet, sowie diverse Alben von Ton Steine Scherben produziert hat, und mit dem wir später bei Eruption gespielt haben. Von acht bis elf Uhr spielten wir also auf dem Gegenzinnober „Inis Reise“, um dann mit Sack und Pack, Thomas Keyserling und dem wiederaufgetauchten John L. ein Haus weiter zu ziehen und auf dem Zinnober als exotische, unverstandene Band zu jammen. Und das an drei aufeinanderfolgenden Tagen!

Hier lernten wir Charly Weiss kennen. Er war ein guter Trommler mit ausgeflippten Percussionsinstrumenten und einem guten Einfühlungsvermögen. Er vereinbarte, mit Christoph zusammen auf einer Veranstaltung einen einstündigen Drumworkshop abzuhalten, was dann auch geschah. Irgendwo in Berlin existiert noch eine Monoaufnahme davon, die wir leider nicht mehr auftreiben können.

Wir beschlossen, bei der nächsten Gelegenheit, Charly zum Mitspielen zu animieren. So sollte es dann auch am 12.4.1970 geschehen. Vorher hatte sich jedoch etwas Grundlegendes verändert: Ende März zerstritt ich mich mit Ludwig und die Band hatte sich für mich oder ihn zu entscheiden. Sie entschied sich für mich. Mein schlechtes Gewissen trieb mich am nächsten Tag dazu, einen Ersatzmann zu beschaffen. Meine Wahl fiel auf Axel Genrich, den wir schon länger kannten und der auch dafür zu haben war. Wir komponierten schnell ein paar neue Stücke und traten dann mit Axel und Charly zusammen am 12.4.1970 im Berliner Sportpalast beim ersten deutschen Popfestival auf.

Noch ein Wort zur Begründung von Ludwigs Ausscheiden aus der Band: Da Ludwig mit 17 Jahren in die K1 zog, fing er an, sich immer mehr politisch zu engagieren. Er ging lieber zu den Demos als in den Proberaum. Gleichzeitig war er auch bezüglich Drogen sehr experimentierfreudig. Dies alles diente nicht unbedingt der Zuverlässigkeit. Oft haben wir ohne ihn geprobt, weil er einfach nicht auftauchte. Als er auch zu einem Auftritt zu spät kam, mussten wir uns von unserem alten Frontmann verabschieden, zumal wir uns auch musikalisch auseinandergeliebt haben. Später wechselte er dann zu der Berliner Art-Rock Band Walpurgis.

Vom Sportpalast zum Quartier Latin - die Band ändert sich

Das Jahr 1970

Am 12.4.1970 fand das „erste deutsche Popfestival“ im geschichtsträchtigen Berliner Sportpalast statt. Veranstalter war ein gewisser Jürgen Föhrenbach aus Stuttgart, der daran Pleite ging. Edgar Froese von Tangerine Dream hat versucht, seine Kohle einzuklagen, aber dieser Mensch hob die Schwurhand. Keine Gruppe sah auch nur eine Mark und wo die ganze Kohle bei 5000 zahlenden Leuten an zwei Tagen geblieben ist, weiß niemand.

Für uns war das Wichtigste, daß wir die Leute von Guru Guru kennenlernten. Dies war einerseits gut, aber andererseits auch schlecht. Der Gitarrist der Gurus, Jim Kennedy - ein Amerikaner - erkrankte an Tbc und mußte zurück nach Amerika. Also brauchte man einen Ersatzgitarristen und Axel sprang ein. Schließlich war er so von Guru Guru begeistert, daß er zu ihnen wechselte. Na ja, war auch dufte, immerhin hat er 'ne klasse Gitarre gespielt, Mani Neumeier Freude gemacht und nicht zuletzt seine Frau Sharon kennengelernt, was ihm auch die beste Agitation-Free-Tour nicht hätte bieten können.

Insgesamt spielte Axel etwa drei Monate bei uns, sein Nachfolger wurde Jörg „Joshi“ Schwenke, der seinen ersten Auftritt mit uns in der Berliner Akademie der Künste für Amnesty International hatte. Es war ein sehr schönes, weil relaxtes Konzert.

Jörg Schwenkes Eintritt in die Band hing mit meinem Schulwechsel zusammen. Ich habe eine sehr bewegte Schullaufbahn hinter mir. Aus der Waldschule wurde ich in der zehnten Klasse gefeuert (Latein 5, Sport 5, Mens sana. . .). Ich wollte dann auf die Akademie für Graphik, Druck & Werbung (wie Axel Genrich), brauchte dafür die mittlere Reife und wechselte auf die Robert-Bosch-Schule, eine Realschule in Berlin-Charlottenburg. Dort lernte ich übrigens Alfred Bergmann kennen. Er war einer meiner Lehrer und später sehr wichtig für Agitation Free. Ich habe dann dort so gut abgeschnitten, daß ich Ende der zehnten Klasse wieder aufs Gymnasium durfte. Also ging ich zur Hildegard-Wegscheider-Schule in Berlin-Grunewald, denn die Akademie interessierte mich nicht mehr.

Wie der Zufall es so will, saß am ersten Tag in der großen Pause auf dem Schulhof ein Typ neben mir, der interessiert in meinen Marshall-Verstärker Katalog schaute (die Amps von Jim Marshall waren damals der Hit, auch Hendrix spielte darauf). „Auch Musiker?“, fragte er und wir kamen ins Gespräch. Er war Gitarrist, spielte in einer Band namens „The Shatters“, der ehemaligen Begleitband von Manuela, einer damals bekannten Berliner Schlagersängerin, hatte keinen Bock mehr und wollte etwas Neues machen. Der Typ hieß „Joshi“ und wir mochten ihn alle vom ersten Tag an, als er bei uns spielte. Joshi hatte eigentlich keinerlei Erfahrung in der Art Musik, die wir machten, aber das machte ihn für uns besonders reizvoll. Er spielte nicht besonders gut, machte aber völlig unerwartete Sachen. Der Zeitpunkt seines Eintritts war Juli 1970.

Um dieselbe Zeit lernten wir durch Thomas Kessler einen Komponisten namens Ladislav Kupkovic kennen. Er war damals bekannt für seine „Wandelkonzerte“, bei denen das Publikum zwischen den Musikern, die wie ein Museumsstück auf einem Podest aßen, umherwandern, rauchen, sprechen usw. durfte. Kupkovic suchte einen Rockmusiker, möglichst einen Bassisten, als Exponat für sein nächstes Wandelkonzert. Mir gefiel die Sache und ich sagte zu. Kurze Zeit später habe ich dann bei fünf Konzerten von ihm mitgespielt.

Das Jahr 1971

Anfang '71 begann Edgar Froese (Tangerine Dream) sich von Zeit zu Zeit Christoph Franke auszuborgen. Ich werde den Gedanken nicht los, daß wir eine der Brutstätten der damaligen deutschen Rockszene, wie John Mayall und Alexis Korner in England, waren. Immerhin fütterten wir die Szene ganz schön mit unseren Leuten. Die Dummen waren im Endeffekt wir. Mitte '71 war Christoph dann fest bei Tangerine Dream. Unser letztes Konzert mit ihm zusammen, war ein weiteres Wandelkonzert von Kupkovic, bei dem diesmal die ganze Gruppe als Exponat mitwirkte. Gerade fällt mir ein, daß Christoph manchmal auch schon vor '71 bei Tangerine Dream mitgespielt hat.

Unter anderem hat er zusammen mit Edgar Froese als Studiomusiker für die deutsche Fassung des Stückes „The Boxer“ von Simon & Garfunkel in der Fassung der deutschen Popgruppe „New Folksingers“ gespielt.

So waren wir also wieder zu dritt. Wenn wir Konzerte hatten, spielten wir mit einem Wahnsinnstrommler aus Berlin-Spandau zusammen, Gerd Klemke. Er kam aus dem Jazz und studierte damals Komposition in der Hochschule für Musik, bei Isan Yun. Außerdem machte er Rockmusik mit der Gruppe „Garlick Generation“, heute lebt und lehrt er in Oslo, Norwegen und in Berlin. Mit ihm haben wir das Konzert gespielt, das uns nach Nah-Ost gebracht hat. Es war März '71, als wir ein Konzert im Berliner Quartier Latin gaben. Gerdi war in Hochform und trommelte ein Wahnsinnsolo, was auch uns in Stimmung brachte. Nach dem Konzert kam ein straight aussehender Typ auf die Bühne und fragte „Lüül“, ob wir nicht Lust hätten, in Kairo zu spielen. Er hieß Christian Nakonz, Konsul in der dortigen deutschen Botschaft und wäre schon den ganzen Abend durch die Berliner Kneipen gezogen, auf der Suche nach interessanten Musikern. Obwohl „Lüül“ skeptisch war, ließ er sich auf ein längeres Gespräch ein und sie tauschten schließlich die Adressen aus. Zunächst vergaßen wir die ganze Sache.

Irgendwann führte ich dann auf dem Schulhof ein längeres Gespräch mit Michael „Höni“ Hoenig, der auch auf meine Schule ging. Da er Interesse an Avantgarde-Musik hatte, schlug ich ihm damals vor, mal mit ins Studio zu kommen und mit der Improvisationsgruppe, die Tommy Kessler leitete, zu spielen. Er kam dann tatsächlich öfter hin und lernte, mit Zuspieldändern zu arbeiten. Als ich dann die Sache hörte, gefiel mir die Art, wie „Höni“ arbeitete sehr gut. Ich lud ihn ein, bei einem unserer Konzerte in der TU-Mensa, das wir ursprünglich zu dritt, also ohne Schlagzeug machen wollten, mitzuspielen. Er hat seine Gerätschaften zusammengepackt und mit Tonband und Schwebungssummer Electronics produziert. Uns gefiel die Sache so gut, daß wir Hoenig anboten, bei uns zu bleiben. Er willigte ein. Zum selben Konzert hat auch noch ein Keyboarder mitgespielt: Christian „Bino“ Brero, der eigentlich Kontrabassist im Symphonieorchester ist. Er spielte später bei Os Mundi sowie „Lütüls“ Band, hörte aber dann mit der Rockmusik auf. Kurz darauf (ca. September 1971) kam Klaus Schulze, den wir gefragt hatten, ob er bei uns einsteigen würde, zu einem unserer Übungstermine und brachte jemanden mit: Burghard Rausch. Burghard spielte Schlagzeug und war zuerst etwas gehemmt, aber Klaus Schulze managte die ganze Geschichte. Wir haben sofort mit ihm gejammt und waren ganz angetan von Burghard. Nun also war die Gruppe zusammen, die als Agitation Free bekannt geworden ist.

Thomas „Tommy“ Kessler fing an uns fürchterlich zu trainieren. Gehörbildung, Harmonielehre und Rhythmik. Er machte viele Versuche mit uns und gab uns Einblick in die E-Musik. Es war wirklich toll. Im Dezember brachte er Peter Michael Hamel mit, der einige Übungstermine mit uns absolvierte. Er erzählte uns dann von einer neuen Plattenfirma (Music Factory) und riet uns, ein Demo-Band zu machen. Während dieser Zeit spielten alle Bandmitglieder auch noch mit anderen Gruppen zusammen. Burghard und ich in einer Band namens Sopwith Camel zusammen mit dem australischen Gitarristen Richard Clapton, der heute wieder in Australien lebt und dort ein berühmter Rockmusiker geworden ist. „Lüül“ spielte in einer Improvisationsgruppe, die „Guricht“ hieß und aus der Bernhard Arndt kommt, der wiederum zum Schluß bei Agitation Free gespielt hat. Michael Hoenig spielte in E-Formationen. „Lüül“, Manuel Göttching, Hartmut Enke, Klaus Freudigmann, Conrad Schnitzler, Thomas Keyserling und ich spielten ebenfalls in einer E-Improvisationsgruppe namens Eruption und traten damit auch auf.

Das Jahr 1972

Wir spielten ein Demoband ein und schickten es an Music Factory, ein Label des Schott-Musikverlags. Die Antwort war positiv und man lud uns für den 25.2.1972 nach Mainz zu einem Konzert im Kurfürstlichen Schloß ein, um unsere Live-Qualitäten (gegen gute Gage) zu testen. Irgendwelche Bosse von Plattenfirmen waren auch da und deren Kritik war recht gut, so daß Music Factory sich entschloß, eine Platte mit uns zu produzieren.

Wir haben in der Folge einen (d.h. mehrere) Plattenverträge unterschrieben, über die man lieber nicht sprechen sollte. Das einzig Positive war der uns zur damaligen Zeit relativ hoch erscheinende Lizenzsatz, aber wir hatten natürlich keinen blassen Schimmer und schätzten unseren Marktwert völlig falsch ein. Jedenfalls waren wir froh, einen Plattenvertrag zu haben und keiner ahnte, daß

unsere Einstellung sich in den folgenden Jahren von Freude in Ärger wandeln würde.

Inzwischen hatte sich Kairo in Form eines Briefes gemeldet, der von Christian Nakonz, der seines Zeichens tatsächlich Konsul war, kam. Er teilte uns mit, daß er inzwischen mit seinem Freund Hartmut Geerken vom Goethe-Institut gesprochen habe, und daß Kairo die Federführung für eine Tournee mit uns übernommen hatte. Im Frühjahr 1972 sollte es losgehen. Wir waren platt!

Road to Cairo

Das Jahr 1972

In Berlin hatten wir im Januar angefangen, Berliner Musiklehrer auf Improvisationsrock anzutörnen und ließen sie mit ihren Schulklassen ins sogenannte „Beat-Studio“ kommen, um denen etwas über Avantgarde, Rock und elektronische Musik zu erzählen. Der Andrang war ziemlich groß, aber trotzdem hörten wir im März auf die Sache weiter zu betreiben, da wir uns auf Kairo vorbereiten wollten.

Am 4. April flogen wir vom Flughafen Berlin-Tempelhof nach München. Ein paar Stunden und Whiskys mußten wir warten und dann ging es in die Maschine nach Kairo. Das Flugzeug war voll besetzt mit griechischen Gastarbeitern, die zum Osterfest nach Hause wollten. In Thessaloniki machen wir eine Zwischenlandung. Der Flughafen - nur eine Grasnarbe, zwei Düsenjäger und sonst nur unsere Boeing 727. Das Flughafengebäude ist im Bau. Die Griechen verlassen das Flugzeug, nur noch 10 Leute außer uns. Warten -. In Deutschland waren zwei Pockenfälle bekanntgeworden. Es stellt sich heraus, das einige der Griechen kein Impfzeugnis haben, also wieder zurück von der Startpiste zum Abfertigungsgebäude, eventuell müssen diese Leute wieder mit. Der Pilot schimpft über Mikrofon. Es regelt sich aber doch alles und wir dürfen weiterfliegen. Ein dufter Flug, „Lüül“ und ich flirtete mit einem schönen Mädchen, das leider in Kairo nur umsteigt. Sie will nach Zentralafrika zu ihrem Verlobten - Schade. Neben mir auf der rechten Seite, dazwischen der Gang, - ein „Bonze“ von Krupp, „incognito“, wie er sagt.

Wir kommen schließlich gut gelaunt in Kairo an. Gleich der erste Augenblick hat uns fürchterlich geflippt: Abends 10 Uhr und draußen 30 Grad Wärme, in Berlin waren Minus-Grade. Ein irres Treiben, fremde Leute und „sweet smell of perfume“. Dann Hartmut Geerken vom Goethe Institut, ein dufter Typ, und ganz anders als wir ihn uns vorgestellt haben. Er ist Free-Jazz-Fan, hervorragend, das geht ja schon irgendwie etwas in unsere Richtung! Mit dem Instituts-eigenen VW Bus gehts dann zum Hotel. Dem Bus fehlt teilweise die Frontscheibe. Übermütig Steine werfende Kinder, normal in Ägypten, erklärt man uns. Anschließend treffen wir Christian Nakonz wieder. Im Haus von Geerken plaudern und feiern wir noch bis in die frühen Morgenstunden.

Am nächsten Tag soll das Konzert sein und unsere Anlage, die wegen der Kosten nicht als Übergepäck, sondern als Luftfracht mitflog, muss aus den Händen des Zolls geleierte werden. Leider geht die Sache schief und wir müssen die beiden netten Herren, die uns auf Anweisung von Herrn Sadat (Goethe-Institut-Freund und selbst Jazz-Musiker) schon am Vorabend zusammen mit Herrn Geerken durch den Zoll geschleust hatten, noch einmal bemühen. Doch bevor sie zum Einsatz schreiten können, wird der Zoll geschlossen, Pech. Das Konzert wird verschoben. Wir erwarten die Konzertbesucher am Eingang der Halle und erklären ihnen auf Englisch, weshalb das Konzert verschoben werden muß. Auch gut, Malesch. . . wir lernen zum ersten Mal das Wort kennen, das wir als Titel unserer ersten LP verwenden werden. Malesch = nimm's leicht, macht nichts. Das wichtigste Wort in Ägypten. Wir nehmen's auch auf die leichte Schulter. Bei dieser Gelegenheit lernen wir ein paar Deutsche in unserem Alter kennen - Söhne und Töchter dort ansässiger Diplomaten. Eine halbe Stunde später hat Joshi seine ständige Begleitung während des Ägypten-Aufenthalts getroffen, eine flotte Dame von - na sagen wir, schätzungsweise 16 Jahren. Unschlüssig, was wir nun tun sollen, entscheiden wir uns für's Essengehen. Ziel wird ein Nachtclub namens Sahara City, ein altes Zelt, das seinerzeit König Faruk seiner Lieblingsfrau geschenkt hat. Zuvor haben wir unseren ersten Kontakt mit den Pyramiden, weil man uns dort erst einmal vorbeikutschiert, denn der Nachtclub befindet sich in ihrer Nähe. Gigantisch, wir sind erschlagen!

Nachher im Zelt gutes Essen, Musik und Bauchtanz und ein Ägypter, der spontan mit der dort

spielenden Kapelle mitsingt. Ich lasse mein Tonbandgerät laufen, das ich fortan auf Schritt und Tritt mitschleppen werde. Die Aufnahmen werden später als O-Ton auf der Malesch-LP verwendet.

Am nächsten Tag findet das Konzert statt. Vom Fellachen bis zur fast kompletten amerikanischen Botschaft - Alle da. Eine runde Stimmung.

Tags darauf Party bei Nakonz. Wir nehmen unsere Anlage mit. Erst spielt eine ägyptische Band zum Tanzen und dann kommt das Chaos mit Namen Agitation Free. Wir spielen wilde Improvisationen und gegen Ende steigt Hartmut Geerken auch noch auf dem Klavier ein. Dann wieder Tanz, Cocktails und Jet Set. Irgendwie komisch weil ungewohnt. Zum Schluß bleiben nur noch Nakonz, Geerken nebst Anhang und unsere Chaotentruppe übrig. Um fünf Uhr früh gehts ab ins Hotel.

Am nächsten Tag Kinogang in ein Freilichtkino, ungewohnt aber schön. Dann lernen wir einen Entwicklungshelfer namens Hubertus von Puttkamer kennen, der heute in Berlin wohnt und Professor an der Technischen Fachhochschule ist. Er drehte an den Pyramiden von Sakkara mit uns einen Super-8 Film, der auch ausschnittsweise auf dieser Webseite zu sehen ist und kümmerte sich während unseres Aufenthalts in Kairo rührend um uns.

Während der folgenden Tage laufend neue Eindrücke. Ich lerne meine ständige Begleiterin während dieser Tage kennen, Nina, eine nette Bulgarin aus der deutschen Schule, für die ich eine andere stehen lasse (entschuldige bitte Nadja, ich war ein Stiesel), „Lüül“ und Burghard kümmern sich um eine bildhübsche Ägypterin mit akzentfreiem Deutsch: Laila. Für sie schrieb „Lüül“ ein gleichnamiges Stück. Es ist Bestandteil der zweiten LP „Second“.

Am 11. April gehts nach Alexandria. Nach Kairo haut mich nichts mehr um, im Gegenteil, ich finde es langweilig. Dafür interessiert mich die Nil-Delta-Straße umsomehr, Mig-Düsenjäger stehen am Straßenrand in überdimensionalen Bauernhäusern: Tarnung, der Krieg gegen Israel ist nicht lange her.

Auftritt in Alexandria: statt der bestellten PA steht nur eine Hi-Fi Anlage als Beschallung für einen tausend Personen fassenden Saal zur Verfügung. Obendrein haben wir alle Schlagzeug-Metalteile in Kairo vergessen. Das Motto der Band, Improvisation, ist angesagt. Eiligst herbeigeschaffte Notenständer dienen als Ersatz. Zu allem Überflus fällt der Strom während des Konzertes aus. Ich robbe am Stromkabel entlang, um die Sicherung zu finden. Derweil bemüht sich Burghard, das Publikum auf seinem Apfelsinenkisten&Notenständer-Schlagzeug gut zu unterhalten. Der Stromausfall war ein Ägypter, der die Beine nicht heben konnte, der Stecker (zwei lose Kabel) ist aus der Steckdose gerutscht. Malesch! Zu Glück nur einen Tag Aufenthalt in Alexandria, dann back to Kairo!

Angekommen erfahren wir: Unser Konzert in Damaskus fällt aus. Daheim ist der deutsche Bundespräsident Herr Lübke (Zitat: Sehr geehrte Anwesende, liebe Neger. . .) gestorben, also in Sachen Pietät usw. usw. - Dufte, noch ein freier Tag in Kairo.

Am 15. April gehts weiter mit dem Flugzeug nach Beirut. Große Abschiedszeremonie, Tränen. . . we'll be back sometime.

In Beirut herrscht ein fürchterliches Durcheinander. Das Konzert wurde vorverlegt. Anstatt in Beirut, sollen wir nun zuerst im 80 km entfernten Tripoli spielen. Was mit unserer Anlage geschieht, hängt vom Zoll ab. In Kairo hatte Bestechung geholfen und auch hier waren die netten Herren vom Goethe-Institut behilflich, sie kennen ihre Pappenheimer und lächeln. Höni muß vorführen, daß sein Synthesizer ein Musikinstrument und keine Zentraleinheit für Spionage oder gar eine Bombe ist. Um sieben ist die Anlage dann startklar. Hubert Eichheim vom Goethe-Institut Tripoli holt uns ab. Der Transporter mit der Anlage fährt später ab als wir. Hubert ist gut drauf und kennt die Küstenstraße gut. Ich darf nicht aus dem Fenster gucken, 80m fällt der Felsen auf dem die Straße ist bis zum Meer ab, dazu viel Verkehr. Die Straße ist 4m breit und Hubert fährt 140. Am liebsten hielte ich mir die Augen zu. Joshi hat's gut, der schläft. Hubert steuert seinen 280er SE zielsicher durch die Brandung entgegenkommender Autos. „Wenn ich das überlebe. . .“, denke ich bei mir. Nun, wir kommen glücklich an, unsere Anlage allerdings später, doch das Publikum wartet geduldig und hilft sogar beim Entladen. Nach dem Konzert gehen wir gut Essen, „Lüül“, Burghard und Höni danach ins Hotel, Joshi und ich noch zu den Eichheims. Erst einmal baden wir und entfernen die aus Ägypten mitgereisten Flöhe, wobei Frau Eichheim, die aus Griechenland stammt, mit guten Tips zur sicheren Flohentfernung dienen kann.

Am 16. April fahren wir zurück nach Beirut zum nächsten Gig. Vor dem Konzertsaal, einer alten Kirche, sitzt ein alter Freund aus Berlin, Franz aus der Kommune 1, lächelt und sagt „Hallo“, als ob wir uns auf dem Kurfürstendamm begegnen würden. Wiedersehensfreude.

Nach dem Konzert spricht uns ein schwächlicher Libanese an. Sein Name ist Assaad. Er spricht französisch und wohnt in Paris. Später sollte er alle Frankreich-Tourneen von Tangerine Dream, Ash Ra Tempel, Klaus Schulze, Can und Agitation Free organisieren. Irgendwann vertrat er alle Bands, die bei Virgin-Records unter Vertrag waren.

Am 17. erholen wir uns am Strand, um am 18. in Nicosia (Zypern) fit zu sein. Als wir mit unseren Instrumenten das Flugzeug betreten, lächelt uns der Pilot an und sagt „I fly the airplane, you play for us today, a deal?“. Zum Glück läuft mein Tonband. Mit diesen seinen Worten beginnt später die LP Malesch.

Zypern ist sehr ruhig, das Hotel gehört zwei englischen Ladies, terrible english food. Fernsehinterviews, Chauffeur, wir fühlen uns wie die Rolling Stones, immerhin sind wir eine der ersten Rockbands in diesen Breiten.

Am letzten Tag besaube ich mich fürchterlich. Unser Gastgeber vom Goethe-Institut hat nur Gin vorrätig. Im Hotel kotze ich ins Waschbecken. Gott, ist mir das peinlich, vornehmlich wegen Burghard, der mit mir das Zimmer teilt.

Ab nach Athen, wo wir am 21. April spielen. Dort lernen wir griechische Rockgruppen kennen, von denen uns eine endlich ein paar brauchbare Anlagenteile für das Konzert borgt. Herzlichen Dank, Jungs. Alle klagen über die Junta, man zeigt uns ein Underground-Lokal namens „Kitharo“ und Joshi hat schon wieder 'ne Braut. Die Jungs vom Goethe-Institut sind rührig und helfen dem Underground so gut wie möglich. Eigentlich erstaunlich, bis auf den Herrn in Alexandria waren alle Goethe-Instituts-Leute erste Klasse, wirklich.

Das Konzert in Thessaloniki fällt wegen deren Revolutionsfeiertage aus. Na Prost denn auch!

Voll von Eindrücken, erlesenen Speisen, Getränke und des Lobes über neue Freunde fliegen wir ab nach Hause.

Ab ins Studio - Malesch

Das Jahr 1972

Ab 6. Juli 1972 ging es wieder ins Studio. Wir wählten das Audio-Tonstudio in Berlin, da es das erste 16-Spur Studio in Berlin war. Wir gingen ohne großes Konzept an die Arbeit und improvisierten einfach. So entstand jeden Tag ein anderes Stück. An zwei Tagen spielte Peter Michael Hamel mit. Nach dem Abmischen suchten wir uns die passenden O-Töne unserer auf der Nah-Ost Tournee gesammelten akustischen Eindrücke und verbanden damit die einzelnen Stücke. Danach diskutierten wir über die Titel und wählten sie aus. Das erste Stück nannten wir „You play for us today“. Siehe den vorher erwähnten Piloten der Middle East Airlines.

Das nächste Stück nannten wir „Sahara City“, nach dem Platz, an dem der Nightclub lag, in dem wir am ersten Abend der Tournee so fürstlich gespeist hatten. Noch heute, wenn ich das Stück höre und die Augen schließe, erlebe ich wieder die Fahrt dorthin, tiefe Nacht, wohlige Wärme, Sterne und die Pyramiden. Unvergesslich!

Das dritte Stück heißt „A La Toul“, was soviel wie „geradeaus“ bedeutet. Hier spiegelt sich die Hektik der Straßen Kairos wieder, wo es eigentlich unmöglich ist geradeaus zu gehen, ergo ein „ägyptisches“ geradeaus.

Der vierte Titel heißt „Puls“. Hier experimentierte Michael Hoenig mit einem Zufallsgenerator und Equipment der Firma Hofschneider, Berlin.

„Chan el Chalili“ ist das nächste Stück, benannt nach dem berühmten Basar, wo auch wir uns im Feilschen erprobt haben. „Malesch“, das sechste Stück, gelang uns am besten. Es stellt eine Huldigung an die ägyptische Lebensweise dar. „Rücksturz“, der letzte Titel auf Malesch, klang schon wieder sehr europäisch und beschreibt unsere Rückreise nach Hause, die wirklich wie ein

Absturz in die europäische Kultur war.

Ursprünglich sollte die LP im September erscheinen, rechtzeitig zum Weihnachtsgeschäft. Doch daraus wurde nichts. Letztlich erschien sie am 1. Dezember. Wann und vor allen Dingen wo sie nun überall erhältlich war, weiß niemand, denn der Vertrieb in Deutschland gestaltete sich miserabel. Inzwischen hatte ein alter Freund, Alfred Bergmann, der außerdem einer meiner alten Schullehrer war, im „Sender Freies Berlin“ (SFB) alles für ein Hörspiel über uns vorbereitet. „Bergi“ hatte sich gerade vorher ein Haus in Halen, in der Nähe von Osnabrück, gekauft und es wegen der Ruhe und der Möglichkeit Musik aufzunehmen, als Aufnahmeort gewählt. Also packten unsere Roadies Uli Rathsack und Uli Popp unsere Anlage ein und wir fuhren aufs Land. Zehn Tage lebten wir zusammen und machten Musik. Wolfgang Wölfer, der Regisseur, jammte manchmal mit. Im Prinzip waren wir jeden Tag reichlich betrunken. Das hatte zur Folge, daß uns die Wurzeln mancher Reibereien ziemlich klar wurden. Leider schafften wir es nicht, unsere Probleme zu bereinigen. Es gab also Streit. Und noch eines geschah: Jeder von uns hatte seinen Stempel weg und wurde ihn nicht mehr los. Alfred Bergmann der das alles aufgezeichnet hatte, schnitt in Berlin mit Wolfgang Wölfer die Bänder kunstvoll zusammen und würzte das Ganze mit unserer Musik. Am 7.4.73 wurde das Hörspiel im SFB gesendet. Andere Radiosender übernahmen das Programm später. Am 30.8.72 fuhren wir nach München. Die Olympiade war in vollem Gange - Ich hasse Sport (Nur früher nicht, da habe ich meine Zigaretten selbst gedreht!). Man verfrachtete uns dort in ein Schulgebäude, Flachbau, das durch Bundeswehr-Betten zum Schlafsaal umfunktioniert wurde, und in dem außer uns auch noch die Musiker der New Folksingers und Joy Unlimited wohnten. Alle kamen zum Glück ohne Groupies, Familie oder sonstige Sauerstoffverbraucher. Am 1.9.72 hatten wir unser erstes Konzert in der Medienstraße, die aus Anlaß der Olympiade als kultureller Beitrag gedacht war. Das zweite Konzert folgte am 3.9.72 im Theatron. Die Besetzung war diesmal Burghard Rausch, „Lüül“, Michael Hoenig, Peter Michael Hamel, ich, sowie Wolfram Jacob von Os Mundi, genannt „Nase“ an den Congas. Eigentlich sollten wir noch zwei weitere Konzerte geben, aber dann machte uns der Mordanschlag der Terroristen einen Strich durch die Rechnung - Malesch! Wir blieben noch für ein paar Tage in München, fuhren dann wieder nach Hause und hatten für ca. drei Monate keine Gigs mehr.

Dafür produzierten wir am 26. und 27.9.72 ein weiteres Hörspiel, „Eine Krähe hackt der anderen“, wieder mit unserem Freund „Bergi“. Außerdem gründeten wir in Berlin zusammen mit Michael Duwe, Os Mundi und Ute Kannenberg (ehemals Schlagersängerin Tanja Berg) die Berliner Musikerinitiative kurz BMI. Wir stellten die Sache ganz gut auf die Beine. Auf der Gründungsversammlung im November oder Dezember 1972 sprach uns Dietmar Burmeister an. Er hatte zeitweilig bei Ash Ra Tempel getrommelt und fragte uns, ob wir nicht einen Percussionisten bzw. zweiten Trommler gebrauchen könnten.

Das Jahr 1973

Bis auf Burghard Rausch gefiel uns allen die Idee ganz gut. Am 7. Januar 1973 spielten wir in der Hamburger „Fabrik“ noch mit Burghard alleine, auch wurden weitere Aufnahmen für das Hörspiel „Agitation Free, Portrait einer Musikgruppe“ vom 8. bis 12. Januar noch ohne Dietmar gemacht. Bei unserem Gig zur Eröffnung der Berliner Discothek Dampfmaschine am 8. und 9. März spielte Burmeister dann aber schon mit.

Schon vorher gab es Ärger. Wir hatten entdeckt, das Joshi angefangen hatte zu fixen. Ich mag gar nicht daran denken, was damals los war. Joshi versprach uns hoch und heilig, vor der geplanten Frankreich-Tournee mit dem „schießen“ aufzuhören. Natürlich packte er es nicht, und war am Tag vor unserer Abfahrt immer noch drauf. Mit zitternden Knien brachen wir also nach Paris auf. Hinter Aachen warf Joshi seine Spritze aus dem Auto. Bis Paris ging dann noch alles gut...

Assad empfing uns freundlich und stellte uns seinen Eltern vor. Er hatte eine Garage für unseren Wagen und ein billiges aber schönes Hotel besorgt. Am nächsten Tag ging es Joshi schlecht. Die Wirkung der Valoron-Tropfen war nicht ausreichend und er hatte seinen ersten Entzug. Wir erzählten Assad nur, Joshi sei krank. Assads Eltern kümmerten sich rührend um ihn. Nein, nein, einen Arzt wollte er nicht, es würde bald schon wieder besser gehen. Kurz vor dem Konzert war Joshi verschwunden. Wir suchten und fanden ihn. Inzwischen lernten wir die deutsche Fotografin Irm Siering kennen (Coverinnenfoto LP Second). Es war unmöglich, Junk zu beschaffen, aber irgendwie

schaften wir es, Joshi auf die Beine zu stellen.

Beim Konzert in der Opera Comique mit Nico lehnte er sich dann an seinen Marshall-Turm und hatte Schweißperlen auf der Stirn. Obwohl er saumäßig spielte, waren die Leute doch begeistert. Es wurde ein voller Erfolg. Alle einschließlich Assad und Irm waren happy. Bis zum nächsten Konzert war Joshi wieder ziemlich okay.

Wir spielten im ORTF-Gebäude für die Radio-Sendung Pop Club, waren live auf Sendung und bekamen später Anrufe. Die Leute wollten wissen, was das für eine Gruppe war.

Wir lernten Pierre Latesse kennen, der uns fragte, ob wir nicht in ein paar Tagen auch noch eine Fernsehsendung machen wollten. Wir waren begeistert. Am selben Tag gaben wir noch ein Konzert im Salle Napoleon, dann hatten wir zwei Tage Pause. Zwischendurch zogen wir alle zu Irm. Dann weitere Konzerte auf dem Land. Am 27. März machten wir die Aufnahme fürs Fernsehen. Rock en Stock hieß die Sendung. Abends gingen wir zum Pop-Club, einer anderen Sendung, weil Can da war. Großes Hallo, denn wir kannten uns bereits. Joshi machte den Can ein Groupie abspenstig: Patchouli. Er wurde also langsam wieder. Patchouli zog mit zu Irm. Am 30. März gaben wir ein Frei-Konzert in der Universität Vincennes bei Paris, am 31. Januar und 1. Februar wieder Konzerte auf dem Lande und fuhren dann über Paris nach Hause.

Für lange Zeit hatten wir aber keine Ruhe, denn am 10.4. ging es schon wieder nach Frankreich, zu einem einzigen Fernsehig am 11.4. bei Paris. Danach ging es sofort wieder nach Hause, damit uns die Kosten nicht auffraßen. Kaum in Berlin angekommen, erfuhren wir, daß unser Freund Assad schon wieder gewirbelt hatte. So spielten wir am 8.5.73 im „Sound“ in Berlin um Geld aufzutanken und rauschten am nächsten Tag schon wieder in Richtung Frankreich ab.

Joshi hatte natürlich inzwischen schon wieder zu fixen begonnen! Die nötigen Medikamente zum Entzug wollte er am nächsten Morgen besorgen, aber wer sich am nächsten Morgen nicht meldete, war Joshi. Wir waren stocksauer. Bei „Lüül“ versammelt, telefonierten wir wie die Verrückten, aber Joshi war nicht zu finden. Am Nachmittag meldete er sich und stellte in Aussicht, innerhalb der nächsten halben Stunde seine Medikamente zu bekommen. So stellten wir ihm ein Ultimatum: Entweder träfe er in der nächsten Stunde bei Lüül ein, oder wir würden allein fahren! Nach einer Stunde war er noch immer nicht da. Wir überlegten. An sich hätten wir die Tour jetzt absagen müssen, da wir keinen Leadgitarristen mehr hatten. Wir entschlossen uns doch zu fahren, denn uns fielen die Brüder Stephan und Frank Diez ein. Beide waren Spitzenleute und in der Lage unser Programm aus dem Handgelenk zu schütteln. Also anrufen. Frank ist verhindert, mit Stephan haben wir schon oft gespielt, er kennt auch unsere Stücke und vor allem hat er Zeit und Lust. Anruf bei Joshi, tut uns leid Alter, wir sprechen darüber, wenn wir zurück sind. Da wir Joshis Mercedes nun nicht mitnehmen konnten, borgten wir uns das Auto von Frau Hoenig (Mutter von Michael) und fuhren endlich los.

Touren bis zum Ende

Das Jahr 1973

Über Paris, wo wir Assad abholten, fuhren wir nach Orleans. Wir sollten in einem Zirkuszelt während eines kleinen Festivals spielen. Zwei Bühnen, eine große und eine kleine, waren aufgebaut. Da die große Bühne schon übermäßig vollgestopft war mit dem Zeug der vor uns spielenden Band Faust, verzogen wir uns freiwillig auf die kleinere Bühne und hatten unsere Ruhe. Am nächsten Tag spielten wir in Bordeaux wieder auf einem Kleinfestival. Wir konnten erst um 2:00 Uhr nachts anfangen, da die Veranstaltung durch einen Bombenalarm unterbrochen wurde. Vor uns spielte Gong. Eine dufte Gruppe.

Tags darauf spielten wir in Brest. Wie jeden Tag legten wir wieder ca. 400-500 km zurück, danach auch noch spielen, das schlauchte. Wir hatten Rauchpulver mit und nebelten den ganzen Saal ein.

Am nächsten Tag fuhren wir gemütlich von unserem Übernachtungsplatz, einer Landkommune (Rockgruppe, nannte sich „Tribu“, Indianerfreaks) in Richtung Angers. Stephan war Weinkenner und empfahl uns den hiesigen Rosé. Als wir Angers verließen, kaufte er so ca. 15-20 Flaschen

Wein ein. Wir beteiligen uns mit ein paar Francs und sofften das Zeug wie Brause. Weinselig wie wir waren überschritten wir auf der Rückfahrt nach Paris die Höchstgeschwindigkeit und wurden prompt angehalten. Vorher hatten wir unsere Roadies immer gemahnt, vorsichtig zu fahren und vor allem nicht zu trinken. Besonders auf John, einen Ami, der vorher Roadie bei Jefferson Airplane und Delaney & Bonnie war und somit das California-Feeling auch in Sachen Wein hatte, hatten wir wie irre eingeredet, damit er nicht zuviel Scheiße baut. Aber die einzigen, die man erwischt hat, waren wir. Nur ein Anruf bei der Deutschen Botschaft rettete uns. Glück gehabt!

In Paris spielten wir im Bataclan am Boulevard Voltaire. Can hatten vor zwei Monaten dort gespielt. Mit von der Partie bei diesem Konzert war auch noch Nico, die wir schon von unserer ersten Tournee her kannten.

Mit dem Gig in Paris war die Frankreich-Tour zu Ende und wir fuhren von Paris nach Frankfurt, um auf dem German Super Rock Festival zu spielen. Obwohl wir uns diesen Gig noch alleine besorgt hatten, erhielt unser Management dafür schon Prozente. Für uns war dieses Festival die erste persönliche Begegnung mit Kraan, der deutschen Gruppe, auf die ich am meisten stand. Und natürlich auch Karthago. Von dieser Band kannten wir zwar ein paar Leute von früher, wir hatten aber keinen direkten Kontakt zueinander, da sie zu einer anderen Szene gehörten. In der Folge spielten wir des öfteren zusammen, vor allem weil wir das gleiche Management hatten, und entwickelten ein recht herzliches Verhältnis zueinander.

Frankfurt war das letzte Konzert mit Dietmar Burmeister. Er mußte aussteigen, weil Burghard und er musikalisch nicht zurecht kamen.

Wieder in Berlin, gaben wir ein Konzert im Radiosender RIAS, um am 14.6. wieder in Richtung Paris zu fahren. Am 16.6 hatten wir ein Konzert in der Nähe von Paris, in Saint Michel sur Orge. Guru Guru wurde auch erwartet, konnte aber wegen Schwierigkeiten an der Grenze nicht kommen.

Das nächste Konzert gaben wir in Montmorillon, einer winzigen Kleinstadt, und dann ging es nach Roanne. Dort spielten wir im L'arc en Ciel oder englisch Rainbow, von dem man sagte, daß es damals der beste Club in Europa gewesen sein soll. Das stimmte meiner Ansicht nach auch (diverse Leute, wie z. B. Klaus Schulze, Tangerine Dream und Klaus D. Müller meinen das auch). Ein paar Menschen hatten Geld aufgetrieben und zwei Häuser auf dem Land gemietet. Aus einem Gebäude machten sie ein Wohnhaus und im Obergeschoss des anderen Hauses errichteten sie ein superteures Restaurant, das man nur als Clubmitglied betreten durfte. In den Keller bauten sie einen Privatclub und im Erdgeschoß eröffneten sie einen Laden für Freaks. Im Club und dem Restaurant wurden die Leute aus der Umgebung ausgenommen und die Gelder flossen dann ins L'arc en Ciel. Es waren meist nie mehr als 200 Leute da, und dennoch spielten dort Gruppen wie z. B. Soft Machine. Die Gagen waren auch echt okay. An sich ein echter Traumladen, schwer zu beschreiben. Wir gaben dort zwei Konzerte, blieben dann noch 6 Tage und probten und entspannten uns dort. Das Stück „In the silence of the morning sunrise“ ist dort entstanden.

Am 30.6. kehrten wir zurück und spielten auf einem Festival in Marburg, gemeinsam u.a. mit Atlantis. Dann hatten wir eine Ruhepause und bereiteten uns auf die nächste Platte vor.

Vom 15.7. bis zum 21.7. waren wir in München im Studio 70 und spielten mit Dave Siddle als Toningenieur die LP „Second“ ein. Während der Aufnahmen verkrachten sich „Lüül“ und Stephan Diez, der als Ersatz für Joshi inzwischen festes Mitglied der Band geworden war, fürchterlich. Nach den Aufnahmen verschwand Stephan meist ganz schnell aus dem Studio, auch um seinem Bruder Frank in einem anderen Studio bei einer Aufnahme zu helfen, der wiederum bei einem seiner Besuche bei uns mit seiner Frau zusammen background vocals für uns sang. Außerhalb des Studios sahen wir Stephan kaum.

Nach einer einwöchigen Pause in Berlin kehrten wir am 28.7. nach München ins Studio zurück. Während des Abmischens war der Krach zwischen Stephan und uns komplett und wir beschlossen uns nach den Aufnahmen zu trennen. Stephan spielte anschließend bei Chris Hinze, der WDR-Bigband und als Studio-Musiker.

In Berlin suchten wir wie verrückt nach einem neuen Gitarristen, aber irgendwie sah alles aussichtslos aus. Unter anderem trampfte Thomas Kretschmer mit seinem AC 30 (Kofferverstärker der Firma VOX) von Hamburg nach Berlin, weil er das Panik-Orchester verlassen wollte. Leider erhielt er anderweitig ein besseres Angebot und wir mussten weiter suchen.

Schließlich meldete sich ein alter Bekannter, der Musikprofessor Heinz Lau bei uns und erzählte uns, daß er einen guten Gitarristen kennen würde, der aus dem Jazz komme und nach Berlin ziehen wolle. So lernten wir Gustav „Gustl“ Lütjens kennen und wir waren wirklich erstaunt, weil er fast genau so wie Stephan spielen konnte. Also wurden schnell die Stücke eingeübt und als die zweite LP draußen war, stand die Gruppe schon beinahe. Bei zwei PR-Gigs in Hamburg (Fabrik) und Hannover (Silo) spielte allerdings noch Stephan mit. Gustav trat dann am 20.10. zum ersten Mal mit uns in Würselen bei Aachen auf. Am 22.11. gaben wir ein Konzert in der Berliner Akademie der Künste und spielten dort Stücke der neuen LP.

Zwei Tage später spielten wir dort eine E-Musik Komposition von Erhard Großkopf, einem Freund von uns auf. Das Stück wurde vom RIAS mitgeschnitten und gesendet. Wir spielten das Stück auch in Warschau beim Festival „Warschauer Herbst“. Doch darüber später mehr.

Das Jahr 1974

Am 3.1.74 hatten wir ein Konzert in der Berliner Dachluke und am 18.1.1974 ging es mal wieder nach Frankreich. Von Troyes über Rennes nach Brest, wo wir herzlich von Freunden empfangen wurden. Leider hatten wir diesmal kein Dope dabei.

Dann weiter nach Nantes, Clermont Ferrand, Marseille, wo es zu dieser Jahreszeit schon wirklich herrlich warm war, und nette Bräute sich unser annahmen, Montpellier und Lyon. In Lyon gab es bei reichen Leuten eine Party für uns. Auf dem Weg zum Hotel brach das Gaspedal unseres LKWs, bis zum Hotel war Höni am Steuer und eine zweite Person musste unten kauern (ich glaube, ich übernahm diesen verantwortungsvollen Posten) und das Gaspedal auf Zuruf mit der Hand betätigen. Sch... , wie reparieren? Aber auch das war kein Problem für unseren Super-Roadie Klaus D. Müller, Ex Ash Ra Tempel, ohne den wir schon viele Male aufgeschmissen gewesen wären, der auch dieses Mal seinem Ruf als Hexenmeister alle Ehre machte.

Mit neuem Mut und geflicktem Gaspedal ging es dann nach Köln zum WDR, dem Westdeutschen Rundfunk. Das Konzert dort lief prima. Stephan Diez besuchte uns, und wir verstanden uns eigentlich wieder gut.

Am 13.2. spielten wir einen Abtörngig (seltsame Stimmung beim Konzert) in Duisburg, - merkwürdige Stadt. Danach hingen wir drei Tage in Hotels herum, gaben das soeben verdiente Geld wieder aus und spielten dann in Moers.

Langsam wurde die ganze Sache für uns zur Routine und wir begannen uns selbst gegenüber immer kritischer zu werden. Ein paar Festivals weiter waren wir uns darüber im Klaren, daß es so nicht weitergehen konnte: Anreise, Aufbau, Programm runterspielen, Abbau, Abreise usw. Das war nicht unsere Sache. Zudem entfernten wir uns musikalisch immer mehr voneinander. Hoenig stand auf elektronische Improvisationen, Gustav mehr auf Jazz, „Lüül“ stand immer noch auf Beatles und Folklore, Burghard fuhr auf harte Rockmusik ab und ich, Fame, mochte Grateful Dead, Country und Funky Music.

Nach einem Gig im bayrischen Ort Schönsee überlegten wir ernsthaft, wie es weitergehen sollte. Gustav und ich meinten, das es besser wäre, wenn wir zusammen etwas Neues machen würden und schlugen unseren Austritt vor. Das war den anderen nicht recht. Dann bekam Hoenig ein Angebot von Klaus Schulze, das er annahm. Ohne Hoenig wollte Burghard aber nicht weitermachen und auch „Lüül“ wollte lieber etwas alleine auf die Beine stellen.

Am 16.6.74 gaben wir in Paris zum letzten Mal auf einem Festival ein Konzert in der alten Formation, kurz bevor wir im Pariser Olympia hätten auftreten sollen, dazu kam es dann nicht mehr, obwohl Assaad schon alle Weichen gestellt hatte.

„Lüül“ lernte in Paris eine Frau kennen und blieb dort. Nach Berlin zurückgekehrt, suchte ich mit Gustav sofort nach neuen Leuten. Wir fanden Bernhard Arndt (E-Piano) und Christian Kneisel (Synthesizer) ganz okay für uns und fingen an wie die Wilden zu proben. Bei einem Konzert in Witten half Dietmar Burmeister als Schlagzeuger aus. Mit ihm, sowie Micki Duwe, nahmen wir am 18. und 19. Juli in Berlin noch eine weitere Hörspielmusik, „Störenfried“, unter dem Namen Agitation Free auf.

Am 27.9. flogen wir nach Warschau, unser Roadie Roger Niklaus quälte sich mit dem LKW über

Frankfurt/Oder nach Polen. Als Schlagzeuger nahmen wir noch einmal Burghard mit. Das Konzert am 28.9. war sehr explosiv. Um die nicht umtauschbare Gage in Zloty zu verjubeln, blieben wir noch ein paar Tage und amüsierten uns prächtig. Eine kleine Nebengeschichte gibt es noch: Das Konzert auf diesem E- (E = „Ernste“, vielleicht, weil keiner lacht und die Eier zurückgebunden werden) Musik-Festival war überraschenderweise gut besucht und zwar hauptsächlich von jungen Leuten, die in der Ankündigung gelesen hatten, daß eine Berliner Rockband kommt. Als dann die programmgemässen drei Stücke „Looping IV“ von Erhard Großkopf und uns, „Church of Anthrax“ von Terry Riley & John Cale, sowie eine Komposition von uns, die dem Charakter einer solchen Veranstaltung Rechnung trug, verklungen waren, gab es bescheidenen Beifall. Doch statt zu gehen blieben die jungen Leute im Saal und verlangten nach mehr. Erst waren wir ratlos, doch dann dämmerte es uns: Die wollten Rockmusik hören! Also ging ich ans Mikrophon, faselte auf Englisch irgendwas von „Wir denken...“, „Rockmusik, eine von vielen unserer Sparten.“ und daß wir dem geneigten Publikum dann noch gerne einen Blues zum Besten geben wollten. Wir fingen an, den „Nightlife-Blues“ von B. B. King zu spielen, zum einen wegen unserer verwerflichen Natur und zum anderen, weil dieses Stück aus dem üblichen drei-Harmonien-Schema herausragt, was dann wohl die Ohren der Verantwortlichen nicht beleidigen würde, so dachten wir. Weit gefehlt - man stellte uns den Strom ab, Personen in dunklen Einheitsanzügen und modischen Glatzenhaarschnitten, mit Sicherheit staatliche Sicherheitsbeamte, riegelten die Bühne ab, weil schon wütende Unmutskundgebungen im Publikum hörbar wurden. Kurz und gut, der Saal wurde geräumt. Am nächsten Tag fand eine Pressekonferenz für die Internationale Presse statt, in der unser Fauxpas und die skandalösen Umstände erhellt werden sollten. Entweder war es Witold Lutoslawski oder Tomasz Sikorski, ich weiß es nicht mehr genau, in jedem Fall ein berühmter polnischer Komponist und Mitglied des dortigen Komponistenverbandes, der uns in lupenreinem Deutsch erklärte, daß die ersten drei Stücke „seine Welt“ gewesen wären, der „Dreck“ (hat er abgeschwächt gesagt, ich schreibe nur was er wirklich dachte), den wir nachher gespielt hätten, würde nicht auf ein solches Festival gehören. Ich werde solche Menschen wohl nie verstehen. Ich habe jedenfalls über die oft unverständliche E-Musik nie so gedacht, geschweige denn geredet. Erst zuhause gaben mir Berliner Komponisten wie Wilhelm Dieter Siebert oder Hartmut Westphal von der Gruppe Neue Musik meinen Glauben an die E-Musiker wieder, weil die nicht so engstirnig denken oder fühlen.

In Berlin trafen wir uns dann wieder mit den alten Freunden, um die Angelegenheit mit der Auflösung noch einmal zu besprechen. Dabei stellte sich heraus, das Burghard und Hoenig etwas dagegen haben, daß Gustav und ich den Namen Agitation Free weiter benutzen wollen. Wir einigten uns aber ohne Streit, da die neue Band sowieso wenig mit der Musik von Agitation Free zu tun hatte und beschlossen, den Namen mit der Band sterben zu lassen. Noch zwei Konzertverpflichtungen wurden von einer letzten Formation, bestehend aus Bernhard Arndt keyb, John Merritt dr, Lutz Ulbrich g, Christian Kneisel synth, Gustav Lütjens g und Michael Günther b im Berliner Quartier Latin und der Dachluke erfüllt. Am 14.11.74 wurde eine Abschiedsfete, The Final Reunion, für alle Freunde abgehalten, auf der fast alle ehemaligen Musiker anwesend waren und auch spielten. Sogar Christoph kam für zwei Tage aus England zurück, wo er gerade auf Tournee war und spielte Schlagzeug. Axel „Ax“ Genrich konnte leider nicht kommen, dafür erschien aber Mani Neumeier und trommelte eifrig mit.

Was die Leute dann trieben, ist heute Geschichte.

Und zwar: „Lüül“ kehrte für eine Weile nach Frankreich zurück, lebte dort mit Nico und arbeitete an seiner Solokarriere, kehrte mit Nico wieder nach Berlin zurück, spielte bei Ash Ra und war 9 Jahre lang Mitglied im Theaterprojekt „Reineke Fuchs“.

Michael Hoenig versuchte sich am Projekt Timewind. Dann ging er kurz zu Tangerine Dream. Heute ist er erfolgreicher Filmmusikkomponist mit einem eigenen Studio in Los Angeles.

Burghard Rausch hielt erst einmal längere Abstinenz und gründete dann die Band Bel Ami, heute ist er Moderator bei Radio Bremen.

Was aus Christoph Franke geworden ist, ist hinlänglich bekannt. Auch er ist nach seiner Zeit bei Tangerine Dream Filmmusikkomponist und betreibt genau wie Höni ein Studio in Los Angeles.

Lutz „Ludwig“ Kramer ging nach Thailand, betrieb dort zwei Coffee-Shops für mehrere Jahre.

Heute lebt er in Darmstadt und ist Leiter einer Altenpflegeschule in Frankfurt.

Jörg „Joshi“ Schwenke versank in der Drogenszene, fing sich für kurze Zeit wieder und arbeitete im HiFi-Laden seines Vaters in Moabit. Am 14.5.1990 wurde er tot auf einem U-Bahnhof in Berlin aufgefunden, die Droge hat ihn wohl nie verlassen.

John L. habe ich 1994 beim Abschiedsfest des Berliner Lokals Go In wiedergetroffen, wo er mit einer Band auftrat, bei der ich mich um 20 Jahre verjüngt fühlte, die Musik war die gleiche, die Sprüche. . . usw.

Mit Gustl habe ich noch eine Weile weitergearbeitet und eine Gruppe namens Lagoona zusammen mit Manfred Opitz und Konstantin „Bommi“ Bommarius gegründet. Wir brachten es aber nur zu einer Dänemark-Tournee, eine Platte ist nie erschienen. Danach gab es noch Versuche mit den vorgenannten, sowie mit Harald Großkopf, Lou Blackburn, Klaus Henrichs und anderen. Gustav startete danach andere Projekte, machte Studioarbeit, spielte unter anderem auf Tourneen für Shirley Bassey und Nena.

Bernhard Arndt wandte sich der Jazz-Szene zu und hat bis heute 3 eigene LPs herausgebracht.

Dietmar Burmeister ging wieder zu Seedog, der Gruppe in der er schon vorher trommelte, arbeitete als Zapfer in der Berliner Szenekneipe Breitengrad, und hat das Schlagzeugspielen aufgegeben.

Stephan Diez spielte eine Zeit lang bei Chris Hinze und bei Orchestern wie der WDR-Bigband, sowie NDR-Bigband, und lebt heute als Studiomusiker in Hamburg und München. Wiedergetroffen habe ich ihn unlängst in meiner Eigenschaft als Technischer Leiter des Berliner Jazzfestes, als er als Gitarrist der WDR-Bigband beim Jazzfest spielte.

Christian Kneisel machte mehrere Solo-LPs, hatte diverse musikalische Projekte und ist heute Intendant des Stadttheaters Brandenburg.

Michael „Micki“ Duwe, der vor Agitation Free beim Musical Hair spielte, hatte 1972 die Gruppe Metropolis, war später bei Ash Ra Tempel und macht heute Soloprojekte unter dem Namen Mickie D's Unicorn. The Story goes on, aber ohne Agitation Free. Na ja, vielleicht gibt's ja mal 'ne weitere Reunion ?!! (machen alle anderen doch auch!)

Das war also dann der Stand von Ende 1974 - und die Geschichte ging wirklich weiter!

Die Band macht Pause

Das Jahr 1974/75

Nachdem Agitation Free im Streit um die Richtung, in die zu gehen sei, nun kurz vor der Auflösung stand, wollten wir zwei Sturköpfe Gustl und ich dann doch nicht aufgeben. Zunächst einmal konnten wir Lüül davon überzeugen, doch wenigstens temporär weiter mit uns zu arbeiten. Mit Harald Großkopf und Manfred Opitz fanden wir erst einmal Ersatz für Burghard und Höni. Als neues Instrument stieß Klaus Henrichs (Sax) von Os Mundi zu uns. Zunächst war also eine Neue, aber instabile Formation gefunden. In Udo Arndt von der Berliner Band Os Mundi, späterer Mitproduzent von Nina Hagen und Nena, mit dem ich in einer Wohngemeinschaft in der Berliner Bayernallee wohnte, hatten wir einen Verbündeten, denn der machte gerade eine Art Praktikum im Tonstudio des Evangelischen Rundfunkdienstes und lud uns permanent zu Aufnahmen ein, denn er mußte üben mit seinen Geräten umzugehen.

Leider ergab es sich, das ausgerechnet Lüül zu diesen Terminen immer in Frankreich weilte. So gibt es in dieser Formation keine Aufnahme mit ihm, wohl aber Photos. Gustl und ich machten aus der Not eine Tugend.

Musikalische Ausflüge in andere Welten haben bei Agitation Free Tradition. Das Zusammenspiel mit vielen anderen Musikern war Programm. So gab es zu allen Zeiten des Bestehens der Band Projekte z. B. im Bereich der E-Musik. Die, die in den Bereich des Jazzrock oder des Politrock gingen sind aber derzeit nie veröffentlicht worden, weil unsere damalige Plattenfirma eine Veröffentlichung ablehnte. Nichts desto Trotz haben wir viele solcher Projekte durchgeführt. Also sammelten wir wie gewohnt andere befreundete Musiker als Gäste und versuchten uns in anderen musikalischen

Welten.

Etliche Stücke sind aus dieser Zeit erhalten geblieben, aber erst 1999 veröffentlicht worden, Zeugen einer spaßigen Zeit mit unseren Freunden:

- Manfred Opitz, damals Keyboarder der Band Metropolis
- Klaus Henrichs, damals Saxophonist bei Os Mundi
- Harald Großkopf, ehemals Drummer der Band Wallenstein
- Constantin „Bommi“ Bommarius, damals Drummer bei Karthago
- Lou Blackburn, mittlerweile verstorben, ehemals Posaunist bei Duke Ellington und Leiter der Band Mombasa
- Christian „Bino“ Brero, Kontrabassist beim Radio-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, als Pianist
- Bernd Gruber, Kirchen- und Jazzmusiker
- Jochen Bauer, Jazzrock-Drummer in vielen Berliner Formationen

Voller Stolz und Überzeugung präsentierten wir dann die Ergebnisse aus dem ERD-Tonstudio unserer Plattenfirma und begehrten Veröffentlichung. Es folgte eine herbe Enttäuschung! Man erklärte uns, das Ganze wäre zu kommerziell, nicht verkaufbar usw. Also versuchten wir einen Umweg, wir schickten Hartmut Geerken vom Goethe-Institut, den wir damals in Kairo kennengelernt hatten ein Band nach Kabul, Afghanistan, wo dieser derzeit Leiter des örtlichen Goethe-Institutes war, in der Hoffnung, er würde uns eine Tournee ermöglichen und dann würde, wie damals, unsere Plattenfirma Music Factory/Phonogram mitziehen und ein neues Album veröffentlichen.

Auch das war ein Trugschluß, als Antwort erhielten wir ähnliche Kommentare wie von unserer Plattenfirma und zudem den demütigenden Vorschlag uns ein Engagement im Hilton Hotel Kabul eventuell vermitteln zu können. Nun war es soweit gekommen, daß uns anscheinend niemand mehr verstand, obgleich wir uns mit viel konkreteren musikalischen Strukturen als vorher beschäftigten und diese mehr körperbetonte Seite von uns trotzdem auf die alte Art und Weise von Agitation Free verarbeiteten. - Die Ignoranten bekamen einfach nicht mit, daß wir nicht wie Klaus Doldinger spielten sondern auf unsere erprobte, eigene Weise.

Pessimismus machte sich breit und wir beschlossen dann doch unter anderem Namen (Lagoona) und in neuer Formation, unser Glück zu versuchen, also einen richtigen Neuanfang zu wagen. Lüül war inzwischen mehr in Frankreich als in Berlin und somit war das Kapitel Agitation Free anscheinend abgeschlossen. Lagoona hat dann auch nur eine einzige Tournee durch Dänemark gemacht, aber Plattenverträge, geschweige denn Aufnahmen zur Veröffentlichung waren uns nicht beschieden.

Keiner von uns ahnte damals, was noch passieren würde.

Der Misserfolg saß allen in den Knochen und so wurden Agitation Free und Lagoona Ende 1975 zunächst zu Grabe getragen. Alle Bandmitglieder gingen ihrer Wege und ich begann aus Geldnot, die verbliebenen Technischen Geräte zu vermieten. Das führte mich mit der Nina Hagen Band und Jim Rakete zusammen, ohne zu ahnen, daß 23 Jahre später der Gitarrist von Nina Hagen und Spliff Agitation Free wieder zum Leben erwecken würde.

Außerdem gab es während der nächsten Jahre zwischen 1975 und 1999 einige Ereignisse, die zumindest den Namen der Band in Erinnerung hielten. Was das dann letztendlich bedeuten würde war keinem von uns klar.

INTERVIEW MIT MICHI WEHMEYER (EMBRYO)

Die Gruppe EMBRYO wurde 1969 von Christian Burchard und Edgar Hofmann gegründet. Seit 1976/77 ist Michael („Michi“) Wehmeyer als Keyboarder dabei und auf wichtigen Veröffentlichungen der Gruppe (wie „Embryo’s Reise“, 1979) zu hören. Das folgende Interview führte der Autor dieser Website im November 2005 mit dem Musiker. MW = Michael Wehmeyer / MM = Manfred Miersch

MM: Wann hast Du denn angefangen bei EMBRYO mitzuspielen?

MW: Das muß ungefähr 1977 gewesen sein, weil, ich weiß noch, dass es dann doch ziemlich schnell schon Richtung Indienreise ging. Also nach einigen Tourneen hier in Deutschland wurde das dann schon geplant und ich denke mir zwei Jahre waren vielleicht davor, weil ’79 ging es dann nach Indien. Ich schätze ’77 wird es irgendwie gewesen sein, so in der Gegend.

MM: Wie lief das denn ab? Also ich nehme mal an, damals gab es einen regen Austausch zwischen Musikern von Gruppen, die sich so kannten. Ging das ganz locker, dass man dich dann gefragt hat?

MW: Das weiß ich noch ziemlich genau, weil ich war nach München gegangen um eigentlich was mit Film zu machen und bin dann beim Theater gelandet und dann über den Bassisten von dieser Multimedia-Gruppe in die WG der Musiker gekommen und wir haben dann SEMIRAMIS gegründet. Wir waren einige Male Vorband von EMBRYO, waren die guten Bekannten, das heißt die kamen dann oft zu uns rausgefahren. Dann habe ich mit Dieter Miekautsch, meinem Vorgänger, stundenlang vierhändig gespielt und eines Tages meinte dann Dieter zu mir „Du, - du wirst mein Nachfolger bei EMBRYO!“. Ich war ganz überrascht, dass er aussteigen wollte und es ist dann aber wirklich passiert. Er ist dann wirklich konsequent ausgestiegen, er hat sich das vorgenommen und dann wurde gesagt „Ja, du kannst spielen“ und das habe ich dann erst immer nicht so ernst genommen, bis Christian (Burchard) dann anrief und sagte „Wo bist du? Wir müssen unbedingt proben, wir fahren in drei Tagen los!“. Und damit ging das ganze los. Das endete dann . . . - oder also ich fuhr dann hin und dann mußte ich erstmal mit Christian fünf Stunden ununterbrochen spielen, das war sozusagen Konditionstraining (lacht). Das Konzert danach kam mir ziemlich kurz vor!

MM: Nicht schlecht! Aber du hast ja eine entsprechende Ausbildung als Keyboarder, oder? Warst du nicht irgendwann mal an einer Musikschule?

MW: Ja, ich habe am Anfang Klassik zu Hause gehabt, dann hatte ich die Band BLACK DEVILS, das war der erste Schlagzeuger mit Doppelbasedrum. Da haben wir dann HENDRIX und CREAM gespielt. Ich war dann der Organist, der eigentlich garnicht in die Richtung passte, aber da gab es schon kleine Tourneen rund um Bielefeld und ich bin dann nach München gegangen und war dann auch kurz auf der Jazz-Schule, weil die gerade da eröffnete. Das war so eine Sache von unserer Band, SEMIRAMIS, da war die Hälfte auf der Jazz-Schule und hatte halt ’rumgeforscht, aber wir sind dann nach einem Jahr wieder ausgestiegen, weil wir hatten ja schon eine Band und wir hatten schon unsere Stücke und das war eigentlich nur noch so ein kleines „Extra-Lernen“ an der Seite und eben auch mal gucken was in München so mal los ist, wen man noch so trifft.

MM: Was ja auffällt ist, dass bei den Musikern von EMBRYO Leute dabei waren, die offensichtlich ziemlich professionell spielen konnten. Also nicht so, wie bei anderen Gruppen dieser Zeit, wo dem fröhlichen Dilettantismus gehuldigt wurde. Die Leute bei EMBRYO die waren (und sind) ja doch schon ziemlich virtuos bei der Sache!

MW: Ja, das kommt glaube ich dadurch, dass Christian vorher schon Jazz-studiert war mit MAL WALDRON. Er hat den getroffen in Hof, der war gerade nach Deutschland gekommen und Christian hat sich dann gleich an ihn gehängt und hat dann für ihn die Konzerte gemacht. Er hat dann sozusagen schon damals gelernt, wie man Konzerte macht. Sie sind zwei Jahre mit ihm 'rumgefahren und dann begann halt diese Rock-Zeit und so wie er erzählt hat, hat der MAL dann gesagt, naja also er tritt alleine auf, es ist mehr Gage, und er weiß jetzt Bescheid oder die Jazz-Clubs in Europa wissen, er ist da und können ihn buchen und hat also Christian als seinem „Sohn“ gesagt: „mach doch lieber die Musik, die jetzt anliegt“, und das war Rockmusik. - Und hat ihn sozusagen losgeschickt - und dann kam Edgar Hofmann auf irgendeine Weise auch nach München und hat dann mit ihm zusammen das gegründet, also man könnte sagen, Edgar hat ihn dann gefragt eine Band zu machen, d.h. eigentlich ist der Ur-EMBRYO der Edgar Hofmann. Er ist auch der Älteste von uns, ich glaube inzwischen ist er schon 60 oder so oder drüber. Lange nicht mehr gesehen, ich weiß es jetzt nicht genau. - So wurde mir das erzählt, also da war ich ja noch nicht in der Band. Das war ja noch die Anfangszeit. Es gibt noch Aufnahmen wo Christian bei AMON DÜÜL mitspielt, das war wahrscheinlich so der Ausstieg aus der Jazz-Szene erstmal. Er hat sich auch umgeschaut und da war natürlich die wildeste Band, das waren die AMON DÜÜLs in München, aber ich denke mir, er hat von vornherein schon darauf abgezielt eine eigene Band machen zu wollen.

MM: Offensichtlich gab es einen gegenseitigen Austausch: Lothar Meid und Dieter Serfas waren, glaube ich, auch mal bei EMBRYO in der frühen Besetzung? Wie ist denn, um mal gleich in die Gegenwart zu blenden, dein aktueller Status, würdest du dich noch als Mitglied der Gruppe EMBRYO betrachten oder eher als eine Art „ruhendes Mitglied“, oder wie ist das?

MW: Na ich gehöre sozusagen zu der alten Familie von damals und ... - ja, ich habe vor 2-3 Jahren mal eine Tour nach Istanbul mitgemacht, über Griechenland und Italien, aber ansonsten ist es eigentlich so: ich spiel mit denen, wenn die nach Berlin kommen. Auf Tournee, das ist ein bisschen schwierig jetzt für mich wegen der Familie und naja, gut, die Bedingungen sind immer noch so wie damals und das ist natürlich jetzt ganz extrem auch, da gibt es auch extreme Meinungen dazu sogar in der jungen Band, aber Christian möchte halt gerne den 68er-Stil durchhalten. Das schafft er auch bis jetzt noch ganz gut.

MM: Was gibt es da für Meinungsunterschiede?

MW: Naja, z. B. dass man nicht unbedingt immer da spielen muß, wo es am wenigsten Geld gibt. [...]

MM: Du hast die ganze Zeit bei EMBRYO dort Orgel und Keyboard gespielt, hast du da eigentlich irgendwelche Präferenzen gehabt? Hast du ein „Lieblings-Keyboard“, auf dem du am liebsten gespielt hast?

MW: Ja, ich meine, damals war das FENDER RHODES ziemlich in, das mußte man sozusagen dabei haben, weil das war dynamisch und der Sound war modern und es war ja auch so ein bisschen Jazz-Rock-Zeit in den befreundeten Gruppen. Dann, dadurch dass das mit Funk zusammenhing, den man noch benutzte, war dann auch das HOHNER D6 da, also Spinett-Sound war gefragt, und dann hatte ich auch ein paar Jahre eine HAMMOND ORGEL. Also es war schon immer die Entscheidung letztendlich Klavier oder Orgel, also die grundlegenden Tastatur-Instrumente, und der Synthesizer wurde zwar dann benutzt, aber es kam ja auch immer ein bisschen so wie als wenn man so einen anderen Raum im Konzert hinbaut. Weil: EMBRYO war nie so die Band, die dann „Flächensound“ braucht oder was ein Synthesizer so hergeben kann. Man konnte ihn im Endeffekt dann auch nur Soli-mäßig einsetzen oder perkussiv, eben wie das FENDER RHODES oder das D6 auch, so dass man mehr oder weniger immer wieder dahin kam: ja, Synthesizer ist doch zu „Plastik“, weil niemand anders benutzt den. Niemand anders arbeitet da auch hin, denn es geht eigentlich mehr um die Melodien und das ist das einfache klare Instrument, mit dem Verstärker. Das kann auch mal ein Verzerrer sein, natürlich, die Effektgeräte waren noch mit angesagt, aber es wurde nicht darauf hingebaut „ja, ich muß jetzt an der und der Stelle immer diesen Sound da fahren, damit die anderen da drüberspielen und Bescheid wissen“, sondern ich konnte da an meinem Synthesizer auch Irgendwas einstellen, das war alls völlig egal. Nur es war halt immer vom Klanggefühl dieses „ja, das ist so ein anderer Raum, ein synthetischer Raum, der nie beantwortet wird von den anderen“ und des wegen habe ich den nur so an der Seite benutzt. Also Christian selber hatte mal für das Vibraphon so einen Synthesizer, den hat er dann mal kurz benutzt aber dann stand der mehr oder weniger in der Ecke. Er hat das also nie weiter verfolgt, man kam

immer wieder auf die Basis zurück: entweder der Ton ist lang, wie bei der Orgel, oder ich schlage ihn an und er klingt aus. Das sind ja die beiden grundlegenden Keyboard-Sounds, die dann beim Synthesizer auch nur hinkommen. Und keiner war jetzt irgendwie begeistert „Wow, du hast du ja einen tollen Synthesizer-Sound aufgebaut!“, das wurde sozusagen nur nebenbei beachtet und niemand sagte „Den mußt du unbedingt nochmal spielen!“. Das war eher so: „Schön, dass du den heute Abend gespielt hast, ich hoffe, du wirst ihn nie wieder spielen und dir wieder was neues ausdenken!“ (lacht)

MM: Was hattest du da für einen Synthesizer?

MW: Na das waren so KORG-Teile, - also so in der ersten Zeit. Diese ersten analogen Synthesizer, und als dieser YAMAHA DX7 herauskam, den habe ich mir nicht angeschafft, weil alle Keyboarder hatten den und kaum war man auf irgendeinem Festival konnte man den dann auch mal leihen, und von da her war der ja vorhanden, immer und überall. Alle anderen Keyboarder hatten diese Teile, diese neuen, und ich hab' mir die dann immer geliehen mal für einen Gig, damit es mal was neues gab auf der Bühne.

MM: Jetzt wäre man praktisch schon bei den Stücken, bei der Instrumentierung. Wie habt ihr die denn eigentlich erstellt? Also interessant ist für mich immer auch der Faktor der Live-Improvisation, ob der eine Rolle spielt, also: wie sind die Stücke von euch aufgebaut worden? Hat sich da im Laufe der Jahre eigentlich was verändert? Gab es da irgend jemanden, der Vorgaben gemacht hat, also wie habt ihr das gemacht?

MW: Ja, so ganz am Anfang, als ich eingestiegen war, gab es sozusagen noch Gesangsstücke, weil Roman (Bunka) dann gesungen hat, und Christian hat auch hin und wieder gesungen. Da mußte man dann schon so ein gewisses Gerüst spielen, aber in der Improvisation konnte man das natürlich fallen lassen, und es gab eigentlich eine Menge von Themen, die jeder konnte, aber wann die im Konzert kamen, das war ungewiß. Das war nur so: wenn jemand die anspielt, dann mußte man ganz schnell reagieren und mitspielen. So dass, was also jeder konnte, etwas live einbringen in so eine Improvisation und sagen „O.k. jetzt reicht's mir, ich will jetzt die Melodie spielen, ich glaube hier ist der Bogen zu Ende“ und dann haben alle anderen auch grundsätzlich mitgemacht. Und so klang das dann für die Leute als wäre das arrangiert. Aber die Themen waren einfach vorhanden. Manchmal gab es natürlich auch Intros, da hieß es dann „Gut, wir spielen das Stück erstmal“, das hieß aber nur, wir spielen diese Thema, was jeder kann und danach, - gut, da sind wir in einer bestimmten Tonart oder wo auch immer, da geht die Improvisation los, und wann dann das Thema wiederkommt, oder ob wir dann vielleicht in ein anderes Stück . . . , dass jemand in ein anderes Thema direkt 'reinspielt, das war vollkommen offen. Es war eigentlich nur so für den Moment, dass man . . . man hat ein Stück beendet „ja, wie spielen wir jetzt weiter?“, - da hat halt dann irgend jemand irgend eine Melodie angefangen, die jeder kannte, und dann wußten alle o.k. ja dann spielen wir halt jetzt das. Ganze Stücke, wo man sagen würde, wo auch der Mittelteil der Improvisation genau geklärt war, so nach dem Motto „da mach ich mein Gitarrensolo und danach macht niemand mehr ein Solo, weil dann spiel' ich wieder das Thema“, das gab es nicht.

MM: Also es war nicht so, dass dann irgendwie mal in bestimmten Phasen versucht wurde eine Platte dann live komplett irgendwie abzubilden, nachzuspielen?

MW: Nee, das auf keinen Fall. Also, wenn die Platte fertig war, wurde die sozusagen . . . , dann kommt ja immer erst einmal das Probe-Exemplar, wo man gucken muß, ob auch alles wirklich gut drauf ist, kein Fehler drauf ist, das war sozusagen immer das letzte Mal, dass die Platte angehört wurde und danach war es eigentlich immer angesagt „Wir spielen die Stücke jetzt nicht mehr!“. Weil, jetzt ist dieses Kapitel fertig, wir haben die Stücke lang genug live gespielt, wir haben sie aufgenommen, jetzt muß was neues kommen. Gut, da wurde natürlich doch mal hier und da dann immer wieder mal so eins gespielt, auch manchmal weil die Leute das haben wollten, aber letztendlich hieß es in der Band „So, was ist mit neuen Themen, wer hat ein neues Stück? Was können wir jetzt noch spielen, was nicht auf der Platte ist, oder was wir schon immer mal angespielt haben aber noch nicht für die Platte benutzt haben, - jetzt könnten wir daran mal weiterarbeiten und gucken was wir damit machen“.

MM: Das finde ich ja sehr interessant, und im Studio? Habt ihr da eher dann aus vorhandenem Material ausgewählt oder wie habt ihr das da gemacht?

MW: Ja, da war dann schon ein bisschen vorher klar, dass wir die und die Stücke aufnehmen, nur,

ja, es wurde natürlich daran gefeilt wie, in welchem Sound die Melodie aufgenommen wird und was man vielleicht noch dazu basteln kann, was man live nicht so in dem Sinne machen kann, weil man vielleicht ein paar mehr ist oder weil es nicht genug Leute sind. Im Studio wurden öfters auch mal Leute eingeladen, die dann noch ihren Sound dazugeben durften, und die Improvisationen waren dann dementsprechend offen. Da wurde halt eben gesagt „Schau, dass du nicht über drei Minuten kommst, das Stück soll nicht so lang werden auf der Platte“. Das war vielleicht die einzige Vorgabe, dass es nicht so, wie live, ausgespielt wurde, je nach Gefühl und je nach Stimmung, sondern da wurde dann gesagt „Naja, gut, das Stück soll nur ein Kurzes sein, also vielleicht spielt nur Edgar ein Solo und dann ist gut“. Dann haben die anderen gesagt „Schade, ich würde auch gern eins spielen“. (lacht) Das war dann immer das Gerangel, wer bei welchem Stück das Solo spielen darf oder ob dann noch jemand irgend wo was extra machen darf oder nicht, und das wurde kurz ausprobiert, wenn das nicht schön genug war wurde es gleich weggeworfen, fertig! Man mußte sich sozusagen selber darauf vorbereiten, was man noch so gerne irgendwo gespielt hätte, das war noch möglich.

MM: Das ist ja wahrscheinlich typisch für solche Geschichten auf dieser Basis. Zum Thema „Aufnahme“: da ist dieses eine Stück, auf „EMBRYO's Reise“, „Es ist, wie es ist“, und da habe ich mich immer gefragt, ob die Live-Aufnahme im Bus im nachhinein inszeniert ist. Denn das kommt ja, auch mit diesen Radio-Einsprengseln, und was da auch im Radio läuft, das kommt ja wirklich perfekt in den Kontext eingebunden rüber, und ich frage mich da, was das authentisch oder ist das nachher nachempfunden?

MW: Also ich glaube, soweit ich mich erinnere, ist das auf der Indien-Reise und da war ja eine Film-Crew dabei, da war ein Tonmann dabei, der Brian, der hat also ständig aufgenommen. Der ist wirklich morgens aufgestanden und nur noch mit dem Tonbandgerät durch die Gegend gelaufen und der hatte solche Sachen auf Tape und ich denke mir, die sind dann durchgehört worden und da hat man dann halt gesagt „Oh, die Stelle ist gut, das ist gut, das könnten wir doch als Sound da davorbauen“ und vielleicht sogar noch ausgecheckt am Instrument „Ah, das geht in die Tonart, na gut, dann machen wir das Stück in der Tonart, dann geht das ganz sauber rüber“. Also, das waren schon Aufnahmen, die immer so am Rande gemacht wurden.

MM: Also, dass dieses Stück, wo wie gesagt, dieser Dialog kommt, am Steuer sitzend mit Radio an, und dann geht es über in so ein ziemliches Punk-Stück mit der Textpassage „Einmal ganz wo anders gewesen sein, das haut ganz schön rein!“. Das Stück ist ja wirklich ziemlich punkig ...

MW: Jaja, das war für uns glaube ich auch ein bisschen nach dieser Indien-Reise, da war ja hier mehr Punk, - also gut, nach acht Monaten in anderen Ländern zu sein ist ja auch ... , - z. B. das Schlagzeug kam uns hier halt ultrabrutal vor, weil ja die meisten Schlagzeuger nur das Timing halten und es kommt einem dann vor ein bisschen wie Maschinengewehr, auch diese Rock-Wirbel die da waren, weil ja die Drummer in den anderen Ländern viel sanfter damit umgehen. Und dann war das im Endeffekt ein bisschen eine Antwort da drauf, „Ach so, jetzt ist gerade Punk, ja, sowas können wir auch machen!“. Wir haben eine eigene Art von Texten, ohne sich jetzt genau damit zu beschäftigen was der Punk eigentlich will, oder so. Da wurde nicht so genau recherchiert, sondern man hat hier und da auf Festivals Punkbands gesehen und hat dann sozusagen eine eigene Version gemacht, weil dieses „Eigene“ war bei EMBRYO sowieso immer das Wichtige. [...]

MM: Ich habe hier in einem Lexikon ein schönes Zitat gefunden: „Wir hoffen, so Christian Burchard, durch ständige Konfrontation mit anderen musikalischen Umgebungen in unserer Entwicklung weiter zu kommen.“ (aus: „Ehnert, Günther: Rock in Deutschland“, Taurus Press Hamburg, 1979, S. 68). Hat das denn funktioniert, deiner Meinung nach? Also, dass die Reise wirklich ein entscheidender Auslöser für eine neue Entwicklung war?

MW: Na ja, es gab schon vorher immer ein bisschen diese Sichtweise Richtung Osten, also Richtung Indien, denn alle Gruppen schauten nach Amerika und weil wir dann immer der Meinung waren, na gut, dann müssen wir woanders hinschauen, das kann uns dann unterscheiden von den anderen, weil, jeder hatte irgendwie Paranoia, dass, wenn wir so klingen wie eine andere Band, dann wird's uns nicht mehr lange geben, dann sind wir eine unter vielen. Es war ja auch dieser Drang, oder es war vielleicht auch die Erfahrung aus der Jazz-Szene, dass man halt seinen eigenen Sound kreieren muß, seine eigene Art zu spielen, ansonsten lohnt sich's nicht, weil die anderen Sachen gibt's schon. Die Amerikaner sind sehr stark, haben sehr viele Sounds rausgefunden, und im Endeffekt ist man kein „Exot“, wenn man nicht eine eigene Richtung hat. Ich glaube, dass das so ziemlich

der Grund war damals warum man unbedingt anders spielen wollte. Ich hab' das auch sehr stark gesehen an anderen Pianisten, die parallel zu uns waren, die haben dann manchmal HANCOCK nachgespielt, also bei MISSUS BEASTLY zum Beispiel, das hat dann im Endeffekt aber dazu geführt, dass sich das verlaufen hat. Nach ein paar Jahren haben die Leute dann doch mitgekriegt, ja Mensch, HANCOCK ist doch besser, wenn ich den anhöre, und geht noch mehr ab und ist noch interessanter! Also irgendwas ist da doch dran, was da mehr ist, und diese Weiterentwicklung haben diese Gruppen oft nicht geschafft, weil die dann immer in dieser Abbildung blieben und das immer nachgespielt haben. Der Einfluß, der dann in den anderen Ländern entsteht, dass man einfach in dieser Sound-Umgebung ist, wenn man da hinfährt, dass einem andere Musiker begegnen, die ganz anders spielen. [...] ...dass immer Gäste mitspielen, das war eines der Grundkonzepte, - z.B. dadurch kam die Nigeria-Connection, das war ein ganz deutliches Beispiel dafür - ... das Afrika-Institut, der Professor Ulli Beier war da, mit einem nigerianischen Trommler, der kam in der Pause in die Garderobe und meinte, „Das ist ja erstaunlich was ihr da macht“ und wir haben dann gesagt, „Naja spiel doch gleich mit, hol die Trommel, du kannst im zweiten Set gleich mitspielen.“ Das war immer so dieses Konzept: dass jederzeit jeder mitspielen kann, und wir haben dadurch diese ganze Nigeria-Crew kennengelernt und unsere Afrika-Connection gekriegt, weil die einfach ... die wollten mit anderen Gruppen spielen und da haben die Gruppen immer gesagt „Ja da müssen wir erstmal proben!“. Was ich auch nicht verstanden habe, denn als Trommler kann man doch sofort mitspielen, jeder Perkussionist kann doch irgendwie ... , gut, die sind keine Perkussionisten in dem Sinne, aber trotzdem! Die waren halt so begeistert davon, dass es so eine Gruppe (wie EMBRYO) gibt, die so eine „offene Bühne“ hat, das war phänomenal für die. Da gibt's im Internet so eine Seite, [da hat jemand aufgelistet], da haben 380-400 Musiker inzwischen bei EMBRYO mitgespielt, wahrscheinlich inzwischen sogar noch mehr, es ist 'ne alte Internet-Seite. [lacht] Das kommt daher, weil EMBRYO immer gesagt hat „Ja, komm vorbei, spiel mit. Kannst du spielen? Klar, dann komm! Traust du dir's zu?“. Weil die, die sich's nicht zutrauen, die kommen dann sowieso nicht auf die Bühne. Die sagen „Uh, das ist mir zu undurchschaubar“ oder „Die spielen zuviel krumme Takte, das kann ich nicht“ oder so. Die sind dann eh von sich aus vorsichtiger. Von daher waren da immer viele Gäste und viele Gäste auch aus der Jazz-Szene, weil Christian zwar eben mit MAL [WALDRON] früher gespielt hat, aber die dann auch gesehen haben „Aha, die Band hat einen eigenen Sinn drauf, das zählt dann doch irgendwie auch zu Jazz“. Zumindest zu einer Art von freier Musik. Ich meine, die haben sich immer gesträubt, mit dem ROCK, das war irgendwie noch nicht ihr Ding, aber auf der anderen Seite gab es auch die Neugierde „Naja, wie spielt man denn da?“. Wenn da nicht das Swing-Feeling drunter liegt ... Es hat einige schon immer interessiert, und da gibt es Freunde und Bekannte bis heute, die immer noch gerne aushelfen und immer noch mal ein paar Gigs mit EMBRYO spielen. Gut, die Bedingungen sind dann für die anders, aber ... - na das kommt jetzt zu detailliert, da müßte ich jeden Einzelnen durchgehen.

MM: Dieses Konzept von offener Musikergemeinschaft, hat sich das denn auch im täglichen Leben irgendwie abgespielt, war das denn auch 'ne Musikerkommune? Haben da die Leute zusammen gelebt?

MW: Also diese „alte Familie“, wenn man das so sagen kann, damals, wir haben da in der Öfelestraße in München gewohnt, eine dreistöckige, kleine ehemalige Hutherstellungsfabrik, da war die Haustür z.B. immer offen. So dass dann auch ... - manchmal kam man in die Küche und da saß dann plötzlich jemand und [sagte] „Hallo, ich kenn euch aus Italien, von dem und dem Konzert und wollte euch mal besuchen“ und das war auch immer o.k., das war eben diese Hippie-Zeit, wo alles offen war und das war in Ordnung. Irrerweise ist auch nie was geklaut worden. Also man hätte locker auch rein ins Haus und Verstärker abziehen können, die gleich unten an der Tür standen! Das war damals einfach nicht angesagt. Selbst Roadies kamen ja und sagten „Darf ich bei euch helfen?“. Die haben nicht nach Geld gefragt, sondern haben gesagt „Wir möchten gern mit ner Band zusammen sein, und ihr seid duft, ich hab euch gesehen live, ich würde gern für euch die Verstärker schleppen“ oder so. Das ist heute unvorstellbar. [lacht] Und so gab es immer Leute drum herum, die halt ... - was weiß ich, da kamen mal Frauen vorbei, die haben gesagt „Ich koch euch was heut abend!“ und so, also die Wohngemeinschaft wurde immer betüttelt und ich glaube, das hängt vielleicht dann auch viel damit zusammen, dass wir auch dann nette Konzerte abgeliefert haben, die die Leute schon begeistert haben und wodurch die Leute Fans wurden davon und irgendwas mit der Band zu tun haben wollten, egal wie. „Hauptsache wir lernen die kennen und schauen mal wie die das machen.“

MM: Wieviel Leute haben da zusammengewohnt in dem Haus?

MW: Na, wir waren fünf Leute, sechs Leute, mit den beiden Roadies, ein Roadie hatte Familie ... Dann lebte auch mal ein Schriftsteller bei uns [...] und es haben auch ein paar extreme Typen mitgewohnt, wenn da irgendwas frei war, und manchmal wurden es auch ein paar mehr und es kamen andere Bands vorbei, die übernachtet haben. Wir haben am Anfang in einem Zimmer geschlafen und waren Tag und Nacht zusammen. Was dann auch dazu führte, dass man mal in der Küche warten mußte, bis irgend jemand mit seiner Geliebten zurecht kam, oder so. Aber es war dieses ununterbrochen-zusammensein, Tag und Nacht.

MM: Wie lang hast du da gewohnt?

MW: Ich habe schon vor EMBRYO da gewohnt und ich würde sagen 10 Jahre waren wir auf jeden Fall da. Ich bin dann mal zu meiner Freundin gezogen, dann war ich nur in der Nähe, aber ... das Haus hat existiert bis vor wenigen Jahren. Da haben immer noch Musiker gewohnt, - und es ist inzwischen verkauft worden und ich glaube jetzt mußten alle ausziehen, mit dem neuen Besitzer, aber es hat noch sehr lange durchgehalten. Ein ehemaliger Musiker und auch sonstige Freunde und Bekannte haben das Haus immer noch übernommen gehabt, am Schluß.

MM: Irgendwann kam es dann zu einer Abspaltung, da warst du dann, relativ kurzzeitig, glaube ich, bei den DISSIDENTEN? EMBRYOS DISSIDENTEN hießen die doch zum Anfang. Wie kam das denn?

MW: Das kam dadurch, dass nach der Indien-Reise plötzlich herauskam, dass wir doch einiges Geld hätten verdient haben müssen und das auf dem Konto hätte sein müssen und es wurde dann nicht so geklärt, weil da gab's dann Rivalitäten zwischen Friedemann [Friedemann Josch, später bei den DISSIDENTEN] und Christian. Also Friedemann hatte dann so Bestrebungen, die Band zu übernehmen. Da ist er natürlich auf Granit gestoßen, erstmal weil sein musikalisches Können meilenweit davon entfernt war, sowas überhaupt machen zu können und damals war eben eigentlich auch diese finanzielle Seite immer unwichtig für alle. [...] Aber dann hat Uwe als Bassist auch gesagt „also ich möchte es wissen“ und „das gefällt mir nicht“, und hat dann angefangen „wir machen 'ne eigene Band“, und hatte das schon vorher immer im Kopf, - und ich fand das auch nicht so gut, dass das nicht geklärt wurde und es war einfach so 'ne Sache „gut, lass uns mal was anderes probieren“. Und dann haben wir die DISSIDENTEN gegründet, haben dann eigentlich diese Indien-Reise in kleinerer Form wiederholt. Dann allerdings sind die DISSIDENTEN zu keinem Schlagzeuger gekommen danach, darauf bin ich dann wieder nach München und hab' wieder bei EMBRYO gespielt, weil ich wollte spielen! Und die DISSIDENTEN hatten schon von vornherein die Idee 'ne Pop-Band zu gründen und da geht's halt dann eher um die Kleidung und um „Was für eine Gesellschaftsform gründet man jetzt?“ und solche Sachen waren plötzlich wichtig und das hat mich wirklich Null interessiert, ich wollte einfach spielen, und dass sich aus dem Spielen ergibt, was man wird. - Und da war ich dann bei den Dissidenten aber falsch, weil die hatten 'ne ganz klare Konzept-Sache im Kopf und dazu ist es ja auch geworden, letztendlich.

MM: Wann war das, also dass du die DISSIDENTEN wieder verlassen hast?

MW: Ich denke, dass ich da nur ein Jahr war, ein oder eineinhalb Jahre, also nicht so lang. Weil, danach war dann auch erstmal Pause, nach mir, und von einem Manager aus Göttingen wurde die Gruppe wieder zusammengeführt, mit Marlon, den er dann sozusagen dazu verpflichtet hatte und dadurch sind die DISSIDENTEN dann überhaupt erst in die Gänge gekommen. Ich glaube, die wären sonst dann gleich wieder untergegangen.

MM: Mit dem Stichwort „Gesellschaftsvertrag“ kam ja schon mal so eine Art geschäftlicher Seite zutage. Was ich jetzt interessant fand, ihr habt ja versucht einen eigenen Schallplattenvertrieb zu organisieren, das war die Sache mit APRIL, woraus dann später SCHNEEBALL wurde. Wie kam denn das?

MW: Ja, es gab ein Vorbild: die TON STEINE SCHERBEN. Die haben uns auch dann beraten, das in Eigenregie zu machen, und dann gab es eben verschiedene Bands in Deutschland, die glücklicherweise alle schön verteilt waren, vom Norden bis zum Süden und dann hat jede Gruppe von der anderen Gruppe die Schallplatte gehabt und hat sie in ihrer Gegend direkt verkauft. Ich weiß auch noch, dass wir durch Bayern fuhren, von Dorf zu Dorf und guckten, ob da ein Plattenladen war, da rein gingen und sagten „So, wir haben hier ein kleines Sortiment, wollen sie das nicht mal versuchen

zu verkaufen?“. Und das haben alle anderen Gruppen in Deutschland auch gemacht, und dadurch war das auch dieses „Musik im Vertrieb der Musiker“. Das war am Anfang der Startschub dafür. Dann entwickelten sich langsam Leute, die gesagt haben „Ach, da kann ich auch für euch machen, ich fahr durch Bayern“, und dann haben die sich wiederum später zusammengetan, und dadurch ist dann auch die Umbenennung zu SCHNEEBALL [zustandegekommen], weil, da war dann auch von TON STEINE SCHERBEN der Nickel [Pallat], der inzwischen von EFA [Tonträgervertrieb] der Chef ist, die haben in Hamburg ein Hochhaus inzwischen, die sind ja, glaube ich, der größte Independent-Vertrieb Deutschlands geworden.

MM: EFA ist doch Pleite gegangen, letztes Jahr, oder?

MW: Warte mal, jetzt muß ich überlegen . . . - nee, INDIGO! Die haben sich dann wieder geteilt von EFA und haben INDIGO gemacht, und das ist ja inzwischen ein Riesending geworden. Aber der Saxofonist von den Scherben [Nickel Pallat] ist immer noch der Chef davon.

MM: Ihr hattet vermutlich den Vorteil, dass bei diesem frühen SCHNEEBALL-System dann entsprechend mehr rauskam, wenn die Platten auf die Art und Weise von den Musikern direkt verkauft wurden.

MW: Ja, weil wir selber dann erstmal sozusagen der Einzelhändler waren, oder der Großhändler. Die Werbung wurde größer, und das Glück war vielleicht auch, dass es so viele kleinere Gruppen waren, die sich sozusagen mit an EMBRYO drangehängt haben, ein ähnliches Konzept in der Lebensführung hatten, und dadurch auch die gleichen Vor- und Nachteile in ihrer Plattenherstellung und Vertrieb hatten. Das Problem war einfach, dass die Plattenfirmen damals schon, als sie sich bewußt wurden, aha, wir sind jetzt eine Plattenfirma, was ja am Anfang nicht so ganz existierte, dann doch anfangen irgend welche Bedingungen zu stellen. Die Bedingungen bei EMBRYO, also da gab es ja irgendwann mal Dierks Studio, die dann meinten, „Ja, ihr könnt mal bei uns aufnehmen, wir haben ein ganz tolles Studio, hier kommen auch die Stones vorbei, aber ihr müßt dann natürlich die GEMA an unseren Verlag abgeben“, und da haben wir von vorherein gesagt „Nee nee, das ist immer alles für uns, wir bestimmen, was da drauf kommt, wir verdienen das Geld, das bleibt alles in unserer Hand!“. Dadurch hatten wir dann keinen Kontakt zu diesen kleinen Plattenfirmen oder sowas, sondern wir waren eher darauf erpicht zu sagen, wir nehmen auf was wir wollen und uns redet keiner rein und dann wollen wir am Schluß auch schauen, dass wir das Geld alles kriegen, und nicht irgendeiner was dran verdient, der eigentlich nicht soviel dafür tut, oder tun würde.

MM: Und mit diesem Verkauf nach diesem ursprünglichen Prinzip, Musiker verkaufen Produktionen der Musiker, hat das funktioniert?

MW: Jaja, das hat funktioniert, weil ja die Gruppen selber dann auch emsig unterwegs waren, also auch live die Platten verkauft haben, in der Pause oder auch nach dem Konzert, und das ging ziemlich gut. Es wurde nur dann . . . irgendwann mal wurden natürlich alle müde jetzt wieder in irgend ein Dorf zu fahren oder in die Vorstadt und irgendwo dann den Plattenladen zu beliefern und man war froh, dass es Leute gab, die halt sagten „Ja, laß mich das doch machen, ich nehm' auch nicht soviel dafür, aber, du weißt ja, Spritgeld brauch' ich ein bisschen, und ich schau dann schon, dass ich damit durchkomme“, und die haben sich teilweise auch dann andere Gruppen noch dazu geholt und wurden dann selbständige Schallplattenvertreter. Bis hin zu [dem], dass wir dann nur noch so ein kleiner Teil sind, wie bei INDIGO. In letzter Zeit ist jetzt nichts rausgekommen, aber EMBRYO ist dann immer noch bei INDIGO rausgekommen, aber, nun gut also im Katalog sind wir da natürlich weit abgeschlagen von irgendwelchen englischen Produktionen oder was die sonst noch vertreiben. Es hat sich dann schon auch ein bisschen dahin entwickelt, dass die dann zwar geholfen haben EMBRYO-Platten rauszubringen, aber dann auch nicht mehr im Plattenladen als erstes gesagt haben „Ihr müßt jetzt erst mal 'ne EMBRYO-Platte nehmen, sonst geben wir euch keine von den anderen Platten“, sondern die haben dann eher am Schluß gesagt „Naja, und EMBRYO hätten wir dann auch noch . . .“. Na gut, so hat sich's dann entwickelt.

MM: Wie ist das denn gegenwärtig, also die letzte Zeit, wie war der Vertrieb da organisiert?

MW: Na der Vertrieb wurde also verschoben, teilweise gab es dann andere Leute . . . , eine zeitlang wurden die Platten von Andorra aus verteilt. Gerade als die CDs aufkamen gab es mal einen dicken Schub, das hatte wahrscheinlich den Grund, dass man dann die GEMA auch nicht mehr bezahlen wollte oder dass man halt rauswollte aus den Steuern oder was auch immer. Das weiß ich jetzt nicht mehr so genau, ich hab' das nur irgendwann beobachtet und dachte mir „Na gut, jetzt kriege

ich ja nicht mal mehr GEMA für mein Stück, weil das irgendwo auf irgend einer Insel erscheint. [lacht] Es hat sich aber inzwischen auch schon wieder erledigt und jetzt ist es eigentlich so, dass Christian Live-Aufnahmen macht, teilweise sogar nur mit einem Mikrophon, und die Sachen dann selber brennt und direkt beim Konzert verkauft. Also die Sachen sind garnicht mehr im Handel und die alten Sachen ... nun gut, ich denke mir, dass die „REISE“ noch im Handel ist, aber ich denke mir, dass von den sonstigen Platten auch der Absatz komplett gesunken ist, also dass da nicht mehr viel unternommen wird. Aber die ... - ja, Bootlegs kann man es nicht nennen, es sind eigentlich Eigenproduktionen, die direkt selber auch verkauft werden, ohne Vertrieb und das ist wieder finanziell lukrativ und auf der anderen Seite ist es halt auch ... man hat mit dem ganzen Apparat nichts mehr zu tun, was, glaube ich, Christians Ziel heutzutage ist.

MM: Das ist für mich erstaunlich, weil sich ja da im Prinzip tatsächlich so ein Geist von radikaler wirtschaftlicher, also ökonomischer Gegenkultur konserviert hat.

MW: Naja klar, es ging immer darum, dass wir die Musik machen wie wir Lust haben und aufnehmen oder rausbringen was wir Lust haben, in was immer für einem Sound, und dass natürlich das Geld auch uns selber in die Taschen fließt, weil man immer wieder in die Situation kam ... , was schon damals mit Managern angefangen hat, die dann gesagt haben „Ja, ihr braucht jetzt 'ne Light-Show“ oder „Ihr müßt euch anders anziehen auf der Bühne“, was sofort zur Konsequenz hatte, diese Manager waren dann binnen drei Wochen entlassen, wenn sie weiterhin auf diesem Trip blieben. [lacht] Niemand redet da rein, also niemand soll irgendwas sagen, sondern die Gruppe macht es nach ihrem Geschmack! Ich weiß noch, ich habe bei einer Aufnahme in München später noch mal mitgemacht, und da hab ich dann gesagt „Naja, du könntest alles mal über einen Kompressor fahren, dass es so eine gewisse Radio-Tauglichkeit hat, weil die wollen das immer mit so einem gewissen Druck“. Und da hat Christian mich angeguckt „Mit was für'm Ding?“. Also das war wie „Du redest über irgendwelche technischen Geräte im Studio, die uns null interessieren, uns interessiert das Mikrofon, und dass es auf Band ist, und danach machen wir das dann schon mit dem Mix, aber ein Kompressor oder sowas, das ist schon fast Verfälschung“. Gut, aber die Musik ist inzwischen auch sehr akustisch und sehr ethnologisch oder sehr eigensinnig geworden und man beachtet solche Sachen überhaupt nicht, es interessiert auch niemanden, was da Radio-tauglich oder sonstwas ist. Das ist alles irrelevant, weil es zählt nur: „Wie schön ist die Melodie“, oder „Sollte man die rausbringen, ist die interessant?“ oder „Ist das gut oder das?“ oder „Nee, spielen wir es lieber anders, dann ist es noch interessanter“, darum geht's eigentlich.

MM: Wie ist denn das, was hörst du denn gegenwärtig im Radio? Also wenn du jetzt mal 'ne CD auflegst, oder du schaltest das Radio ein, welche Musik interessiert dich gegenwärtig?

MW: Na, ich muß sagen, ich habe jetzt gerade dreissig Cassetten aufgenommen von der Sammlung von dem Max, von den POETS OF RHYTHM. Der hat sich 'ne große ethnologische Sammlung angeschafft, und die habe ich mir erstmal alle auf Cassette kopiert, weil da sind auch so 50er-Jahre Aufnahmen dabei. Das ist so die eine Richtung. Dann höre ich gern SUN RA und diverse Jazz-Leute, die jetzt speziell meine favorites sind. Gut, morgens schalte ich dann manchmal Multikulti-Radio an, da ist ein bisschen Nachrichten dabei oder auch gelegentlich mal 'ne neue Platte, die angespielt wird. Aber das höre ich auch schon lieber nachts, weil da sind bessere Sendungen, die kommen dann so Europa-weit. Na gut, Jazz-Radio höre ich auch mal zwischendurch, aber die Qualität da ist auch schon sehr gesunken und sehr mainstreamig geworden und naja, da lege ich dann schon lieber wieder selber 'ne Cassette auf. Und dann habe ich natürlich auch ... ich habe jemanden, der für mich Sachen aufnimmt, der selber Plattensammler ist und dadurch kriege ich da immer Nachschub. Dann muß ich das durchhören, auf jeden Fall!

MM: Nun ist es ja so: wenn es dieses, seit Mitte der 90er, seit Julian Copes Buch „Krautrock-sampler“ entstandene riesige Krautrock-Revival nicht gegeben hätte, würden wir möglicherweise garnicht hier sitzen. Hatte der Begriff „Krautrock“ denn damals in der Zeit Ende der 70er für euch noch irgendeine Bedeutung? Oder wie ist es jetzt, welche Bedeutung hat der Begriff „Krautrock“ und dieses Revival für dich jetzt, was verbindet sich für dich mit dem Begriff?

MW: Damals war das eher so, dass man beobachtet hat was eben so im Land läuft. Also wir waren sehr stark Schwarze-Musik-Hörer, also von Soul und Funk und was es da alles so gab, hauptsache die Musiker waren schwarz. Weil, wenn schon [Musik] aus Amerika hören, dann nur schwarze Musik, das war die oberste Devise, und ... [wir haben] auch viel Jazz gehört, was immer die Leute sehr verblüfft hat, wenn die dann an den Bus kamen und wir hatten unser Konzert beendet, was

wir dann denn da hörten, weil wir das ja garnicht spielten, was die da alles spielten. Wir haben halt immer so Jazz-Sachen gehört. Das hat sich dann langsam entwickelt zu ethnologischer Musik, über Indien, Arabien wurde halt das dann studiert und da wurden dann Platten gesammelt oder Aufnahmen gesammelt. Auch wie wir halt in den Ländern waren wurde kräftig eingekauft und dementsprechend wurde nach solchen Musikern geguckt, und Krautrock, das war dann halt „Ach so, das ist jetzt hier in Deutschland in, aha, gut, naja, was machen die denn so, naja, das können wir auch“. Also es wurde dann auch mal „krautig“ gespielt, wenn man in irgendeinem Jugendheim war, wo man das Gefühl hatte „Oh, die sind hier alle Krautrock-Fans, na gut, dann machen wir heute mal so einen Kraut-Abend für die“. Also wir sind immer ein bisschen so darauf eingegangen, was so denn da so anlag, soweit es möglich war. Man konnte das „Punk-Stück“ z. B. auch mal leiser und soft spielen, dementsprechend konnte man natürlich irgendwelche neuesten indischen Melodien auch Heavy-Metal-mäßig spielen, also z. B. afghanische Melodien eignen sich sehr gut als Heavy-Rock-Nummer! Und so wurde das immer so ein bisschen so „Ja, gut, wenn das hier eben gerade so in ist, prima, aber wir sind eigentlich . . . wir hören ganz andere Musik und wir sind eigentlich nur auf der Suche nach neuer Musik“. Vielleicht hat man hier und da mal was gehört und hat gedacht, „Ach, das was die da machen ist doch ganz nett, und so, das ist ja interessant, wie machen die das“. Es kann schon sein, dass das auch mit beobachtet wurde.

MM: Es ist ja so, ihr werdet ja zweifelsfrei, wenn man heute auch in irgendwelche Plattenläden geht, in der Schublade „Krautrock“ sortiert. Andererseits: andere Gruppen laufen dann unter Esoterik, [New Age, Wellness-Musik], TANGERINE DREAM oder so, die findet man im Laden oft unter Esoterik, aber EMBRYO findet man in Läden, z. B. den ganzen second-hand-Plattenläden, bei „Krautrock“. Ihr habt euch aber anscheinend da nie als Bestandteil dieser merkwürdigen „Krautrock“-Szene betrachtet, wie ich jetzt gerade höre?

MW: Ja also nicht direkt. Kann sein, dass wir mal mit CAN auf irgendeinem Festival gespielt haben, oder mit GURU GURU und was es da alles so gab, aber die waren jetzt z. B. auch nicht in unserem Schallplattenverteilungssystem, also die waren garnicht so die Bands die so mitmachen wollten mit anderen Gruppen. Von daher waren die jetzt nicht so interessant für uns, weil da gab es irgendwie keinen direkteren Kontakt zu den Musikern. . . . Ja, der Teil, dass die Leute das oft so sehen wollen heutzutage, glaube ich, das hängt damit zusammen, dass die EMBRYO in dieser Zeit mal gesehen haben. Es gibt ja immer diese Leute, die dann schon manchmal zehn Jahre oder so älter sind wie ich, die dann sagen „Ja, ich hab EMBRYO '76 in Wuppertal gesehen, weiß ich noch genau“ und so. Ja und damals hat EMBRYO vielleicht in der Art schon gespielt und diesen Sound mit benutzt. Oder . . . gut, der eine meinte, Roman spielt wie Jimy Hendrix, der eine meinte, er spielt ziemlich krautrockig oder so. Das kommt dann immer darauf an, wie das Gehör so funktioniert, aber ich denke mir, danach haben die dann aufgehört, das zu hören und haben dann, wie man ja heute auch sieht, da kommt dann Krautrock [in einem Fernsehbeitrag] und das ist dann CAN. Ja weil CAN halt dann immer wieder in den Medien war und immer wieder erwähnt wurde, deswegen ist es für die . . . da sind die dann drangeblieben. Die hatten mehr Werbung, die haben das durchgehalten über Jahre, 'ne gleiche Art zu spielen. Bei EMBRYO war halt immer die Sache, dass die Leute dann auch manchmal beim zweiten Mal beim Konzert da waren und die Gruppe war völlig anders. Irgend ein Afrikaner hat mitgetrommelt und die konnten plötzlich nicht [verstehen] „Wie, das ist EMBRYO, wie, die spielen ja ganz anders als damals?“ und so. Und dann war das oft für die dann „Ja, nee, äh, ich möchte die ja so haben, wie ich die in Erinnerung habe“ und da sind sie meistens schwer enttäuscht worden bei EMBRYO. Weil es wurde immer anders. Selbst Vorschläge, die noch in der alten Familie waren, [wie] „Mensch, das eine Stück, das hat so einen guten Sound, das passt so gut heutzutage, lasst uns doch ein ganzes Album machen, nur in dem Sound, das wär doch mal was, alle Stücke so in der Art“, das wurde sofort abgelehnt! „Nein, nein, wir haben den Sound erfunden, danke, lasst uns weiter suchen nach dem nächsten“, - es wurde nie was festgehalten, sozusagen. Es war immer der Anspruch „Ja, gut, schön dass wir's erfunden haben, können wir ja immer mal benutzen, aber was haben wir sonst noch auf Lager?“, das war immer die Frage.

A LOOK INSIDE THE BRAIN

by Patrick O'Hearn (July 1998) for Perfect Sound Forever

If you had asked me a few years ago to name my favorite record labels of all time, I would have given you this list: Elektra Records from 1965-75, Vanguard Records, and late 1960's/early 1970's Island Records (in the good old days when they used either a pink or palm tree label on the record). Now that I am older and wiser, I would also add some German labels from the 1970's to that list: Sky, Pilz, Ohr and especially the legendary Brain Records. During the past year, Repertoire Records in Hamburg has begun doing all of us a big fat favor by starting to re-release the entire Brain catalog a few albums at a time on CD. I think they have released about 25 albums so far.

Some of my favorite (and the best known) Brain bands include Neu!, Cluster, and Guru Guru. They also released the first Scorpions album (before they became a heavy metal band) and also the very successful band Jane, which I don't really consider a Krautrock band, but I might think differently if I ever get a chance to hear their first album.

BRAIN was not a record company but one of the (many) labels created and run by the German record company METRONOME MUSIK GmbH (which was and is owned by PolyGram), all located in Hamburg. For a better understanding and as a good example of how this works: all contracts with the artists or producers were always made by METRONOME and the name of any of their labels did not even appear in those contracts.

In the early seventies METRONOME just distributed - among many other own or foreign labels - also the OHR label in Germany. Neither METRONOME nor METRONOME's employees Günter Koerber & Bruno Wedel had much to do with the production, recording, cover, artists, promotion, etc. of OHR records (who released classic debut albums from Tangerine Dream, Guru Guru, and Ash Ra Temple, as well as early records from Amon Duul, Xhol Caravan, and Embryo). This was alone the business of "Ohr Musik Produktion GmbH" which was owned and run by the brothers Meisel (Berlin) and Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser (Cologne/Berlin). METRONOME MUSIK GmbH was closed down on 31st of December 1996, on order of PolyGram.

Later on Günter Körber left and started Sky Records which released tons of Cluster and Cluster related projects and the first few solo albums by Neu! guitarist Michael Rother. Bruno Wendel seems to have disappeared from the scene, but if he ever surfaces, I'm ready to start a label with him.

For most collectors, the 1000 series of releases with a Green label are the most interesting. The 1000 series ended when Körber left to start Sky Records in 1976. At that point, they switched to an Orange label and a different series of numbers.

OK, let's take a look at some of my favorite, but lesser known parts of the Brain:

Satin Whale Desert Places Brain LP #1049

Released in 1974, the debut album from Satin Whale is one of my all time favorite Brain releases. The first song "Desert Places" reminds me of early Jethro Tull (the Stand Up and Benefit albums). With a soaring flute played by Dieter Roesberg and Gerald Dellmann's heavy organ, the song has a great groove, very powerful stuff. After a minute or two, the flute disappears and the organ gets

even heavier with a strong Brian Auger influence. The guitar (also played by Dieter) starts to come up into the mix with a psychedelic blues feel, similar to Cream. Everything I love about progressive music happens in the first two and half minutes of this song. The singer (Dieter again) begins at the three minute point and he sounds excellent and heavenly. Then the flute comes back in and it's almost like Ian Anderson fronting Cream.

The next song "Seasons Of Life" is a psychedelic pop song, the vocal harmonies are very solid, while the guitar and organ continues to kick me in the ass. Then the tune switches suddenly to a funky Doors-like mood, with an almost R&B or soul groove. It occurs to me as I listen to this record again that the band reminds me of Iron Butterfly, such as the best jamming elements of "In A Gadda Da Vida." This album is probably one of the best records ever made in Germany, and I'm eagerly waiting for it's reissue on Repertoire. Unfortunately this is their only Brain LP, the band moved over to the Nova label after this album and released six more records, but I haven't heard any of those.

Embryo Rocksession Brain LP #1036

Embryo was only on Brain for a short time. They were originally on the legendary Ohr label (mentioned before), but then moved onto United Artists (the same label that released all the Can and Amon Düül II albums during their peak period). But United Artists did not like the fusion sound of the album they had recorded, so the band sold the rights to Brain instead. Let's just say that Brain was using their brain when they bought these tapes, because the music is fantastic. The album opens with Christian Burchard's jazz rock drum beat, then eastern sounding melodies start to come in from the other instruments. It reminds me alot of the Miles Davis album Big Fun that combines jazz rock rhythms with tablas and sitar. The music then begins to get very dense with many sounds and instruments, including two keyboard players; Mal Waldron and Jimmy Jackson (also like early 70's Miles when he had both Keith Jarrett and Chick Corea). The only problem with this opening song "A Place To Go" is that it's too short, it's only four minutes long!

But the next song makes up for it with fifteen and half minutes of psychedelic jazz fusion. The keyboards are clearly featured and the rhythm expands and contracts freely. Both Miles and Mahavishnu come to mind. At times the band also reminds me of Agitation Free (see my previous Krautrock article), who also experimented with a blend of jazz, rock, and middle eastern sounds. The only bad thing about this album is the name; "Rocksession," "progressive middle eastern krautrock session" would be a better description. Now available on CD, go search it out...

Novalis Sommerabend Brain LP #1087

Novalis was from Hamburg and took their name from a 18th Century poet. They loved English bands such as Pink Floyd and King Crimson and you can hear that influence in their music. This was their third Brain album and it begins with a song called "Aufbruch." The music starts with a Dark Side Of Moon feel and then moves into a more symphonic sound, perhaps like early Genesis. Like the best English prog-rock, the song takes twists and turns every few minutes. It's a beautiful nine minutes of music blending classical melodies with rock synthesizers. "Wunderschätze" uses German lyrics written in 1798. It starts with an acoustic guitar and builds from there with organ swells. Again I am reminded of Foxtrot-era Genesis. But it still has a unique and original approach that can only come from a band living in Hamburg in the mid-1970s.

Their self titled second album on Brain (LP #1070) is a little less classical and symphonic. The sound is lighter with more space rock sounds and influences. By today's musical standards, it's probably more tasteful. In fact after listening to it again, I would say that this self titled album is better than "Sommerabend".

Various Artists Krautrock Brain #3/1046

For me, this is the ultimate Krautrock sampler. A triple album in a triple gatefold sleeve. It includes songs from the best known Brain bands such as Neu!, Guru Guru, Cluster, and Jane. There's also

a healthy sampling of bands you probably haven't heard before, so let's take a closer look at those songs. Emergency reminds me of American jazz rockers Blood Sweat & Tears with their song "Get Out To The Country" from Brain LP #1037. Pop idol Udo Lindenberg was an early member and appeared on their first album, but left before their only Brain LP was recorded. Featuring an organ and full horn section, the song is more interesting towards the end when the singing stops and a heavy percussion groove and screaming lead guitar kicks in. Like Emergency, Thirsty Moon also has a heavy percussive sound and a jazz rock horn section. But there's more ambience, more of a tripped out, spacey sound to Thirsty Moon on the song "Big City" from Brain LP #1021. Imagine if the band Chicago took a boat load of LSD and then recorded their first album. "Big City" is a psychedelic jazz rock jam.

A slow, beautiful bass line and a dreamy flute start the song "Gageg" from the band Kollektiv. It reminds me of the more mellow side two of the "In the Court Of The Crimson King" album, but with a lot more reverb added to the mix. I'd really like to hear more from this all instrumental band. When is Brain #1034 coming out on CD? "Jive Samba" from the Wolfgang Dauner Group is totally cutting edge modern jazz. Fans of Miles Davis would be wise to search out Brain #1016. Dauner's piano playing is incredible and I love the totally fuzzed out and distorted lead guitar of Siegfried Schwab. Where is he now? Back in 1969 when this was recorded, he was a monster player.

Similar in sound to early Hawkwind, Lava is a hard rock, space rock band. Lemmy and Nik Turner would have enjoyed listening to "Tears Are Going Home" from Brain #1031. Creative Rock continues the Blood, Sweat, & Tears and Chicago influences of Emergency. I think mildly creative jazz would be a better name, although there is some great Hendrix flavored guitar sounds on the song "Natron" from Brain #1017. As I review this three disc set again, I am forced to admit there is some garbage on here. There's no reason for any human to search out albums from Sperrmüll or Curly Curve. Like their one time Brain label mates the Scorpions, these two bands explore the world of hard rock. I will leave that mission up to someone else.

There's approximately 75 original Green label Brain releases, so it's impossible to cover all the bands here, but from my research I would say there's very few duds in the bunch. Check them out.

Special thanks to Klaus D. Mueller for background information about Brain and Ohr.

STEPHAN KASKE - MYTHOS INTERVIEW

by Archie Patterson, later than 2001, <http://www.eurock.com>

Q: Let us begin with a little ancient history. When you first conceived the group Mythos - it's name and musical sound - what was your inspiration? It seems a very "cosmic" musical concept.

We wanted to get on stage; we wanted to go on tour; we wanted to become famous and we wanted the girls! Honestly, we didn't think beyond that.

Q: What music had you listened to previously that influenced the early Mythos style?

Mainly progressive and psychedelic stuff. Here is a listing of the live-set-list we performed at the end of the sixties before and while we composed our first own songs. Here is my calendar of summer '69. We played up to 5 songs of i.e. Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull, Iron Butterfly, The Doors, Steamhammer, Spooky Tooth or Ten Years After.

Q: I remember when I got the first album, saw the cover and heard it; I was astounded, as I'd never heard music like that. How did you come into contact with the OHR label and convince them to release such non-commercial music?

That has been rather simple. We had more than 100 concerts a year all over Germany in 1970 and 71. We also played several times in the legendary Beat Club Langelsheim. The boss was a real fan and a big supporter of Mythos and when he organized the Langelsheim Festival in summer '71 (the German Woodstock) with lots of rock world stars like Family, Ashton, Gardener & Dyke, Coliseum, Steamhammer, Golden Earring, Nektar and many others, he let us open the program on both days! So we had the full attention of the media and the people (the place was overcrowded with more than 14,000 enthusiasts) especially Mythos fans from all over Germany. It was an incredible experience and success in spite of our unique, but not very commercial music. That's why not only lots of club and festival managers knocking at our door; OHR convinced us to produce a record for them!

Q: Do you remember how many copies it sold?

Still no need to remember! With time the first 4 albums developed into classics and are reissued periodically. More than a dozen companies worldwide paid and still pay for copies and copyrights of the Mythos I. I know at least of 3 labels offering the CD's today.

Q: Have you any idea what ever happened to Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser and Gille Letteman?

Not really. After they had blown away their brains with dope they lost their credibility, reputation and at last their music and imperium. Dieter Dierks got all this in '78 or '79 as far as I know. Now his organizations (i.e. Venus Records) are managing the labels and pay my licenses. In 1980

“starmaiden” wrote me a letter with extreme confused “cosmic” stuff. I answered her letter shortly to wish her good luck (honestly), but my letter returned unopened. “Sorry, Mr. Kaske. I cannot open this letter addressed to Gille Lettmann. Please send it again to ¿Starmaiden!”, she had written on the envelope. Anything left to say !?!

Q: After OHR you went to Sky Records and the Venus Records labels, your style changed somewhat. How would you describe this evolution in your sound? Perhaps you simply got older and better in terms of musicianship, or did your whole concept for the group change?

You see, we’ve been in a special situation. Mythos had been a real performing live group all over for it’s first 10 years (contrary to many of the electronic musicians of that time). Remember, we played hundreds of concerts, festivals and especially Langelsheim. I did and financed absolutely everything in the group. I did booking gigs telephone, mail, procuring posters, photos, press info., lighting, P.A., managing all media-things, paying for the truck (and driving it), the rehearsal room, hotels, a.s.o. I did all this to find musicians to perform my music and to continue the Mythos-story. We simply needed lots of concerts to survive! And the only way to get those gigs and moreover a record company deal seemed to be to make more commercial music with more action. The times they are a-changin’; it was just not possible to get gigs and contracts with sitar, improvisations and 20 minute songs and “only” a certain portion of action.

All that led to the musical stuff of our LP’s Strange Guys and Concrete City (Lp no.3 and 4 released by Venus). At the end of the seventies, when the band “had troubles” again, there were new technical possibilities! The development of drum computers, software sequencers and certain studio equipment made it possible to create new musical ideas and sound without musicians and a thousand foul compromises! That’s why and how I made my demos during ’79 and contacted SKY to get a contract. All of that resulted in Lp’s no.5 and 6, Quasar and Grand Prix.

Q: After this time (in the late 1970’s, early 1980’s if I remember right?) Mythos disappeared. I always wondered what happened, then I think it was in the early 1990’s that a friend told me he had gotten a new production - a double/triple (?) CD of classical music done electronically. Did you stop making music for some time, or take a hiatus from the music scene? What have you been doing these last 15-20 years?

In fact up to the 1980’s I worked with my music and became very successful. That’s why in 1981 I founded my own studio - Mythos Studio Berlin (MSB). Because I’ve been well known in the musicians’ scene and had many press and radio appearances for the record release of the album Grand Prix (“Berlin boy recorded an Lp in his own studio!!”). Within a few months I could order a professional 16-Track-recording machine (in ’82); 24 and 32 tracks followed later on. Also 32-channel-mixer (today 40-channel, computer mixer), digital stuff and effect-units I never heard of before. Remembering those early years I still smell the interior of my first new Jaguar. For years I lived in it, as well as in the studio except the few hours of sleep at home. Up to today more than 1000 groups, projects and musicians of all kind of styles have worked in the MSB. All my compositions and musical themes of that time were used for numerous TV- and radio-commercials or video- and film music.

Remember: after 4 LP’s in a row (’78 to ’81) I had been a little “fed up” with producing my own music. Moreover everything had been “bulldozed” by the stress and success of the MSB. But in all those studio-years I sampled ideas, tricks, effects, melodies, sounds and more in several, finally big folders. And in the end of ’88 I began to produce new Mythos music. But then happened the “Big Hammer”, like a “Cheap Shot”! I sent nearly 100 demos all over the world to get a contract, all in vain ... Everybody refused to listen to the tapes (... “to be fair to our present artists... , ... currently not accepting unsolicited demo submissions. . .”, etc.) or simply ignored them! Finally in 1989 I remembered an “old ally” (from the Strange Guys/Concrete City years) and asked Jürgen Jacobsen who managed several companies in Switzerland. The following is part of Mythos history. He ordered and has published up to today 8 Mythos CDs and approximately 20 additional releases

(i.e. M.A.S.S. and Classic on Synth productions).

Q: Perhaps you can make a listing of all the albums you have done over the years?

OK, let's have a look at least at the Mythos discography:

MYTHOS (Ohr LP1972), DREAMLAB (Cosmic Couriers LP1975)

STRANGE GUYS (Venus LP1978) , CONCRETE CITY (Venus LP1979)

QUASAR (Sky LP1980) , GRAND PRIX (Sky LP1981), MYTHOS LIVE (Hits & Fun Maxi-Single +CD1989)

MYTHOSPHERE (Selected Sound Carrier CD1990), SOUND OF SILENCE & HARMONY (Art & Music CD1995)

PURRR-SYMPHONY (Art & Music CD1997), (W)INTERMEZZO (Art & Music CD1998)

LE PRINTEMPS MYSTIQUE (Art & Music CD2000), THE DARK SIDE OF MYTHOS (Pastels CD2000)

FEUILLAGE (Art & Music CD 2001)

Q: I've heard the latest releases and in some ways the sound is still the same, but with a more sophisticated approach. Would you say that the music and concept of Mythos has changed over the years? Or perhaps it's still motivated by the same concept?

What a difficult question. You see, the world is changing dramatically and faster all the time. If you do not react to it and accommodate yourself to it you're simply going to disappear like the dinosaurs or the producers of wooden mail coaches. In the musical world you won't find concert venues, record companies and media feedback and thereby an audience. Musicians "die softly", imperceptibly! That's why a certain change in the music and concept has been a must. Otherwise Mythos would have disappeared in the early seventies like so many others before and after. On the other hand, the Mythos project is still inspired by the original motivation, the same spirit as in the very beginning! Search and find musical formats outside of the mainstream. If you can't avoid listening to other popular music - do the contrary. If 140bpm stand for success and the charts - my music's going to have 14 beats per minute! Try, experiment, provoke! But always stay on top of the tight rope. You are dancing between the realization of your dreams and the deep commercial fall!

Q: Materially your situation surely has changed. Now you produce and release your own music. Do you also work in other fields that complement this creative side, or have a more diverse occupation that allows more of a yin yang situation in regards to your musical creativity?

Beside producing music I've got only some (hated) tasks to manage a certain property and some investments. But that's only a necessary kind of burden stealing my time. My real beloved alternative to the musical work is: active sports!

Since 1990 when I bought my first mountain bike I ride in the Berlin forests as often as possible, 1 to 3 times a week, all through the year. Additionally since 1996 my favorite passion is speed skating! Approximately 5 to 7 times a year I skate in marathons (esp. the famous Berlin M.), half-marathons and city runs all over Germany. Ice-skating, indoor-cart-racing in winter and snooker and billiards complete the range of my interests outside of music.

But believe it or not: music's all around. Especially during the many hours out in the fresh air on the bike or speed skates, all alone in a wonderful environment, I sometimes get new musical ideas.

Q: We now truly enter the millennium period during 2001 and Mythos is 30 years old musically.

If you had it all to do over again would you do anything differently?

Contrary to what many people might say (...who did it MY WAY...), I would love to change and repair many things. I've made so many mistakes, unfortunate decisions, wrong moves and disappointed, or hurt some people in all periods of my life. I say, I'm sorry to everybody to whom it concerns!

From the musical point of view especially I should have finished the group-activities perhaps sooner, after the split of the Mythos I in 1973. It would have been probably more effective to invest all that time, energy and resources not in trucks, rehearsal rooms, P.A., light equipment and musicians, but in instruments, computers and recording equipment. But that is hypothetical. On the other hand, I would have never met my beloved wife. We have been together since the 1977 Germany tour and have a daughter since '92.

Q: Do you personally feel “cosmically” changed by the last 30 years, or have you become more down to earth?

Actually, I think I always stayed the son of a merchant (Hi daddy, everything's alright in Heaven!?). That may sometimes reduce the cosmic range of ideas; but it's taking responsibility for a punctual and reliable delivery of work. I guess my partners enjoy it.

Q: What would you like to happen with Mythos in the next 30 years?

There is a commercial spot on German TV - somebody asking a woman what she would like to change: “Everything should stay like it is. . .”, she says. This corresponds to my feelings best today!

I love to produce 2 or 3 CDs for Jürgen Jacobsen a year, to work with those young guys in the Mythos Studio Berlin, and to race on blades and wheels through the forests, nature and cities!

Apart from this I would be seriously interested to have productions with some of the Big Guys of Electronic Music worldwide. Maybe exchanging song themes/fragments/parts/ideas via Adat format, or via the internet. Then adding ideas, sending it to and fro' a few times and mixing it finally somewhere in the world, or at the MSB !!?

INTERVIEW MIT CONNY PLANK

von Ax Genrich, Riebes Fachblatt, 11/1974

Dies ist nun das zweite Interview, diesmal mit Conny Plank (Anm.: Interviewer ist Ax Genrich, Gitarrist und Gründungsmitglied von Guru Guru; sein erstes Interview war mit Volker Kriegel), und es kommen mir natürlich schon die ersten Bedenken, ob das Ganze überhaupt einen Sinn hat. Erstmals, ich möchte nicht Frau Sybille oder sonst ein Kolumnenungeheuer sein, obwohl ich mich über die Briefe sehr freue und sie euch gern beantwortet habe. Ich werde sie euch weiterhin beantworten und es sind ja auch einige interessante Brieffreundschaften entstanden, aber das war trotzdem nicht der Sinn der Sache. Einige machen mir vielleicht den Vorwurf, ich wollte die Unterbrechung meiner Musikerkarriere vertuschen und mich auf diese Art featuren. Aber das ist auch vorbei, denn Gitarre spielen ist geiler als schreiben. Ich habe echt geglaubt, dass ich mit meinen Erfahrungen oder den meiner Interviewpartner vielen Leuten helfe und einige dazu bringe, ihrerseits einmal Informationen auszupacken. Aber gerade die Reaktion der Leute, die etwas wissen müssten - also der Profis - war gering. Und dann, das habt ihr sicherlich gemerkt, geht es mir nicht so sehr um die technischen Details, sondern vielmehr um das, was eigentlich dahinter steht, was normale Menschen zu unabhängigen und schöpferischen Könnern ihres Fachs gemacht hat. Und auf dem Gebiet, nachdem es anfangs recht positiv aussah, scheinen die deutschen Musiker zu passen. Das Experimentierstadium ist zwar verlassen, dafür befinden wir uns allem Anschein nach in einem Kopierstadium. Jazzrock und Germanfunk sind da so die Schlüsselwörter, und ich würde gern mal wissen, wie vielen deutschen Musikern mit den „Hymns to the seventh galaxy“ die Erleuchtung kam. Eigentlich nichts dagegen. Mir ist nur schade, dass da einige mitmachen, die eigentlich durch ihre persönliche musikalische Aussage mehr zur Szene hätten beitragen können. Mit anderen Worten: es ist wohl Blödsinn Tips zu geben, wie man am schnellsten wie der und der werden kann, und der Conny Plank kann euch nicht den Sound wie Harvey Mandel einstellen, er dient ihm bloß als Orientierungshilfe.

Ax: Wenn man heute auf die Idee kommt, Rockmusik zu machen und sich vielleicht bald einige Anfangserfolge einstellen, dann dauert es nicht lang und man will den Ausbruch schöpferischer Tätigkeit auf Schallplatten verewigt sehen. Diese relativ kurze Zeitspanne von der Gruppengründung bis zur ersten LP ist in einigen Fällen von Plattenfirmen unterstützt worden, was zur Folge hatte, dass ein jeder heute automatisch die LP in seine Musikermotivation mit einbezieht. Was sollte ein Studioanfänger unbedingt wissen?

Conny: Um das genau zu beantworten, will ich zunächst einmal in die Studiogeschichte zurückgehen. Was ist eigentlich deutsche Studiogeschichte? Die Reichsrundfunk- Ingenieure, die Typen von der Deutschen Grammophon, haben darauf geachtet, ein Klangbild zu reproduzieren, welches etwas ähnliches darstellt, wie das Konzert selbst. Sie suchten sich akustisch hervorragende Säle aus und plazierten die Mikrofone weit weg vom Klangkörper, um möglichst den gleichen Höreindruck, wie ihn der Konzertbesucher erlebt, auf die Matrize zu kriegen. Die Studiogeschichte der Amis fängt erst nach dem Krieg so richtig an. Die wollten alle Details, welche innerhalb einer Musik passieren, möglichst fett nach vorne kriegen. Praktisch wollten sie einen Sound aufzeichnen, als hättest du viele Ohren und könntest jede Klangquelle im Kopf zusammenmischen. Das sind also zwei grundlegend verschiedene Konzepte, und bei der Anwendung kommt es auf das Musikmaterial an, welches zu übertragen ist. Wenn du die Bostoner Symphoniker hörst, klingt das zwar toll

bombastisch, aber es hat mit einer Superaufzeichnung der Deutschen Grammophon nichts zu tun. Die ist einfach besser.

Ax: Also nicht nur die Wurzeln der Rockmusik, sondern auch die Wurzeln der mit ihr verbundenen Studioteknik liegen in Amerika. Bei Live- Konzertaufzeichnungen musste ich oft feststellen, dass Rundfunktechniker heute noch nicht durchblicken, trotz Ü-Wagen und modernem Equipment. Hängt das mit dieser sogenannten „Alten Schule“ zusammen?

Conny: Die sind mit den neuen technischen Gegebenheiten, die eine Rockgruppe bietet, total überfordert. Die müssen einfach passen, wenn sie auf die Sache stoßen, die nicht in ihr gelerntes Konzept hineinpasst.

Ax: Allerdings hört man, dass das technische Grundequipment eines deutschen Studios dem eines englischen oder amerikanischen in nichts nachsteht.

Conny: Die Ausrüstung ist grundsätzlich, naja, genauer. Nur wird sie in Amerika oder in England cleverer angewandt, anders gehandhabt. Sie steht zu dem, was gemacht wird, in einem anderen Bezug.

Ax: Damit könnte man ja das Vorurteil einer frustrierten deutschen Rockgruppe beiseite räumen, welche das Nichtgelingen ihres Werkes auf das Studio schiebt. Bleibt nur noch der Ingenieur, der Produzent, der sowieso nicht allzu häufig anwesend ist, oder die Musiker selbst, die den Flop provozieren.

Conny: Ich habe einen brutalen Spruch: Jede Gruppe kriegt den Sound, den sie verdient.

Ax: Wir deutschen Rocker, die ja im allgemeinen alle mal auf U.S.-Platten abgefahren sind, gehen meist mit einer amerikanischen Klangvorstellung an unsere eigenen Produkte, wenn wir im Studio sind. Werden wir jemals den zeitlichen Vorsprung aufholen, den die Amis oder auch die Engländer uns voraus haben, wenn es um moderne Aufnahmequalität geht?

Conny: Das könnte der Fall sein, wenn sich der öffentliche Geschmack, das, worauf das Gros der Leute abfährt, wandelt. Es kann plötzlich passieren, wenn die Stimmung total umschlägt. Das hast du gehabt, als Amerika wie verrückt Bert Kämpfert kaufte. Kämpfert ist ein Schulbeispiel alter deutscher Aufnahmetechnik; mit zwei Mikrofonen aufgenommen, die Musiker gehörig zum Mikro aufgestellt. Einfach eine gute Idee, und der Erfolg hat es bewiesen. Und sie haben versucht, den Bert-Kämpfert-Sound nachzuvollziehen und haben es nie geschafft, weil sie nicht wussten, wie es gemacht wird. Andererseits haben die Amis für die Rockmusik Pionierarbeit geleistet; durch geschickte Separation der einzelnen Instrumente, durch aufstellen von Trennwänden in kleinen Studios. Es gab in Hollywood die ersten winzigen Studios, die aber einen höllisch dicken Sound rausbrachten. Da hat man sich in Deutschland stark gewundert.

Ax: Es wäre also für einen Anfänger wichtig, sich darauf gefasst zu machen, unter total anderen Bedingungen als auf der Bühne zu musizieren, wenn er an ein ausländisches Klangideal heranreichen will. Allein, in Trennwänden eingepackt, ohne den engen Kontakt zum Mitmusiker dennoch sauber und „gutsy“ spielen zu können.

Conny: Ja, das haben besonders die Engländer exzessiv angewandt, als Sie in den späten sechziger Jahren ihren gewaltigen Fortschritt in der Soundtechnik gemacht haben, aber letzten Endes sind das alles kommerzielle Gesichtspunkte.

Ax: Kommerziell ist, was verkauft - und was verkauft, ist gut. Aber bei uns scheint sich ja die Musik am besten zu verkaufen, die am unkommerziellsten klingt. Ich denke da an Tangerine Dream, Can, Kraftwerk oder Neu!. Zu einem gewissen Teil bist du ja auch an deren Produkten beteiligt, also Kraftwerk und Neu. Was meinst du, ist es die Andersartigkeit, welche die Produkte kommerziell macht oder einfach die außergewöhnliche Qualität?

Conny: Es ist das andere Musikgefühl, welches die Jungs hier produzieren. Wir haben hier ein Musikpotenzial, welches noch nicht entdeckt wurde, weil alles durch den Rock verunsichert ist. Der Rock ist ein sehr starkes Element, und weil bei den Amis die Verkäufe total im Vordergrund stehen, mit dem dazugehörigen Apparat, konnten wir uns hier dem Klischee nicht verschließen und wurden davon vielleicht genauso geprägt, wie die Leute in den USA selbst. Das bedeutet aber nicht, dass unsere eigenen Substanzen gänzlich verschwunden sind. Wenn einige Jungs nur mutiger und freier wären, könnte sich das Zusammentreffen ausländischer Prägung mit eigener Substanz

zu immer mehr Produkten niederschlagen, wie z.B. Kraftwerk. Das sind eigenwillige Jungs. Der Klaus Dinger (Neu!) ist auch ein eigenwilliger Typ, der sich nicht so schnell von auswärts was ins Gehirn blasen lässt.

Ax: Das will ich akzeptieren und es ist mir auch klar, dass zu einer außergewöhnlichen Sache totale Individualität der Schlüssel ist. Aber ich will nun weniger starken Typen nicht sämtliche Hoffnung rauben. Da gibt es welche, die genau den Sound von dem und dem haben wollen, ihn aber mit ihrer eigenen Phrasierung koppeln, so dass eine halbeigene Sache entsteht. Könntest du denen helfen, wenn sie dir Plattenbeispiele nennen oder ist soetwas von vornherein out?

Conny: Wenn es einer wirklich will, bemühe ich mich, das so zu machen, und dann ist das Plattenbeispiel auch mir eine Hilfe. Nur, ich muss ihnen dann aber die Bedingungen aufklären, die zu einem solchen Ergebnis führen. Gerade gab es große Diskussionen wie: der YES-Bass klingt so toll, wie zwei Bassisten auf einmal; es klingt tief, es klingt hoch und in der Mitte so durchsichtig, so toll, wie wurde das gemacht? Dazu kann ich sagen, gib mir erst einmal die Zeit, die die Jungs gehabt haben, um den Ton zu entwickeln. Die sitzen erst einmal monatelang im Studio und stellen ein und probieren rum und fummeln, bevor sie dann an die eigentliche Produktion rangehen, aber dieses Geld hat hier kein Mensch. Wir sind gezwungen, auf die Schnelle irgendwas hinzukriegen.

Ax: Obwohl ich die Meinung eines Engländers gehört habe, der sich wunderte, wieviel Zeit deutsche Gruppen im Studio verplempern und wie schnell das alles in England klappt.

Conny: Natürlich ergeben sich aus Forschungszeiträumen auch wieder Erfahrungen, die ein Ingenieur bei Gruppen mit weniger Etat schnell reproduzieren kann oder er schaut es sich woanders ab. Aber die eigentliche Neuerung kommt immer dem zugute, der viel Zeit und Geld zum Experimentieren hat. Was glaubst du, was die dem Phil Spector auf die Finger geguckt haben. Der hat sich irgendwann mal hingesetzt und alle möglichen Verzerrungen durchprobiert, wie und durch welche Geräte sie erreicht werden können.

Ax: Und er hat keine Geheimniskrämerei gemacht. Wäre es nicht duftete, wenn die Scene in dieser Hinsicht transparenter wäre, denn Geld zum Experimentieren wird heute hier von keiner Firma mehr ausgespuckt. Würdest du bestimmte Einstellungen am Mischpult verraten?

Conny: Klar. Und auch ein englischer Toning verrät sie dir oder du kannst sie auch abschauen. Nur, ich weiß nicht, ob unserer Musik damit gedient ist, irgendwelche englischen Praktiken zu klauen.

Ax: Na, vielleicht nur, um sie zu wissen oder um darauf aufzubauen. Außer den vorhin genannten Gruppen stützen sich doch die meisten auf das ausländische Klangideal und erreichen das Ziel nicht. Dem Käuferpublikum wird einfach eine Diskrepanz deutlich.

Conny: Für mich liegt das eigentlich immer an den Musikern. Ich habe noch nie eine deutsche Gruppe gehört, die wie eine englische klingt. Also, schlechter oder besser wollen wir jetzt mal weglassen. Aber schau den Engländern mal auf die Finger, sieh dir mal Pete Townshend an, wie der in die Saiten langt, und schau mal den deutschen Märchen-Musikern zu, wobei ich gegen deren Musik nichts einzuwenden habe, nur, der Unterschied ist doch offensichtlich. Klaus Voorman ist aus Berlin und der hat irgendwann mal begriffen, dass es hier keinen gibt, der genauso hinlangt wie er, also ist er ausgewandert. In Deutschland würde doch niemand auf die Bühne gehen und, ohne irgendein englisches Vorbild gesehen zu haben (ein tierisch rockiger Aufschrei vom dicken Conny), irgendwelche ekstatischen Bewegungen machen. Das ist eine Mentalitätsfrage. Vielleicht ist das mal drin, wenn die Bedingungen ähnlich sind. In Deutschland ist halt eine liebere Scene, alles braver. Von Studioerfahrung kann hier noch nicht die Rede sein, weil in der Art Musik noch nichts gemacht wurde. Die Typen, die am Drücker sitzen, sind mit Schlagerproduktionen viel besser bedient, die deutsche Rock-Scene ist zwar künstlich gepusht, Krautrock oder so, aber vorläufig ist sie noch ein schönes Märchen. Irgendwo lokal passieren mal außergewöhnliche Dinge, weil ein paar glückliche Zufälle zusammenkommen. Aber sogar mit Kraftwerk muss ich dir einen Zahn ziehen. Das war irgendwo eine große Imagefrage. Man hat sich an das erste beste Produkt geklammert, und es ist ja auch nicht schlecht.

Ax: Obwohl du jetzt dein eigenes unabhängiges Studio hast und der Scene eigentlich auf Gedeih und Verderb ausgeliefert bist, gibst du den deutschen Musikern nicht viel Kredit, wenn sie sich nicht gewaltig ändern. Liegt es nur an den Musikern?

Conny: Es gibt in Deutschland keine Managerfigur, die so total auf ein Produkt abfährt und es durchbringt, - das ist duft, da steh ich drauf, auf Biegen und Brechen. Und das sind übliche Geschäftsgepflogenheiten im Ausland. Da muss ein Manager so sein, mit all der Härte, die dazugehört.

Ax: Naja, wenn Freund Hudalla das jetzt liest, denkt der, Bullshit, das tu ich doch für meine Gruppen und doch trifft der gewünschte Effekt nicht ein. Was ist also los?

Conny: Das Publikum, wenn es wirklich „Yeah“ schreit, wenn es eine Sache gefressen hat, dann puscht es den Musiker, und dann finden sich hier auch Leute, die investieren, um was gigantisch aufzubauen und die nur die allerbesten Leute dafür suchen.

Ax: Nun wird es aber kompliziert. Wenn ich heute ein Live- Konzert einer ausländischen Gruppe besuche, welche im Vergleich zu uns gigantische Ausmaße annimmt, reagiere ich oft, wie andere auch, ziemlich kühl und gelassen. Bei all dem Reizüberfluss muss doch eine deutsche Gruppe zwangsläufig hinten anstehen. Wie soll sie denn ein Publikum zu einer „say yeah“ Reaktion hinreißen, wenn die sogar bei Spitzenleuten gelangweilt reagieren. Außerdem habe ich selber erlebt, dass positive Reaktionen von kurzer Dauer sind. Beim Krefeld-Festival reagierte das Publikum auf Guru Guru außergewöhnlich und doch ist die Gruppe, wenn ich das richtig überblicke, heute in keiner besseren ökonomischen Situation. Also zählt doch einzig der Erfolg im Plattengeschäft, der natürlich manipulierbar ist.

Conny: Es war niemand da, der sich die Mühe gemacht hatte, herauszuarbeiten, was da in Krefeld gewirkt hat, um es dann auf synthetischem Wege, also im Studio, zu reproduzieren. Und gerade das passiert ja im Ausland. Jimmy Miller, wenn der was produziert, weiß ganz genau, was den Appeal einer Band ausmacht. Und außerdem muss ich den Gruppen hier vorwerfen, dass sie zu oft introvertiert sind und sich nicht trauen, einen Produzenten an ihre kostbare Musik zu lassen. Dazu muss ich sagen, dass ich noch keinen gescheiten Produzenten in Deutschland gesehen habe.

Ax: Klar, in Deutschland willst du dein eigener Produzent sein, um die Ursprünglichkeit deines Produktes zu gewährleisten und ja nicht den Touch des kommerziellen heraufzubeschwören. Aber irgendwie schneidet man sich da ins eigene Fleisch. Sämtliche Guru-Platten sind eigentlich falsch produziert und irgendwie ist jetzt alles zu spät.

Conny: Ich habe euch immer gesagt, ihr seid eine Live-Gruppe. Ihr wart im Studio immer gehemmt, unter dem Druck, irgendeiner Sache gerecht zu werden. Nach dem Schema: jetzt müssen wir unsere vier Stücke, die wir gemacht haben, unterbringen. Wenn ihr die voll ausgespielt hättet, wie ihr das gewöhnt seid... Und immer das Band mitlaufen lassen, egal wieviel Rollen das werden. Danach hört man sich das alles an - das ist gut und das - und dann wird entweder geschnitten oder überblendet, mit raffinierten Bearbeitungsmethoden herausgefiltert, das hätte sicherlich zu einem interessanten Resultat geführt.

Ax: Kann man sagen, dass die Can das so machen?

Conny: Can ist eigentlich die einzige konsequente Gruppe in Deutschland, die es verstanden hat, ihren ökonomischen Zustand mit ihrer Produktionsweise und ihren Produktionsmitteln in Einklang zu bringen. Die haben sich gesagt, wir haben nicht so viel Geld, um den totalen Studiofuck mit den tollen Sounds zu betreiben. Also stellen wir unsere Geräte so ein, dass es optimal klingt, mischen das auf einem ganz normalen Mixer so, dass sich jeder gut hört. Und wie es dann im Kopfhörer tönt, so ist es nachher auf dem Band. Das ist fantastisch. Das ist ein System, das in sich stimmt. Einfach ein natürliches Gefühl zur eigenen Leistung und zur Markterwartung. Einfach toll. Das ist doch eine Anregung für andere Gruppen, sich mal zu überlegen, ob sie sich das Haus mit Elektronikschrott vollstellen sollen, Türme, Wahnsinn, noch „nen dicken Kasten, bloß weil sie denken, das bringt den Sound, und den brauche ich, um Erfolg zu haben. Die sind irgendwelchen Gerätschaften auf die Rolle gegangen. Die machen die Musik nach dem Gerät und nehmen nicht das Gerät, um Musik zu machen. Oder ob sie sich nicht lieber zu einem System entschließen sollten, das ihnen selbst gerecht wird, wie es z.b. bei den Can der Fall ist. Diese blöde Angst bei den meisten, das Klischee richtig zu bedienen, oder das Spekulieren, wie werden wir am schnellsten eine Supergruppe, dieses ausschalten der eigenen Individualität, das macht soviel kaputt. Wir müssen uns mit deutscher Musik, ohne jetzt einen Nationalstolz produzieren zu wollen, aus der englischen und amerikanischen Kiste heraushalten und es von einer ganz anderen Art und Mache bringen. Natürlich können wir uns irgendwelche Sound- Erkenntnisse von denen zunutze machen,

aber eine wirklich gute Sache hängt nicht von einer Supertechnologie ab, von Erkenntnissen, wie toll ein Bass oder eine Orgel klingt. Aber solange man sich immer noch in dem Maße in fremde Gefühle einklinkt, sollte man sich nicht wundern, dass eigentlich nichts passiert.

Ax: Irgendwie einleuchtend. Trotzdem verstehe ich eines nicht: wenn ich z.B. deutsche Rockproduktionen mit amerikanischen vergleiche, beim Abhören auf einer ganz normalen Anlage, dann klingt die deutsche immer leiser. Das ist doch ein technischer Fuck, welcher sich stark auf den Verkauf und auf andere Bereiche auswirkt.

Conny: Da kann ich dir ein Beispiel nennen. Die Gruppe Jane, ganz gleich, was man jetzt so von der hält, klingt genauso saftig auf Platte, wie die Ausländer auch. Und um das zu erklären, führ dir doch die Diskussionen vor Augen, die beim Mischen passieren, wo jeder sich hören will und zuerst an seinen Scheiß denkt. Die Jane-Typen haben da mehr Vertrauen zueinander und der „Together-Sound“ steht immer im Vordergrund. Den Ausländern ist schon lange klar, was für einen Stellenwert sein partieller Soundbeitrag hat, und sie finden sich viel schneller in der Soundlandschaft zurecht. Das ist eben ein Klischee und da gibt es keine langen Diskussionen. Eine musikalische Balance ist nicht von den Wünschen eines einzelnen abhängig, sondern von dem, was da vielleicht zufällig zusammen gekommen ist. Paul Klee hat mal gesagt: „Ein Werk macht sich ab einem gewissen Zeitpunkt selbständig. Du schaffst nicht mehr das Werk, sondern es fordert von dir seine Vollendung. Und du schadest dem Werk, wenn du die von ihm entwickelten Gesetze nicht spürst.“

Ax: Also Vorsicht beim Mischen, nach dem Motto: viele Köche verderben den Brei. Man sollte immer auf Solistenkram zugunsten der Gesamtproduktion verzichten können.

Conny: Manchmal passiert es aber auch, dass der Gitarrist sagt, an der Stelle habe ich was besonders duftes gespielt und du hast es beim Mischen vergessen. Wenn es dann hinzu kommt, klingt tatsächlich alles viel besser. Das sind dann echte Hilfen für den Ingenieur. Aber grundsätzlich passiert bei unerfahrenen Leuten, die konzentriert hören, was psychologisches. Sie regeln das Instrument, dem sie zuhören, lauter, so dass das Gesamthören gestört ist.

Ax: Da würde ich sagen, ein unbefangener mit Durchblick müsste zum Mischen her.

Conny: Ja deshalb sind die Amis dazu übergegangen, den einen Ingenieur die Aufnahme fahren zu lassen und einen anderen als Mixer zu nehmen.

Ax: Trotz eventueller Kommunikationsschwierigkeiten beim Mischen und einer gewissen Gefahr zu meinen, es besser zu können als der Toning, sollten die Musiker doch dabei sein. Gerade du hast auch immer geraten, sich mit technischen Problemen auseinanderzusetzen, zu Hause vielleicht selber mit einem Vierspurgerät vorzuzuschneiden.

Conny: Ja, der Musiker der Zukunft sollte auch Toning sein. Einfach, um da überhaupt den Überblick zu behalten, denn die Anforderungen, welche die technische Entwicklung stellt, nehmen ständig zu. Zumindest sollten die Handgriffe, die der Ingenieur am Pult macht, dem Musiker bekannt sein. Er sollte die Terminologie beherrschen, um besser klarmachen zu können, was er sich vorstellt. Natürlich wird es immer Typen geben, die sich einen Furz um die Technik kümmern, dafür aber in die Saiten langen, dass es alle umhaut. Aber das sind Leute, die durch ihr Feeling alles rausreißen. Die normalen Typen sollten sich schon einen Überblick verschaffen. Ein klares Handbuch wäre da vielleicht angebracht.

Ax: Wir haben vorhin über die Aufnahmetechnik der Reichsrundfunkingenieure gesprochen. Die moderne Kunstkopftechnik, die bis jetzt eigentlich nur in Deutschland praktiziert wird, ist ja davon die direkte Weiterentwicklung. Das wäre vielleicht die Lösung für den Deutschrock, ein modernes Produktionsverfahren, welches sich deutlich vom ausländischen abhebt.

Conny: Ja, das ist eine echte Weiterentwicklung, ein perfektes System. Ein Mikrofon stellt ja eigentlich nur eine Membran dar, so als würdest du die Trommelfelle aus dem Ohr herausbauen und irgendwo hinhängen. Aber es passieren ja noch Prozesse innerhalb der Ohrmuschel des Gehörgangs, mit dem ganzen Mechanismus Amboss, Steigbügel, ganz spezifisch zur Übertragung in den Kopf. Und die Nachbildung des Ohrs in Verbindung mit einem Mikrofon ist einfach super. Das ist ein zweispuriges Ereignis, welches durch die verschiedenen Laufzeiten und anheben oder absinken der Präsenzen zu einem Quadrophonie-Hörerlebnis wird. Ohne den Kunstkopf wäre das ungeheuer schwierig nachzuvollziehen. Nur lässt sich das nur durch Kopfhörer wiedergeben, und dass ein

musikalisches Produkt an den Kopfhörer gebunden ist, das halte ich für Stress, und wenn es noch so interessant ist. Ich habe mir schon überlegt, was ich für Sachen machen könnte. Räume ineinander schachteln, akustische Fiktionen darstellen; ich könnte simulieren, dass man durch den Raum fliegt, du dich drehst oder in zwei Räumen zugleich bist. Total ausgeflippte Sachen. Das ist eine fantastische Spielerei, nur weiß ich nicht, ob sie vom kommerziellen Gesichtspunkt aus gesehen interessant ist. Wie gesagt, auch der Stress mit dem Kopfhörer.

Ax: Vielen Dank an Conny. Er hat zumindest denen, die noch nie ein Studio von innen gesehen haben, einiges sagen können. Und er hätte zumindest nichts dagegen, wenn interessierte Anfänger mit ernstesten Ambitionen ihm mal in seinem Studio auf die Finger schauen wollen. Nur ist der Abhörraum sehr klein und manche Gruppen wollen bei ihrer Arbeit eine intime Atmosphäre. Auf jeden Fall sollte man vorher telefonisch anfragen.