

The **SOUND** Projector
Presents...

RAUTROCK

Compendium

In Kolour!





The Sound Projector KRAUTROCK KOMPENDIUM

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The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium

Introduction

This is a compilation of all written reviews of Krautrock records that have appeared in the pages of *The Sound Projector Music Magazine* to date. It includes music that has been variously labelled as Krautrock, Kosmische, German electronic music, or German progressive rock.

Two caveats to the reader. Firstly, the selection of music is not at all comprehensive and this is not a definitive guide to the genre. For that, I point you in the direction of the many books and studies that have been already been published. Secondly, we have included many records that some scholars would not even call 'krautrock'. For some, the genre is strictly bound by dates; anything issued later than the end of the 1970s, for example, simply doesn't count. For others, there are particular musical characteristics and stylistic qualities that define the genre. I mention this in case any reader's purist tendencies are upset by references in these pages to the music of Limpe Fuchs, the Klaus and Thomas Dinger solo CDs from the 1990s, or the later incarnations of Faust. Similarly, I am aware that the authenticity of the records on the Pyramid label (see pp) remain a matter of dispute among Krautrock aficionados.

For the most part, the reviews appear exactly as they were originally written and published, but changes have been made to the discographical details. Frequently, the original reviews were addressed towards reissue CDs. The catalogue information for these has been improved and expanded, to bring the descriptions in line with my current standards¹. The other addition has been the inclusion of original catalogue numbers and release dates, which I have taken from the very useful discography at <http://www.angelfire.com/planet/krautrock/dg1.htm> (consulted February-April 2007). In this Kompendium, the discographical details of the CD are given first, followed by the original release information.

The reason for doing the *Krautrock Kompendium* at all is simply to make available previously-published extracts from the magazine. We decided to do it as an 'ebook', an online publication which can be downloaded from the website for free. At the same time, digital photography technology has made it easier to deliver photography and reproduction of entire LP sleeves. The visual element is an exceptionally important part of Krautrock history; the sleeve art is beautiful, and packed with significance. For these reasons, we decided to render the KK in full colour. Thus, the layouts, cover art and pictures have been assembled especially for this digital edition; a 'normal' issue of *The Sound Projector Music Magazine*, with its black and white interiors, looks nothing like this.

The scans and photographs of the CD and LP covers are, for the most part, taken from my own collections. I have indicated in a caption where this is not the case.

If there is any interest at all, I would consider publishing the *Krautrock Kompendium* in full colour as a small-run book, although the purchase price of such an item would be very high.

Ed Pinsent
Editor
June 2007

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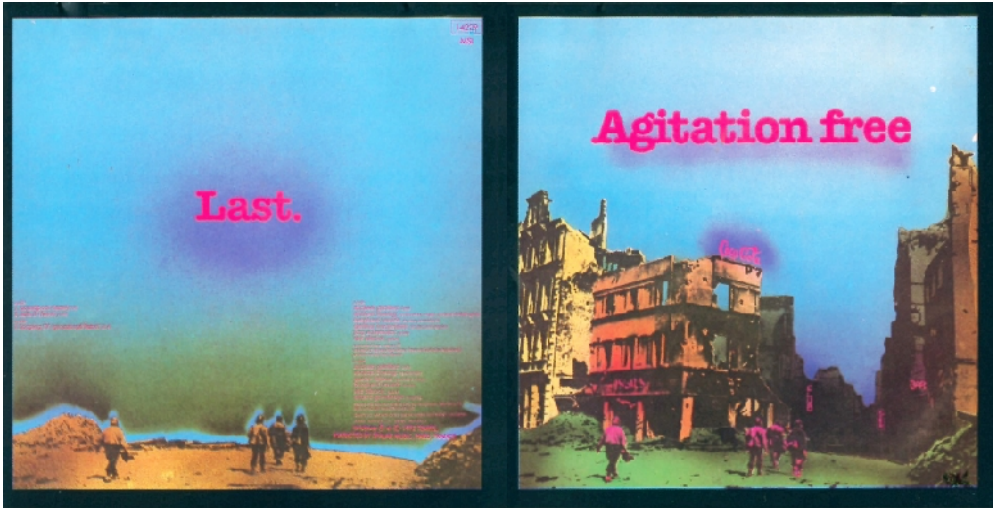
¹ The descriptions are structured as follows: Country of origin (ie of the record label, not the product); name of record label; catalogue number; format; date of release (in round brackets).

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Agitation Free

Last

FRANCE SPALAX 14229 CD (1992)

Original issue BARCLAY 80.612 LP (1976)

One of the better-kept secrets of German rock, this excellent band managed a distinctive blend of astro-improvs with tinges of experimental electronica, and I have the feeling they didn't turn in a single duff LP. A team of fine players to a man. This spacey gem consists of live recordings from 1973 and 1974, three tracks developing into side-long drawn out jams featuring superlative guitar work (Michael Hoenig, Jörg Schwenke and Lutz Ulbrich) cut with unsettling strange noises. 'Soundpool' and 'Laila II' evolve into beautifully sweet melodies, while 'Looping IV' is far darker and desolate; for this the band's ranks are swelled by guests Gustav Lutjens on modified voice and Erhard Grosskopf playing loops. Nowhere near as self-consciously 'cosmic' as some of their German brothers (Ash Ra Tempel, or the Cosmic Jokers), Agitation Free managed to shackle at least one ankle to the earth while their heads roamed free in the star-filled clouds. Needless to say this makes most UK Prog from the same period look pretty damn sick. Muchly recommended.

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Agitation Free

Malesch

FRANCE SPALAX 14250 CD (1992)

Original issue VERTIGO / PHONOGRAM 6360 607 LP (1972)

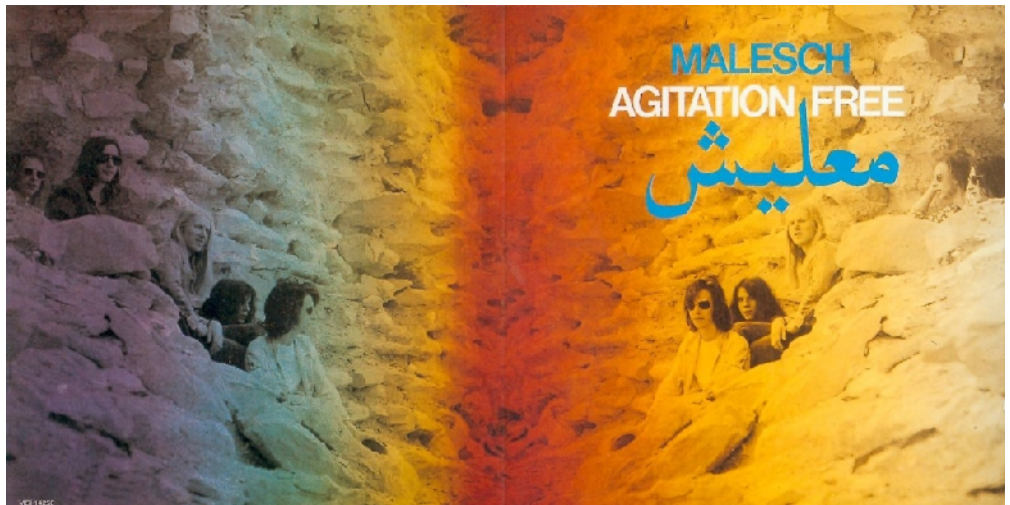
The first and (so many say) best LP by this excellent and still somewhat underrated combo. From 1972, it's a magnificently ambitious affair, a suite of seven interlocking instrumental pieces all as perfectly formed and as varied as the intricate motifs within a Persian carpet. Tricky rhythms, melodies, sounds and methods of playing are influenced by Egyptian and Middle-Eastern music, and there's

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a few field recordings of the real thing (plus documentary sounds) made in Cairo by the bass player Michael Gunther. When these guys are sufficiently fuelled up with psychic energy, which is pretty much all the time, they operate an unbeatable mixture of cosmic guitar manipulations (Lutz Ulbrich, Jörg Schwenke), brain-bendingly brilliant electronic processes (Michael Hoenig) and a team of fellow players that must have been communicating via ESP; they provide a solid bedrock rhythm section which supports all the cosmic proggy decoration. 'Khan El Khalili' and the glorious title track show how they can all plug in together for flowing, cliché-free cosmic jams that surpass even The Grateful Dead; switching time-signatures as easy as blinking, as they drive around the Sahara desert in their four-wheel drive Land rover. If I was in a guitar band and I had only recorded the track 'Sahara City' - a tiny masterpiece of elliptical arrangement - I could die a happy man. The fact that the entire LP yields up treasures of equal splendour makes this all the more an essential proposition. Sheer inventiveness through and through - just listen to all the ideas flying around on 'Ala Tul' - swirling organs, overlapping guitar lines and an inspired marimba passage from drummer Burghard Rausch - have you ever heard anything remotely like this in the entire history of rock? If you think Jimmy Page's 'Kashmir' is great - as indeed it is - just prepare for something even better. An exquisite, sun-drenched, masterful musical statement full of space and light.

Lutz Ulbrich would later play guitar in Ashra. Michael Hoenig, the excellent 'electronic devices' man, probably hit his creative peak with *Agitation Free*; in the mid 1970s he would tour with Tangerine Dream, replacing Peter Baumann. He made a solo LP in the Phaedra / Green Desert mould, called *Departure From the Northern Wasteland*, in 1977.

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Amon Düül

Collapsing: Singvogel, Ruckwärts and Co

JAPAN POLYDOR POCP-2400 CD (1995)

Original issue METRONOME SMLP 012 LP (1969)

Brutal power is the phrase that springs to mind when *Collapsing* first grabs you by the balls. If German Rock is The Blues, then Amon Düül II are Muddy Waters, and Amon Düül (mark I) are clearly Charley Patton. For all their frenetic effort to strip their music down to the most basic components, it remains amazingly weird, you have to deal with a core of something indigestible. Two-note guitar riffs seem to echo with all the blackness of outer space; childish hammering on clatterbox percussion and bongoes made of elephants feet. They lead you down a corridor of madness. Heavy-handedness is a trait of most German culture; in visual art, the clumsy daubs of Emil Nolde springs to mind. In literary studies, the narrow insistence on literal-minded analysis of the written word. With Amon Düül, they have somehow turned their own ineptness into high art. The editing helps. These recordings (and those on *Psychedelic Underground* and *Disaster*) are highlights from a marathon free-form session, afterwards treated with electronic effects and edited into bite-size fragments; a move by their producer attempting to cash in on the other Amon Düül's success. What a hope! We have here a phenomenon that shouldn't have happened, almost on a par with the miracle of The Magic Band that made *Trout Mask Replica* possible. Electrifyingly awesome and naively barbaric, they occupy the tiny space that exists between supreme technical mastery and complete incapability. It's like getting snapshots of an unknown ceremony being performed on Planet Mars. Great, great, great.

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Amon Düül

Disaster

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-022 CD (1995)

Original issue GERMANY BASF 29 29079-8 2 x LP (1971)

On *Disaster*, the awful insistency of those rudimentary guitar lines gets to you - the guitarist is obsessed with working them out, like a backward child single-mindedly ploughing on with a simple arithmetic exercise, eventually he'll get it right. Rhythm guitar likewise is the most basic on-the-beat strumming, no attempt to syncopate. And the vocalising is simply sub-human grunts and wails of primeval men, feeding on raw sabre-tooth tiger meat. 'Autonomes' - with glitches in the master tape intact - features two drummers panning in and out, colliding with each other, vying for supremacy in a noisy argument - they mockingly repeat each other's phrases into absurdity inside the hall of mirrors that is their echo chamber. None of these tunes really start or stop, they lurch into view like uninvited guests, then literally 'collapse' in a welter of bongos and feedback, falling to pieces. This monster was originally a double LP, how magnificent to enjoy (through CD technology) an uninterrupted 70+ minutes of this gibberish. Listen out for when the hippies' offspring wander into the session and try and get their daddies to shut up, also a ludicrous cover of The Beatles' 'I should have known better'.

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Amon Düül

Paradieswaarts Düül

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-017 CD (1995)

Original issue GERMAN OHR OMM 56008 LP (1971)

P*aradieswaarts Düül* was recorded in 1970: a trippier, laid back, folky-acoustic affair, with flutes and bongoes. Despite its quietness, the same awful core of inexorability described above pervades this work. They're satyrs in a trance, swaying madly in a weird pastoral setting, paralysed on dark purple wine. Immerse your feet in their cool fountain of flutes and let that insistent bass riff lap away at your tootsies. They reveal themselves as the true bastard offspring of The Grateful Dead with toy instruments. And, by gosh, they've learned chord changes by this time - one extra chord at any rate, so that on 'Paramechanische Welt' you get their take on the Popol Vuh two-chord ecstasy, achieved with about three acoustic guitars and some warbling goon at the mike. This CD also features both sides of their (only) 45 rpm single, 'Eternal Flow' c/w 'Paramechanical World' [original issue OHR OS 57000, 1970] - two of the dreariest hippy dirges ever committed to vinyl - you'll love 'em!



Check out the demented sleeve art. *Disaster* spells its title out in building bricks across the gatefold, where the reissue version (also reproed on the CD) features the pink Hippy Dude in flares falling off the bridge to be eaten by black crows in the river, while light bursts behind him suggest a UFO invasion or a limited A-Bomb first strike. *Paradieswaarts Düül* has a Mandala on the back cover, painted by band member Lemur, which has been nagging away at my retinas - a cosmic wheel of fortune as rendered by Kandinsky with a trippy crescent moon and beams to the centre, with a Maltese Cross and stupid 'Master of Time' message. *Collapsing* is a black slab of glossy gatefold cardboard with a small square of white typo at centre. Just the sight of this brooding black monster scared the life out of me at first meeting, as did its vinyl price. These

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suckers are rare which makes these CD issues extra-welcome. The Captain Trip versions I have described were hugely costly at time of issue, but soon afterwards SPALAX whacked out a European set at more affordable prices, and the prices of the Japanese issues dropped. You can't lose.

Inexplicably, the article fails to stress what an important and excellent record *Psychedelic Underground* is. Being a cheapskate, I haven't yet bought the Captain Trip CD version of this as I already owned a late vinyl edition of it. Retitled *Minnelied*, it was issued in 1973 on the Rock On Brain label (a budget priced offshoot of the famous Brain label), Catalogue no 0040.149. It features boring (and sexist!) sleeve art in contrast to the photocollage mind-melder of the original.

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Amon Düül II

Yeti

GERMANY REPERTOIRE RECORDS REP 4914 CD (2001)

Original issue LIBERTY LBS 83 359/60 2 x LP (1970)

This recording was originally released as a double album in 1970 and since then a million and one musical fads and trends have come, gone and been forgotten, and still this 2nd effort from Amon Düül 2 (*Phallus Dei* was the first) deserves its classic status in the way it hits the right balance between spaced-out experimental music and a more accessible, pop-oriented style. So while much of the music meanders far and wide in its themes and explorations and pulls in influences from Sixties psychedelic rock and classical music in a sometimes jokey way (mostly evidenced in the wasted operatic singing of Renate and Shrat), it's also not so loose as to seem unstructured and to flounder in its own majestic mess yet it's not too tight either and there are enough short songs, poppy hooks and energetic rhythms to keep even those of us with musical attention deficit disorder hanging about for more. Amon Düül II also stay well away

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from the excessive solo guitar fingering that would become the albatross hanging around the neck of much Seventies hard rock. Titles range from the bombastic and highbrow intellectual ('Archangels Thunderbird', 'Cerberus', 'Eye-Shaking King') to the playful and the plain nutty ('Flesh-Coloured Anti-Aircraft Alarm', 'She Came Through The Chimney') and sometimes you even get the highbrow and the lowbrow in the same title, as in 'Yeti Talks To Yogi'.

All the music is great: the best tracks include 'Eye-Shaking King' with its stately music and treated vocals and 'Archangels Thunderbird' with its driving riff and washed-out female operatic vocals. If you can't stand the thought of sitting through the really long pieces, the wonders of CD technology enable you to skip to the next track. The wonders of CD technology also mean that *Yeti* (the album) includes two bonus tracks originally released as a single in 1970: 'Rattlesnakeplumcake' which packs in incredible hooks, riffs and great moments in just over three minutes of sinister-sounding music and 'Between the Eyes', the B-side piece which has a massive riff which, for lesser bends, would rate as single A-side material. It's worth buying or stealing the album just for these two short tracks but the entire recording is a gem.

JENNIFER HOR from TSP
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Amon Düül II

Tanz der Lemminge

GERMANY REPERTOIRE RECORDS LC08065 CD (2001)

Original issue LIBERTY LBS 83 473/74 2 x LP (1971)

For me this band hit its peak with its second album *Yeti* but *Tanz der Lemminge*, originally released as a double vinyl set in 1971, is also a worthy record especially if your taste extends more to snappy little melodies, the odd bit of spaced-out eccentricity and more experimental atmospheric activity, and away from extended guitars-n-drums improvised freak-outs. Bear in mind too that at the time *Tanz der Lemminge* was being recorded, ADII had problems with people coming and leaving the band and financial problems, and you realise that just getting the album out was a major feat in itself, to say nothing of how it compares with its predecessor *Yeti* or the rest of the ADII canon.

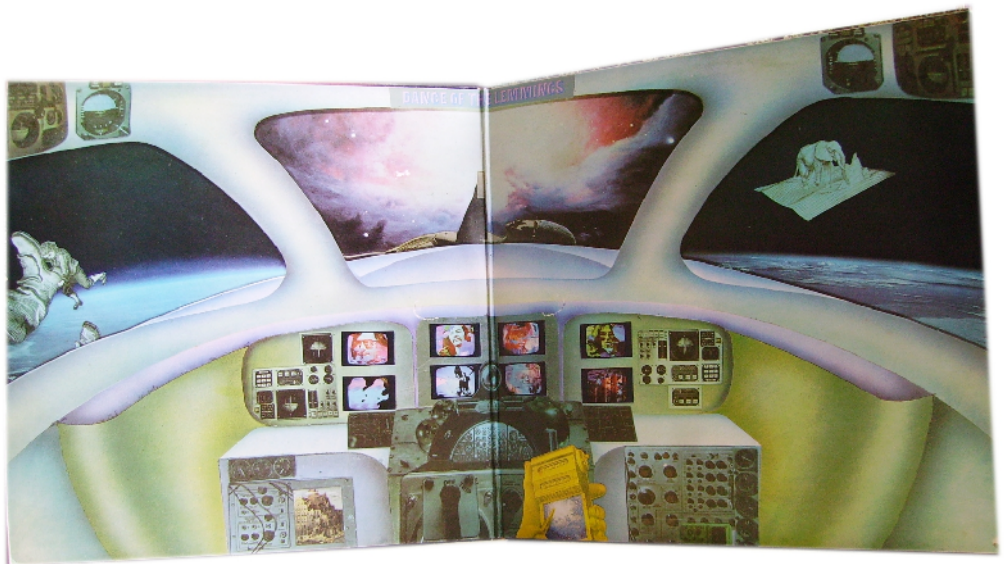
The album divides into three uneven (as in length) and inconsistent (as in quality) parts. Tracks 1 - 4 constitute a mostly acoustic set called 'Syntelman's March of the Roaring Seventies' (the tracks also have their own titles) with the synth special effects in the background to provide the dreamy atmosphere.

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Compared to the rest of the album, this section is not that great despite flashes of melodic brilliance and guitar etude flourishes. The singing is a mixture of John Lennon and late 60s David Bowie, and if you don't care for either of these people (I can understand you may not care for Bowie since he can't seem to stop parodying himself these days), you can keep hitting the play or search function on your players to Track 5. From here on, ADII start applying more synths and special effects in a more active way to the music which also improves dramatically in this second section of 9 tracks, 'Restless Skylight - Transistor - Child'. The tracks are very short, nothing over 5 minutes, and the band keeps tossing off inspired and memorable tunes as if they were mere paddlepops. Highlight of this section is the short and sweet 'Overheated Tiara' with a riff that sticks in the brain forever, delicate and dreamy touches to the rhythm section and a flyaway violin solo. 'Paralyzed Paradise' (sic) with the ADII trademark sinister guitar sound against John Wienzierl's befuddled vocals and 'H G Well's Take Off', a funny-silly piece with fingers-down-the-throat squawking, also rate highly in my book.

The third section 'Chamsin Soundtrack' (that's 'chamsin' as in 'khamsin'), clocking in at 33 minutes, slaps together a very long space ambient experimental piece 'The Marilyn Monroe - Memorial - Church' with three rock-out tracks that, er, sound like they might have been recorded during the *Yeti* sessions, so straightforward and down-to-earth do they sound; indeed, one track even has a recycled riff from the B-side of the single 'Rattlesnakeplumcake' ADII released in 1969 or 1970. Well, it's ADII's riff after all, the band can do what it likes. However, compared to the long piece and the rest of the album, these pieces are somewhat of a let-down so they're best heard separately. The long track on the other hand is quite complex; though it barely hangs together, and you have to imagine it as a sonic soup through which tasty morsels float; by turns it is spiritual, uncanny, rich in mood and, towards the end, quite mad with lots of piano abuse.

It should be apparent by now that the album flops all over the place but its disoriented nature which would otherwise be a flaw for other bands in the early 70s, actually works in ADII's favour: it adds a rather endearing and whimsical eccentricity to the music at a time when ADII's space rock / so-called progressive contemporaries were lurching towards earnest and humourless self-importance. (You can guess which bands I have in mind! And aren't the Germans supposed to be the dour and humourless lot and the English the



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witty and eccentric ones?) Perhaps it's not as 'desert island disc' essential as the earlier *Phallus Dei* and *Yeti* but ADII's *Tanz* ... is more accessible to mainstream listeners; it reflects something of the space rock / progressive scene in the early 70s and for that alone can be considered an important historical / cultural document.

JENNIFER HOR from TSP 12



Amon Düül II

Wolf City

GERMANY REPERTOIRE RECORDS REP 4987 CD (2002)

Original issue UNITED ARTISTS UAS 29406 (1972)

Of course this is not a patch on earlier albums and some of the tracks could've been a bit longer and their concepts expanded even (indeed, *Wolf City* originally was to have been a double LP like the aforementioned albums) but this fifth ADII studio recording, originally released in 1972, still gets the nod from my hippie spirit. The trend towards more structured pop-oriented songs means much of the density and complexity of earlier ADII music have gone and the material here is more assimilable, plus there's a spaciousness that allows the band to explore mood and atmosphere. However the shortness of some tracks in the interest of making a pop-friendly record means that the album seems a bit cramped in parts and not that satisfying. A mighty monster is lurking in the catacombs and sewers of *Wolf City* and the Düülers, had they not been under pressure within their own camp and without to make money and get attention, would undoubtedly have uncovered and released it.

Most of the tracks are good though I single out 'Wie der Wind am Ende einer Strasse' and 'Deutsch Nepal' as needing further attention: yes, 'Wie der Wind ...' establishes a nice mood and it flows well but I think it could've gone to a higher level if the idea behind it had matured a bit more and was more definite. The synthesiser playing here is pretty ordinary and we've heard that kind of boring sound before too many times. 'Deutsch Nepal' (ah, so that's where the Swedish goth/industrial band gets its name from! Now gotta find

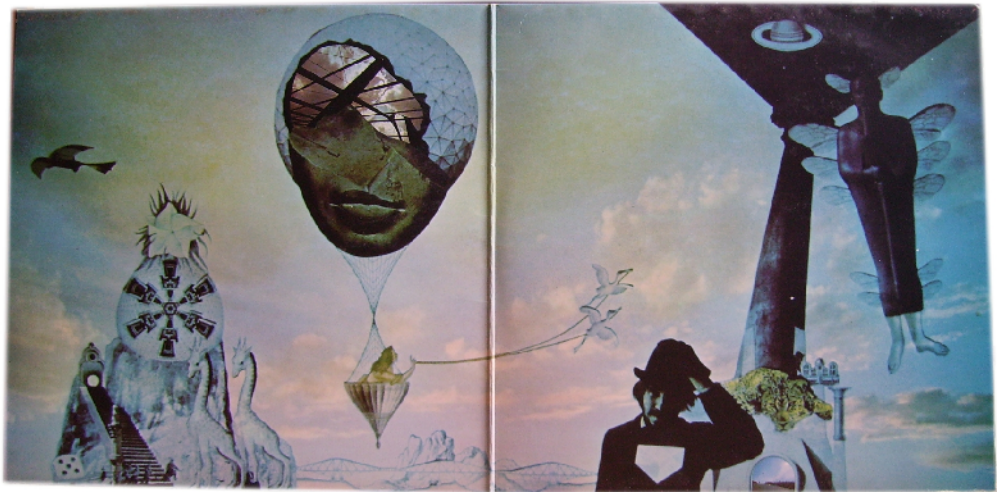
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out where Brighter Death Now gets its name from!) clunks along fine with demented piano while guest vocalist Rolf Zacher declaims in his best 'Also sprach Zarathustra' voice about establishing a ruler warrior dynasty between fits of harrumphing. Is he about to have a coughing fit? Where's the tyrant's cough medicine? Quick, fetch, er ... fetch the doctor! Gosh, had this track been any longer, poor old Zacher would be convulsing on the floor and making a hacking racket while the piano goes right off the deep end ... yes, I'd like to hear that!

Apart from these two tracks, the rest of the album is a mixture of conventional pop-oriented work which tends to push guitarists Karrer and Weinzierl more to the forefront than the original AD collective manifesto would have allowed, the band's former spur-of-the-moment improvisation and dabblings in a more ambient direction. The title track, superficially a straightforward rock piece, has a smooth quality typical of early 70s rock at odds with the abrasive guitar feedback and sneering vocals; the really scary thing about this song is that its theme of the modern urban dystopia is more relevant now than it was 30 years ago and the last line: '...they say: 'Johnny B Goode!'' (ha!) acquires a new sinister meaning in addition to all the other meanings it may have.

A good album which could have been great. Such is life.

JENNIFER HOR from TSP 12



Amon Düül II

Vive La Trance

GERMANY BELL MUSIK GMBH GRR 83 804 CD (2000)

Original issue UNITED ARTISTS UAS 29504 (1973)

One song on this album is called 'Apocalyptic Bore' which sums up my opinion of this 1973 recording. As I see it, the problem here is that success in the UK and the opportunity to crack the US market encouraged ADII to proceed in a more commercial and musically slick direction resulting in a pretentious arty rock record that copied the musical fads swirling about at the time: pseudo-opera ('Jalousie'), rockabilly ('Pig Man'), US Southern rock ('Fly United'), Eurodisco (the cringeworthy

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bonus track 'Lilac Lillies') and Dylanesque ruminations ('Apocalyptic Bore') among others. The result is a terrible mishmash of music with no distinctive identity or any zest, and originality is nowhere to be found though I suppose in 'Jalousie', ADII achieved the dubious feat of getting Kate Bush and Queen together while Ms Bush was still at school.

Probably only one song here is worth salvaging from the wreckord and that's 'Mozambique' minus the finger-clicking bit: the lyrics put this song in a line of songs running back to ADII's first album *Phallus Dei* dealing with European imperialism and tyrannical hegemons. (Given that Mozambique fell victim to ongoing civil war after 1975 with South Africa abetting rebels against the Marxist government there, the song is tragically prescient.) Musical highlights include a lightweight wall-of-guitar sound and delicate synthesiser background effects; the latter are probably the best part of the album overall. Apart from this, I say 'La Trance, c'est morte'.

JENNIFER HOR from TSP 13

Amon Düül II **Made In Germany**

GERMANY REPERTOIRE RECORDS CD REP4631-WP (1996)

Original issue NOVA / TELDEC 6.22378 LP (1975)

My hippie brain doesn't like this CD much but even it recognises that as commercial pop records go, this conceptual rock opera affair about the history of Germany still beats the crap and more out of 97% of other pop records before and after 1975 when this album was first released. In an age where 'good' bands had to tackle every godforsaken musical style known to humankind to prove their worth to the music industry (so Led Zeppelin tackled reggae and disco and wrecked Middle Eastern music for *Physical Graffiti* and Queen went for burlesque and vaudeville on *A Night at the Opera*) so the Düllers knocked over tango, Bob Dylan parody, beerhall carousing, bubblegum girly pop and brass band blaring among other genres on this record but, having become totally professional studio musicians by 1975, they don't exactly leave all these musical styles smouldering away in fine white ash heaps, though they were capable of doing so. As for the history lesson, the record more or less spans the period from the 1860s to 1945 but any glaring omissions you find (and there are plenty), you may rely on Throbbing Gristle and early 80s Whitehouse to fill you in on some of the details.

Highlights (there are highlights!) include 'Wide-Angle' in which original Düller Renate Knaup - five original Düllers from way back in '68 were involved in this recording - accidentally wipes the floor with numerous generations of female pop singers past, present and future (including of course all the current usual suspects) when she's supposed to warble sweetly about some long-gone utopian socialistic living experiment propped up by pharmaceutical companies; and 'La Krautoma' which is a delirious though heavy-handed demolition job of a once-popular 70s lounge bar melody. Indeed, many demolition jobs are going on here - I detect a subversive attitude lurking throughout this record. I nearly do a demolition job on myself when I fall off my chair laughing over the ode to American ignorance and the cult of celebrity encouraged by the music media, '5.5.55' in which an idiot American radio jock interviews famous celebrity entertainer Adolf Hitler (snippets of actual speeches by Hitler are used) and if you think this number is tasteless, read Leni Brenner's *51 Documents: Zionist Collaboration with the Nazis* or Norman Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* and then you'll realise what tasteless is. Brief moments of musical / ambient brilliance throughout the CD in tracks like 'The King's Chocolate-Waltz' and 'Excessive Spray', lite-metal guitar solos and the relative

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lyrical sophistication hint at the once splendid and mighty beast that was Amon Düül II.

By 1975, many of ADI's fellow German Kosmische Musik bands were either defunct or had also succumbed to the pressures of the commercial music industry and the business of making a living; only Kraftwerk, who spent most of the early 70s making their own equipment and building their Klingklang studio anyway, were able to adapt to and take advantage of the changing music scene to present their own polished and distinctive style of German progressive music. While Kraftwerk forged ahead in the late 70s with recordings like *Radioaktivität* and *Trans-Europe Express*, I understand AD2 released a few more albums in the late 70s and early 80s before winding up in 1983: my hippie brain warns me these records are düüll, düüller and düüllerer and begs me to stop. Now.

JENNIFER HOR from TSP 12

(Editor's note: Amon Düül II of course did not wind up in 1983, as anyone who saw their European tour in the 1990s could tell you.)





Anima

Der regt mich auf / A Controversy

GERMANY OHR TODAY OMM 580.001 2 x LP (1982)

Anima are a husband-and-wife team of German loons who, as Anima-Sound, brought us the incomparable *Musik für Alle* record in 1971 – a truly heavy-duty Oktoberfest of high Germanic weirdness, realised on nutsoid home-made instruments, an oddity which none of us would even dream existed but for the fine Alga Marghen 1999 reissue on CD. That release was truly something to cherish. It's not just that it sounded highly unusual (which it did), but it spoke to the heart about freedom, life, individuality and happiness in an impassioned manner and with a conviction which very few people can manage. I only bought this LP on the strength of that weirdie, and frankly - I'm a bit disappointed. By the time of these recordings, dating from late 1978-early 1979 and 1982, the couple had clearly gone a little bit saner, but then so had the Ohr label, branching away from the mega-bonkers Krautrock records of the early 1970s yet still staking their claim as serious representatives of some form of 'contemporary' art music. I'm basing this assumption on flimsy evidence - the name 'Ohr Today', which sounds to me like desperate marketing speak from a label about to go bust, and I've no reason to believe that they ever made such a boast or issued any other such exemplars of modern German music. But I like to entertain these theories.

Der Klang-Projektor Krautrock Kompendium

Paul Fuchs was the man with the 'vision' for Anima, devising and building his eccentric wind and string instruments, usually incorporating the word 'Fuchs' into their names in some way...and spouse Limpe Fuchs was no slouch either, with a fine solo CD *Nur Mar Mus* to her credit on the German Streamline label in 1999. In 1982, the duo entered a studio in Munich and cut the six tracks that comprise sides 1-2. Limpe Fuchs is gracing the keys of the piano with her nimble, slim digits, Paul Fuchs freaks out on his 'engines', while a young Zoro Fuchs plays drums. Clearly, they kept their breed of non-commercial endeavour in the family...appearing now decidedly more settled and middle-class than they did in 1971, yet I could be wrong as gatefold spread of photographs shows them continuing to enjoy their semi-nomadic rural lifestyle, with the Anima tractor and the jeep still ploughing up the countryside, and glimpses of a farmhouse perhaps indicating they were in it for the long haul, unlike Paul and Linda who only went to the Mull of Kintyre as visitors, using the place as a part-time tourist retreat from the hectic pop star life. The Anima music on these sides though is more domesticated, has nothing like the raw wildness of *Musik für Alle*, and amounts to a species of puzzling, cerebral, parlour jazz, complete with chord structures, rhythm, and even some vague intellectual shape, with occasional gestural doodles on top of it courtesy of Paul and his manic puffs and strums on his devices. These instrumental flourishes of his are admittedly unusual, but they don't go far enough and most of the time they just add the ornamentation of 'funny' sound-effect noises to what is fairly ordinary jazzy noodling, rather than being the focal point of the music. Perhaps it's the way it's recorded, by some unadventurous sound engineer; Paul's work isn't high enough in the mix for me. Even so you can hear that the ensemble playing isn't really very strong; the trio as a whole fail to cohere musically, and they often keep on playing long past the point when they've anything left to say. The pitfall of many an improviser I fear.



The front cover shows a figure made out of stones on the beach, perhaps running and catching a ball. It's an image of whimsy and a suggestion of freedom, neither of which you can find in the music. Oddly enough I'm reminded of an old Danish student friend of my mother's, who took a walk on Ringstead beach with the family and was delighted to find some large stone formations, which she promptly named 'Adam and Eva', inscribing said names on the stones with a piece of flint or chalk. Why? Because the stones looked uncannily like two naked bottoms! And who better to represent the apogee of a naked bottom than our two biblical forebears, whose bottoms were famously bared before they left the Garden of Eden under unhappy circumstances. But that was probably before I was born, even. On later walks along the same beach, my Mum would try in vain to find these stone bottoms to point them out to me, but we never did discover them again. Our young Dane's unabashed lack of inhibition would be welcome on this record. And I'm sure the Fuchs could have given us many instructive pointers about the practice of nudity and free sexual

The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium

expression generally, but I wish some of that same verve or elan had been captured on this record. Sides 3-4 are from the same place in Munich, only this time it's a live gig, the same trio, playing two side-long pieces. 'A Controversy' features mostly the Fuchsharfe (a slide guitar?) and percussion, while 'Freeano Forte' is piano, violin, Fuchsbass and Fuchshorn. Another 40 minutes of idiosyncratic art music, an improvised, long-winded, and oddly pointless sprawl.

ED PINSENT from Vinyl Viands 2006

Anima-Sound

Musik für Alle

ITALY ALGA MARGHEN PLANA-A
4TES.027 CD (1999)

Original issue ALTER PFARRHOF LP
(1972)

Fan-terror-tastic! This record is not only a musical winner, sure to appeal to broadminded fans of electronica, 'out' jazz, and wacked-out rural psychedelic music - it's also one of those rare items where the music actually lives up to the promise of the bizarre story behind it. Which would you like to hear first? The story it is, then. In 1971 an egalitarian hippie couple called Paul and Limpe Fuchs had been travelling around Germany in a wooden caravan, pulled by a tractor. Wherever they stopped, they played their bizarre music in the town square for the villagers and townfolk - just like the musicians of Bremen, only this is even stranger than legend. Seems they were banging a large bass drum, shaking their percussion, and whipping it out on some home-made instruments - which creator Paul Fuchs modestly named after himself, including the 'Fuchshorn' and the 'Fuchsbass'. Outgoing and generous, I guess



they sincerely believed in taking their 'art' to everyone who'd listen, but God knows what the audience felt upon catching sight of these two freaks, let alone hearing their eerie blasts - most sensible petit-bourgeois gentlefolk would probably have rather thrown themselves into the gears of their own windmills than endure such musical hell.

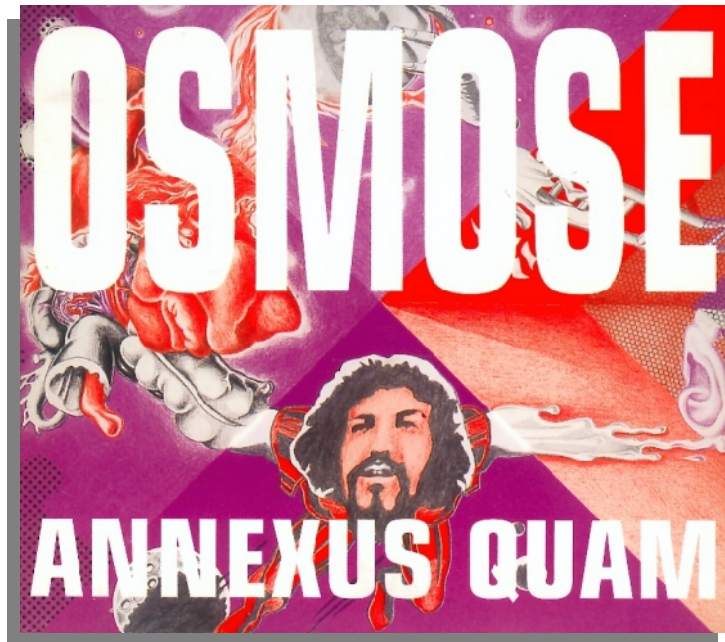
These hairy naturist libertarians eventually wound up in Düsseldorf and parked their caravan outside a recording studio owned by Willy Neubauer. Instead of immediately calling the polizei, he took them in, and, after hosing them down with jets of hot water, let them run rampant in his recording studio with their mad ideas and their demented instruments. Three days later, Willy had added



Der Klang-Projektor Krautrock Kompendium

exciting ring-modulator effects to some of the ghastly ear-splitting wails of Limpe Fuchs, put a little phase on the drums, and these two 17-minute tracks - called 'N DA DA UUM DA' and 'TRAKTOR GO GO GO' - were soon enshrined in a vinyl release in 1972. Now at last the world is ready to fully appreciate the Anima-Sound, and we've the groovy Alga Marghen label to thank for providing this reissue - along with the priceless 'Dozy Old Ram' cover art, and an unbelievable photograph of the Fuchs doing their funky thing on the back cover. Yes, the Fuchshorn is there, the very sight of which makes a mockery of all you hold dear. If you're a Vic and Bob fan and usually collapse into fits of mirth when Mulligan and O'Hare play their ethnic instruments, you're about to learn that truth is always stranger than satire. Boy, do I envy you...get ready for untrammelled and untutored excellence in music, atonal wailing voices, insane horn blats and free blurts, all propelled by off-the-beat bass drum attacks that are simply, well, cretinous would be too polite a word. File this screwball next to Erica Pomerance's ESP acid-freak classic *You Used To Think* and Amon Düül's *Collapsing*, and enjoy. Go Animal!

ED PINSENT from TSP 7



Annexus Quam

Osmose

FRANCE SPALAX 14881 CD (1995)

Original issue GERMANY OHR OMM 56007 LP (1970)

Another fine record, this 7-piece band have their origins in a combo called Ambition of Music formed in 1967, who opted to play their own compositions instead of the beat music still then popular in Kamp-Lintfort. However, to expand their musical horizons in 1968 they linked up with a local Evangelical trombone band - thus trumpets and trombones became part of the music's equation, along with a simultaneous jazz influence from elsewhere. Interestingly, at the time this led to some local

The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium

'modern' church concerts...embryonic free jazz in the pews!

The players soon tired of this and went back to the 'elemental areas of music, such as dynamics, rhythm and intensity'. Along with this improvisatory approach they drew in film, colour effects and weird lyrics. In effect they were discovering The Psychedelic Happening, but in a uniquely Germanic way. Performances in the Kamp-Lintfort Underground Centre became archteypal anarchic events - the collective improvisation band encouraging the young audience to express themselves and join in the music. By 1970 Annexus Quam had given concerts in Japan and played for a couple days at the World's Fair in Osaka.

Like Xhol Caravan or Embryo, Annexus Quam skirt around the edges of jazz rock with their wind instruments, electric organ and conventional rock set-up, although their stodgy arrangements don't always take flight. While the tunes are mostly arranged, the band smuggle in the odd snatch of totally free playing now and again, only to lose their nerve and sneak back to their tasteful guitar chords or 12/8 time signatures. The last track begins and ends as free playing, but it's regrettably short. It would be interesting to compare their development with the all-out free players in Germany from this period, or indeed UK contemporaries Spontaneous Music Ensemble. The important thing is that Annexus Quam overlapped with the flourishing German Rock scene, perhaps in the hopes that they could bring the spirit of their underground experimentation into a more commercial field, and spread their idealistic message to a wider audience. Their name reflected this interest in 'combining together new and existing musical forms' and roughly translates as 'Connection How'.

Released in 1970, this was one of the earliest releases on the Ohr label and had an elaborate die-cut fold-out sleeve printed with some truly outlandish Escher-like images folding into each other. Note that this was a few years before the fad for gimmick sleeves took off in the UK (eg Family's *Bandstand*, John Lennon's *Walls and Bridges*). The multi-combination format (about as close as a record sleeve has come to the condition of an Oyvind Fahlstrom variable painting) was supposed to symbolise 'the possible associations that could arise from our music...since music does not allow itself to be tied down in its effect on individuals, each hears and feels it differently'. The CD package only hints at this origami nightmare, but even original collectors find it well-nigh impossible to snag a mint copy!

ED PINSENT from TSP
3

*Thanks to Margaret Liliás
for translation of CD
sleeve notes.*



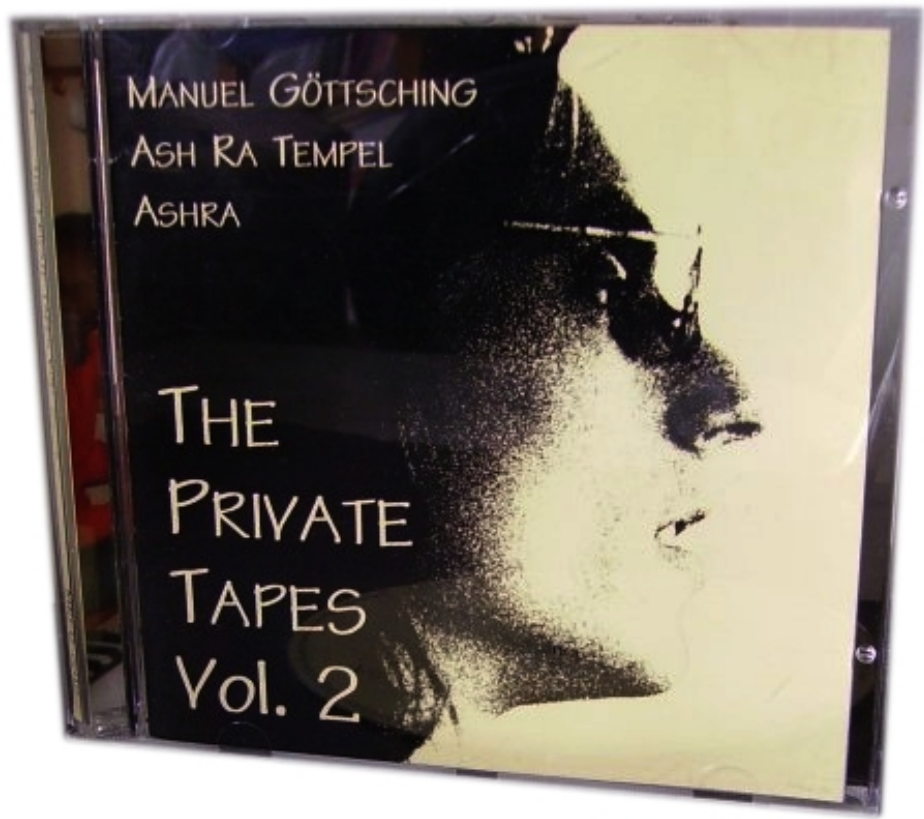
Ash Ra Tempel

The Private Tapes Vol 2

GERMANY MANIKIN RECORDS MRCD 7012 CD (1996)

Mostly a Manuel Göttsching project on a grand scale (six volumes exist!), this one yields up an excellent live cut from Ash Ra Tempel in 1971, whose only shortcoming is not being very well recorded. Also three solo pieces by Manuel from 1976-ish, performed with sequencer, synthesizers, and a lovely buzzy drum-machine that pulses and vibrates rather than pops and snaps like today's strident digital devils. This is Techno before the fact, even beating Cabaret Voltaire to a species of clunky rhythm machine-driven noodling; simple two-chord (or even one-chord) synth figures, over which he layers his Gibson guitar solos with lots of Steve Hillage-y echo. Why he's practically Krautrock's answer to Bill Nelson! You may want to snap up the crucial Ash Ra Tempel recordings first before you allow these sprawling indulgences into your racks - they're more like useful footnotes to the great project, but it's good to know the 'bedroom' mode of record making has produced work of this quality.

ED PINSENT from TSP 2



The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium



Between

Dharana

GERMANY WERGO SM 1011 LP (1977)

A spiritual work, rich with devotional resonances, chants, Indian religion - it practically exudes compassion and inner harmony. Warm tone colours and textures and the best of Popol Vuh or Terry Riley. Robert Eliscu is the oboist here, having played with the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra he was also a fixture on many of Popol Vuh's greatest records. The organist Peter Michael Hamel came from Munich which is the other krautrockish connection here. The band also features two Afro-Americans from NYC (one was in the original cast of *Hair!*) on the congas, and an Argentinian guitarist. This LP gives us the side-long 'Dharana' piece, privileging the combo over the orchestra, the latter mixed down to produce a lovely disembodied, tone wash sound. Prepare for a moment of celestial ecstasy when you reach the end of this track - water sounds effects, an electric drone, a basso voice moaning and some gentle orchestral harmonics drifting in the breeze. Recently reissued on CD.

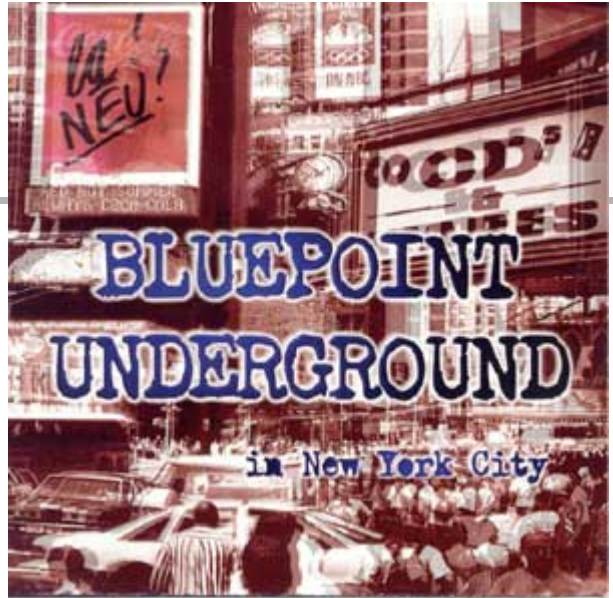
ED PINSENT from TSP 2

**Bluepoint
Underground**

In New York City

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-
161 CD (1999)

While the old Marvel Comics character Captain America always seemed to have an insatiable hunger for stomping the Nazi rats, Captain Trip (whoever he may be) seems to yearn with similar severity for anything related to the musical output of Klaus Dinger. I don't know if Klaus Dinger's mum, pets or chiropodist have done albums, but if they have, I'll bet I know where to get them. This lot seem to be a group whom Mr Dinger has taken under his wing by recording and producing a studio version of what was once a live art event thingie.



I'll have to confess that much of this is kind of on the limits of my area of experience, and interest. It's all a bit too arts-lab-krautrock-cum-jazz-workshop, so being as it was recorded in Germany, the title In New York City has a sense of logic that probably isn't intended. In New York City as in 'my analyst is so happy that after the free expression drama workshop I was able to look deep inside myself and realise that I'm me, and this "me" is a person who lives in New York City.' I keep expecting Lisa Simpson to pop up with a few haikus on world peace.

Leaving my possibly jaundiced opinions aside for a moment in the name of objectivity, the music is fairly acceptable when free of irritating vocals of the kind that are praised as groundbreaking and of world-wide significance by Guardian journalists and the other 49 people who think that choreography and avant-garde cookery are important. There's a wide variety of sounds, instruments and moods on here, but little that really does it for me. Perhaps if that bloody woman would button it every once in a while instead of caterwauling away like Yoko Ono getting suddenly into a scalding hot bath, I might have time to discover whether the music is anything to write home about. If I'm to be honest, I don't think I really care enough to find out. This might be a valued addition to some CD collections, but not to mine.

WAR ARROW from TSP 6

Bröselmaschine

Bröselmaschine

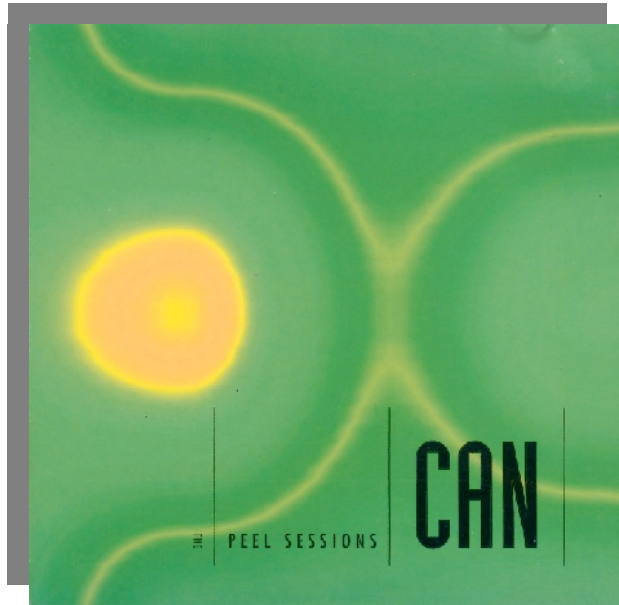
FRANCE SPALAX 14882 CD (1994)

Original issue PILZ / BASF 20 21100-2 LP (1971)

A light folky item from 1971; if the cloying melodies aren't to your taste, you may just want to skip to 'Schmetterling' for nine and a half minutes of fine sitar drones and acoustic guitar circular riffs, while being baffled by the young German lady's sprech-gesänge commentary. This cut has many other period features, among them congas, flute and mellotron; the band try hard for that Incredible String Band feel but they're just a tad too square to cut it. More worryingly, the clever diminished chords of 'Nossa Bova' threaten to become a Steve Hackett moment of preciousness. Elsewhere they try their hand at more traditional songs, for example 'Lassie' turns out to be a version of that favourite of the early 1960s UK folk club circuit, 'I Loved a Lass', and sung in English so carefully that they unfortunately forget to add the emotion for this sad song of lost love. Like Emtidi's *Saat*, this is one from the Pilz label produced by Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser and recorded by Dieter Dierks. The whimsical watercolour sleeve art is also very much of the time, an idyllic 'musical instrument landscape' populated with big butterflies.

ED PINSENT from TSP 3





Can

The Peel Sessions

UK STRANGE FRUIT SFR CD 135 (1995)

Maybe you too dragged your Clark's Wayfinders before purchasing these 1973-75 radio sessions. The fear for me was that The Can's high reputation (Mount Olympus high in my ratings) might somehow be corroded by the late appearance of a bunch of hasty Maida Vale tape-rolls. The unique identity of the finest original discs - *Future Day's* seaspray radiance or *Tago Mago's* be-spooked jamming - evidently benefit from Holger Czukay's magically edits and a production style whereby the four musicians are honed into a coagulating single-cell.

Sure enough, the BBC's utilitarian methods lay the band bare, the playing crisply separated into clean channels. But if this is Can under an unflinching microscope the looking offers some wondrous information. Jaki Liebezit's super-alert drumwork is no surprise but Michael Karoli is here spotlit as a guitarist who never idles into blues-scale cliché. In fact his quavery fuse-wire sustain steers clear of 'soloing' altogether. Then there's Irmín Schmidt, hunched over a tangled bank of patchboards and plastic keys. His gloomsome synth-murk on 'Return to BB City' hits the frontal lobes like a fleet of ironclad bombers looming between the spires of Cologne Cathedral.

Some of the pieces just fail to reach the alchemical boiling-point swooning Can fans cherish ('Tony Wanna Go') and the later Krautpop-phase cuts are played frustratingly straight. But I'm glad I didn't miss 'Up the Bakerloo Line with Anne'. It's as bony and funksome as anything off *Ege Bamyasi*. Damo performs vocal struts like an amnesiac Mick Jagger who has gleefully forgotten how to speak any identifiable earth-language. No handicap, because the singer is plugged directly into the mysteries of unfettered rhythmic caterwauling. You can't fail to be dazzled.

JOHN BAGNALL from TSP 2

The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium

Can

Sacrilege

GERMANY SPOON CD39/40 2 x CD (1997)

You know the story here - album tracks by Can 'remixed' by leading lights on the UK dance club and DJ scene, also avant-gardsters Brian Eno, Bruce Gilbert and Sonic Youth. Perhaps we should credit this to Various Artists, not to Can at all; and of course it isn't sacrilegious. Quite the contrary! Each contributor here venerates Can, worships at the altar of this legendary Krautrock band who in the current day and age seem to get the credit for inventing or foreshadowing virtually every modern manifestation of rock music (and dance music). Jaki Liebezeit's quote - 'The drum is the instrument, the star, the centre of it all. Everything at the moment is based on rhythm. The drum has been emancipated...' - is becoming ubiquitous. The *Sacrilege* artistes each have a story to tell in the booklet of how they bought their first Can record, or attended some legendary Can concert in the 1970s, and their lives were changed forever. Kris Needs: 'I was blown away by the freeform mayhem...in 1973 I was lucky enough to see them live. They were awesome...'; A Guy Called Gerald: 'The breaks and rhythms that they were using in the late 60s and early 70s were way ahead of their time...'; System 7: 'I musically came of age in the heyday of European Experimental music'...Amazing how prescient all these people were; there may be a slight touch of revisionism going on here...

Here's my flash on the deal. If we are to learn (as listeners, or as musicians) from the magic of Can, then I suggest this isn't the best way to do it, cutting up their master tapes and remixing them with foreign sounds over various post-modern dance beat sequences. What Can did was primarily about performance, not making records; it was based on a tough discipline, an ethic of commitment to hard and long improvisation, listening to the other musicians, a heightened sensitivity to the potential compatibility of each fellow player. This level of dedication is a very scarce commodity in the world, and something extremely hard to learn overnight. The actual sound of the records, however distinctive, is almost irrelevant when you consider the intensive processes that fed into a Can performance. Yet that sound is all these remixers are interested in.

But Can loved making cut-ups too, I hear you all cry. Granted, Holger Czukay was an early pioneer of sampling and editing - bring forth exhibit A, the outstanding 1968 *Canaxis* which is probably a touchstone for many of the featured artistes here. And a given Can recording was more often than not edited together by Czukay from hours of studio performances, using ingenious and seamless technique. Yet it was only a part of the overall Can process; the raw material Czukay worked with was of the highest quality. Weirdly, if these remixing guys really had been sacrilegious, and worked some outrageous ideas into their music, then they might have come closer to the spirit of those wild German hippies than this item does.

Sacrilege then can only work for me as a footnote to the glorious history of Can; but if you put the above reservations out of your mind, hide the cover under the bed and play this CD 'blind', chances are you're in for a pretty good time. It may be an overlong spin in places - remixers love to have lots of space and time in which to 'develop their ideas' it would seem - but enjoyable enough. Sometimes the Techno machine has a habit of chewing up everything in its path and reducing it to a homogeneous mulch, the same stereotyped ideas, rhythms and stale ideas you've probably heard a hundred times already. But then you've never heard it done to Can before, have you?

ED PINSENT from TSP 3

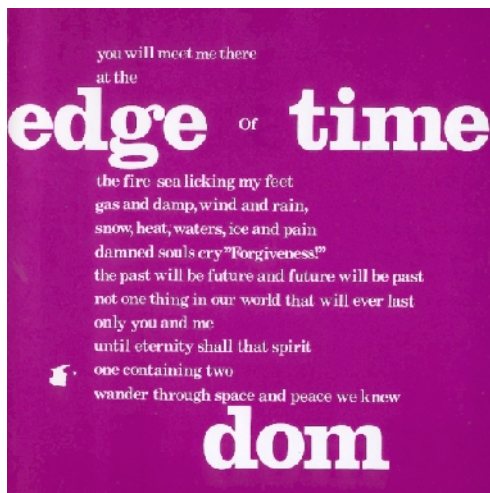
Thomas Dinger

Für Mich

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-078 CD (1998)

Enjoyable, but the process of entropy (or law of diminishing returns, perhaps) is once again rather in evidence. Thomas Dinger tried a solo stab here dating from whenever, out of his period with La Düsseldorf and brother Klaus. And it's the economy sized version on sale today, I fear. *Für Mich* is sadly a pale shadow of La Düsseldorf music, the same languid approach and sounds, but nowhere near as compelling. One is drawn (as with the above) to the more eccentric and silly moments, like the harmonium playing on track two which is deliberately corny and amateurish, presumably to satirise Schlager-music or some equally mindless German beer-swilling knees-up toon. Thomas Dinger does this with some affection however, and a good-naturedness that few English musicians could muster for such an occasion.

ED PINSENT from TSP 4



Dom

Edge of Time

GERMANY MELOCORD ST-LP D 001 (1971)

If doom laden, acid spiked bad trip ceremonies are your secret vice then search out this fine example immediately. Dom were a progressively inclined quartet from Düsseldorf whose speciality was creating Floydian / Tangerine Dream inspired sound poems that were infected with flute and rumbling organ. There are moments on Dom's one and only release, however, that are pure hallucination as the guitars coagulate and an eerie electronic pulse beat takes over. The nearest comparison I can think of is *Psychedelic Moods* by The Deep, but whereas that record was partly processed psychedelia this is the real thing and they don't come any scarier. Recorded, we are reliably informed, after the band returned from a two day acid trip, *Edge of Time* has recently been reissued on CD.

EDWIN POUNCEY from TSP 1

The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium



Electric Sandwich

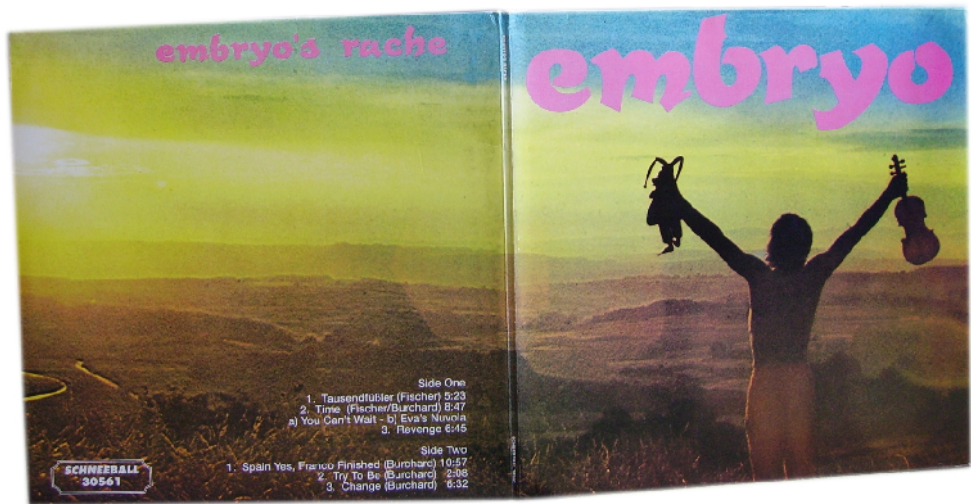
Electric Sandwich

BOOTLEG CD 941033 (ND)

Original issue GERMANY BRAIN / METRONOME 1018 LP (1972)

Another fairly obscure one from 1972, originally on the Brain label. Investigate if Hendrix-influenced hog-like guitar work is your bag, although this piggy stuff is, if anything, more excessive than The 'Jayster' could grind out of his Fender Strat. Jörg Ohlert, whose name translates roughly as 'Big Hog', takes all the blame as lead guitarist (also playing occasional organ and mellotron, though it's hard to actually discern any) and he favours liberal use of the wah-wah pedal. You need to hear the first track 'China' to get the gist of his outstandingly unsubtle abilities - hands, fingers and feet flailing like a manic scarecrow, overamped to the point that he's happily floundering in a swamp of greasy mire of his own making. Luckily the rhythm section are there to fish him out again - and you can bet he'll rely on them to do so more than once throughout the course of this LP. Plus there's some excellent electric sax toots of an equally greasy nature, the likes of which haven't sullied vinyl since Xhol Caravan. These are blurted out by Jochen Carthaus (who also sings the dumb lyrix in English). Again, the Teutonic heavy-handedness that makes Krautrock such an attractive proposition is here by the bucketload; never afraid to overstate the case, play too loud or for too long, nor shrinking from the crassest musical statements available in their limited repertoires (no finer example than 'Archie's Blues' exists to demonstrate this point) - seems there's an unending supply of such hairy seventies fellows waiting to be discovered in the canon of Kosmische. Also of note is the brilliantly disgusting Cal Schenkel like cover. The artist photographed a hideous assemblage of a vile, greasy cheese sandwich mixed up with electrical equipment and shooting out sparks. What an imaginative interpretation of the band's name, eh? Produced by Dieter Dierks which would seem to locate it in Cologne; and they have been compared to Emergency, whom I've never heard. Other than that I'm clueless.

ED PINSENT from TSP 5



Embryo

Embryo's Rache

SCHNEEBALL BOOTLEG LP 30561 (ND)

Original issue UNITED ARTISTS UAS 29239 LP (1971)

An irresistible platter of warped jazz-rock - the delicious combination of flute, Hammond organs and Fender Rhodes electric piano tastes great to this palate. Forget fusion smoothies of the Weather Report or Spyro Gyra schools, this stuff has real guts and rough edges; it's played with such urgency and heaviness that suggests the Krauts could never get as silky as Herbie Hancock, try as they may. Lalo Schiffrin would kill for a flute sound as sandpavery as Hansi Fischer's. File it next to Creative Rock's *Lady Pig* for another example of greasy German jazz-rock; the latter had more horn charts and, erm, unreconstructed 1970s macho lyrics, but were no less wayward than Embryo. This is a different path to the lightness, whimsy and charm of eg The Soft Machine, and once they get into a groove they work it down into the concrete - like The Mothers of Invention on 'King Kong', although they're neither as technically proficient nor as crazy!

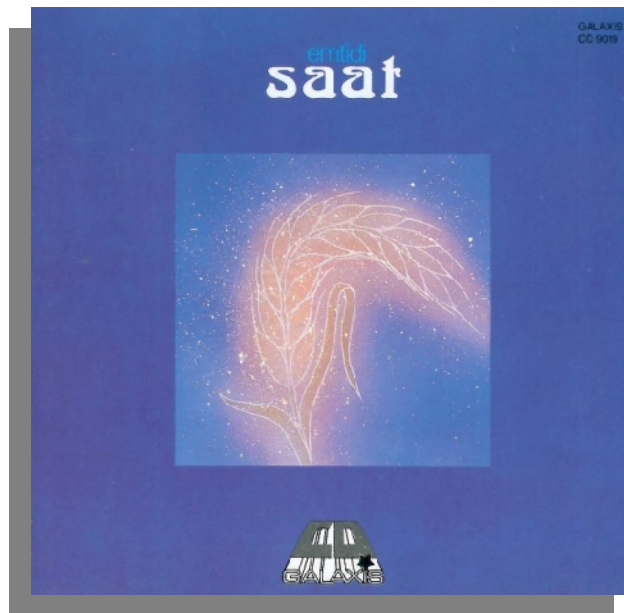
'Spain Yes Franco Finished' kicks off with a triumphant mellotron flourish, side by side with a sax and heavy drums in full processional mode (a real prog-jazz mixture), before the band sweep into a funky flute-electric piano duel in a minor key, suggesting an apt Flamenco flavour akin to Miles Davis' 'Spanish Key'. An overtly political lyric chants 'Revolution is the only way' and - after a mid-section of solos where the track almost disintegrates - the positively barnstorming final riff suggests their revolution was a success. 'Change', which ends the LP, is more traditionally kosmische with its prelude of mellotron clouds and volume-pedalled piano clusters, and quickly warms up into a Red-Spot-of-Jupiter riff that Edgar Froese would adore, set to a syncopated beat. The record ends on a high spot, while the violin is going ballistic right in the middle of a mega-stomping whirlwind workout. These tracks sandwich 'Try to Be' on side two, the LP's only quiet reflective moment - bongoes and keyboard working against a drippy Moon-And-Earth children lyric, which suddenly sparkles at the very ending with a two-second electronic zoom glissando as you 'Fly up into space'. Side one features such delights as a high-register organ solo played by Tabarin Man on 'Tuasendfussler',

The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium

verging on that Rolf Harris stylophone sound so many studio engineers strive for, against scads of syrupy wah-wah rhythm guitar. 'Time' is effectively Dave Brubeck's 'Take 5' figure taken at a harder and faster lick, and showcases Edgar Hoffman's violin in the mix. On 'Revenge', Hoffman contributes some precious seconds of soprano sax freak-out work, before the track melts down in a confusing welter of percussion and jaw harp. Moments of wonderful disorientation like this are to be cherished in music, I feel; the sleeve art for this record promises the same sort of weirdness, which Embryo can't always match, but they make a great effort. It's a photograph of a semi-naked hippy in silhouette, greeting the sunrise over a plains landscape in primary yellow, grasping in one hand a violin and in the other a Punchinello doll. Or is it a giant cockroach? This fine item was recorded in Cologne, no date of issue given; the copy I own is a vinyl reissue/bootleg item, the only format that delivers that total gatefold sleeve art experience my retinas long for (the interior photo of the band confirms all your dreams about what mad Krautrockers should look like!) It has been spotted on CD reissue, as has Embryo's second LP.

ED PINSENT from TSP 2





Emtidi

Saat

GERMANY GALAXIS CD 9019 (1986)

Original issue GERMANY PILZ / BASF 20 29077-8 LP (1971)

Pastoral imagery runs like a green silken thread throughout this fine record, starting with the front cover which is a psychedelic airbrush painting of a pink stardust ear of wheat, and the inner gatefold which depicts a luxurious golden field of corn rendered a la Hundertwasser. Emtidi propose on the first track 'Let's Take a Walk in the Park'. This simple harmless activity is spoiled however by the sudden intervention of restrictive authority, in the form of the Park Bye-Laws: 'There's a sign here..saying Keep off', they sing, switching to an assertive major key as their day of fun is spoiled; the phrase finishes with the charming exhortation 'Don't Sit on the Grass, it's too cold for your ass'. I'm tickled pink by the thought of a park sign like this, which somehow confounds the voice of the stern parkkeeper with the argot of a stoned hippy. The remaining LP, though mostly instrumental, scatters further lyrical clues ('Touch the Sun', 'Love Time Rain') as to how better to manage the countryside and enjoy nature, rather than by ruthless enclosure of fields and repressive rules.

Emtidi were a folky duo of Maik Hirschfeldt and Dolly Holmes who managed to sing like a subversive version of Peter Paul and Mary with their close harmonies. Between them they turn in some organ and electronics riffs of charming simplicity and striking melodic richness. Most of their tunes are in a soothing modal key, and only occasionally are there excursions into trippy cosmic improvs, which may come as some consolation to listeners who fear that Krautrock is a home for the overblown and self-indulgent school. Dieter Dirks added percussion and mellotron, and the legendary Cosmic Courier Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser produced.

ED PINSENT from TSP 2

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Limpe Fuchs

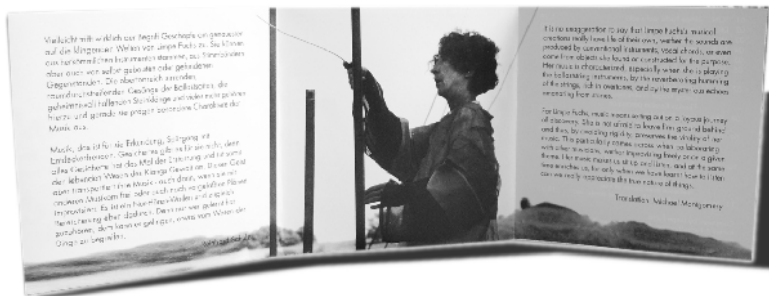
Nur Mar Mus

GERMANY STREAMLINE 1016 CD (1999)

The second CD by Limpe Fuchs to be issued by Streamline, and a very good one it is too. Here she plays a mixture of 'real' instruments along with the more unconventional range of instruments - some of which, like the brilliant ballast string instruments, were developed by Paul Fuchs, her husband. Her percussion battery is no less singular; it includes tuned stones (The Serpentin Stones), sheets of bronze, pieces of oak fashioned into wood blocks, and heavy bronze bars fixed on a long piano wire and suspended from a broad bronze drum. Metal, wood and stone - how elemental can you get? On some tracks she's joined by George Karger on the bass, and Thomas Korpiun on percussion, and together with her bizarre vocal stylings and dripping water solos they create a species of dark, slow jazz music which hasn't been dared since Eric Dolphy recorded the unforgettable 'Warp and Woof' in the early 1960s.

Limpe has sure come quite a way since she took part in the Anima-Sound sessions, and this CD isn't by any means as wild as that early record, but she has succeeded in finding and developing a totally unique voice and (on the evidence of this particular issue) never failed to deliver disquieting, solemn and challenging music, entirely on her own terms.

ED PINSENT from TSP 7





FAUST



The Riddles of the Sphinx

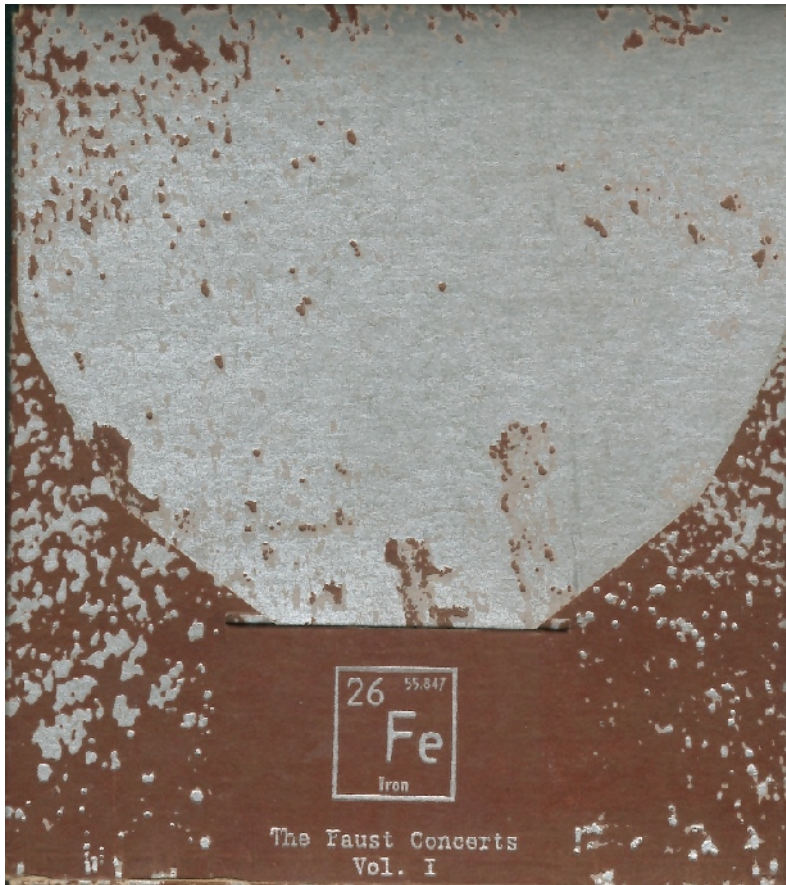
Faust are completely unfathomable. Though not unfamiliar with the work of this band, I can safely say I am still only coming to terms with their achievement. How strange it is to keep listening to something and still not understanding what it is you are hearing; like staring at an abstract painting and becoming aware of hidden presences, unseen spiritual forces outside the canvas. It's not like that old chestnut they all say about Glenn Branca - 'you can hear sounds that aren't really there!'. No, what I feel is something more palpable - Faust make me have ideas that are not my own, they invite me to dream their dreams. They live out their subconscious, inner impulses and smuggle them into the outside world. Quite clearly, the members of this band are insane - what's worse, they can make us share their madness.

Faust 'reformed' in 1990 and effectively reinvented themselves around the nucleus of two principal players, Jean-Hervé Peron and Werner Diermaier. Live concerts followed, as did a new record. No concessions have been made to fans, no attempt to relive the 'classic' Faust years; instead, they have deliberately taken themselves apart, stripped their music down to a scaffolding framework, opened up the interior space.

I was pleased to attend the UK appearance of Faust in October 1992 at the Astoria. They appeared to be a trio at this time and the guitarist kept lapsing into different languages and behaving like a childlike schizophrenic, unexpected exhortations like 'Do you Mind if I Jump??!'. Everyone remembers the Test-Dept-ish power tools episode, road drills and other devices at unbearable volumes, and a message was carved into a paper screen using a chainsaw. A recording of this UK event was issued on CD by Table of the Elements, the Californian based label. So was another gig in Germany. They both came out in luxury formats - beautiful silk-screened, signed, numbered limited packages of cunning envelope design. Then they also appeared in 'trade' versions in jewel-cases. Either way, they're both expensive. These reunion concerts were a totally unprecedented event; but according to Faust's demented logic, they were confidently resuming their joyful anarchic games, selecting options out of a thousand possible avenues of development.

This anonymity in their sleeve art is remarkable - line up the Faust discography in order on your living room floor, and you have an instant exhibition of conceptual art. It reads like a planned project. It's something to do with peeling away layers, seeing further, seeing more than you're supposed to see. You start with an X-Ray of a Fist on the first LP (Faust = Fist in German, the name's nothing to do with the magician Faust); the entire package is transparent, as is the vinyl: they see through themselves. And then see beyond that into the dark unknown of *Faust So Fa's* black sleeve. Empty staves of sheet music on *Faust IV* suggest a book without words, and alert you to the non-composed, non-arranged, non-performable (non-listenable to some!) nature of their music. Chris Cutler's sleeves for Faust repackagings, such as *Faust Party* or *71 Minutes of*, disrupt the project and bend things his way. He used too much colour - a 'proper' Faust sleeve is monochrome, or just black and white - and 'Germanic' woodcuts suggesting story-book elements which Faust have forsworn. That said, Cutler's painstaking reissue of the first album was a labour of love and a flawless facsimile. The TOE Live packages are more sympathetic, but somehow lack the humour. In this context, the package of *Rien* is not only a return to form, but almost a punchline to the whole cosmic joke. The flat silver bed is a virtual mirror; you see yourself in this music, whatever contribution you add from your inner being. It really is Nothing of Faust. (ED PINSENT from TSP 1)

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Faust

The Faust Concerts Vol 1

USA TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS FE 26 IRON CD (1994)

This is the 1990 Hamburg concert. It includes a word-for-word printed transcript of all lyrics (including repetitions, and vocal interjections). The record seemed disappointing at first: not loud enough, a thin, attenuated sound (compared with the richness of 1970s Faust, at least). Even the power tools sound muted and polite! However, I've learned to enjoy the utter bewilderment of it all; what is happening? When does a piece end or begin? Voices from the radio, snatches of classical music - where is all this 'found' material coming from, was it part of the live mix or added post-production? All of this eccentric chaos increases exponentially as you near the end of the record. After a sluggish start, things start to go bonkers in the middle of Track 3, 'The Sad Head'. This could almost be Joe Strummer playing a reggae song with Adam Ant's drummer; but then the sound of a train rushes from speaker to speaker, and the drums turn vicious and lurch aggressively to the front of the mix. By Track 4, 'Haarschart', you hear how attenuated they can be - what they can achieve with just drum kit and one instrument (bass or organ). But the beats are never where they should be, and the bass sounds hesitant and doubtful. Over this sketchy

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fragment of a tune, a found symphony orchestra tape drifts in, a joke they'll use more than once in this concert - and it surfaces again on the *Rien* CD. Track 5, 'Schempal Buddha', as close as they come to a crowd-pleaser song, is rendered here as a horrible nightmare, as taped voices compete with Jean-Hervé's multilingual ravings and somehow overlap into joining in the lyric. '13/8' is so pale as to be barely audible, a Spanish acoustic guitar and percussion rim-shots. More classical music - a piano solo - leads into 'Rainy Day'; the drummer pretends to be keeping time with it, but he's really sticking to the mad time signature in his head. A single-note bass riff joins in and the singer throws out his inane repetitious dada-chant whenever he feels like it. This whole mess is so deliciously untogether you wonder how long they can sustain it (8 minutes is the answer). Lesser artists could easily let this turn into a lullaby 4/4 stone groove; Faust won't let you fall asleep for one second. By Track 8, 'Voltaire', you hear the very sound of Faust unhinging themselves, taking their already loose structure and opening it out even further: concrete poetry, squeaking chains and choppy organ surfing around their ankles. Track 9 'Rien' anticipates their next studio LP, and is the most confusing array of sounds yet put to disc. First, 17 seconds of silence; then a demented 'farewell' song as plaintive as Daniel Johnston singing Neil Young. The collapse of this song, leading into a fragment of a taped interview: 'Why have you got back together?' Faust respond with insane laughter. No wonder. They haven't got back together - they've taken themselves apart. This whole record is therapy for madmen, rewiring the circuitry of their brains track by track; at the end of it all they find 'Nothing'.

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Faust

Faust (aka Faust Clear)

GERMANY POLYDOR 2310142 LP (1971)

A copy of the first Faust LP finally made its way back to me. I used to own a Recommended Records reissue which I foolishly got rid of. I never really figured it out at the time. A good 15 years later, the blocks have been removed, I hear it for the first time. I'm struck by the editing, and the use of found materials. For the latter, the insertion and layering of pop-music fragments from various disguised sources is not simply a happy accident - it is a deliberate attempt to warp normality through subversion of pop icons and treating familiar sounds. But it's also done with affection - hence the sleevenote, 'I Like the Beach Boys!' As Edwin Pouncey has observed, this pop-music component would soon fall by the wayside unfortunately. As to the edits - it doesn't take much deductive reasoning to figure out that producer Uwe Nettelbeck was as much a member of the band as the musicians. He was their Doctor - he knew when to undo the straitjacket, and when to lock them in the rubber room. The selection of musical fragments and their juxtaposition - just like 'painting on recording tape' as Holger Czukay speaks of on *On the Way to the Peak of Normal*. Clearly, this chaotic form of control is what we lacked on *The Faust Concerts*. Some form of structure - no matter how eccentric - is needed to give their lunacy real meaning. Otherwise they tend to wander off to a far corner of the asylum and assume a catatonic position.

ED PINSENT from TSP 1

Slapp Happy and Faust

Slapp Happy or Slapphappy

UK RECOMMENDED RECORDS RRA 5 LP (1980)

Then again, compare their altruistic and outgoing work with Slapp Happy in the 1970s. Not everyone seems clued up on the fact that Slapp Happy and Faust worked together. The former made a very jolly eponymous LP released on the Virgin label in 1974 (V 2014), a crisply recorded collection of eccentric and wonderful songs played by Anthony Moore and Peter Blegvad, and sung by Dagmar Krause. The same songs however, had previously been recorded in Germany in a 1973 session where the bassist, drummer and sax player of Faust joined in, and Uwe Nettelbeck produced. (I don't have the full story on why the Virgin label wanted a different version. I note that Jean-Hervé Peron's bass parts appear to survive on the Virgin record.) These sessions surfaced as an LP called *Slapp Happy or Slapphappy*¹, released in 1980 by Recommended Records as RRA 5. Sensible listeners and fans alike prefer the Faust version, which is somehow looser and weirder; you notice it in the way the performances of the other players are affected by the Germans, as if Faust's very presence in the studio releases these cramped Englishmen from their shackles, and makes them play even more eccentrically. I believe a CD reissue contains both Virgin and Faust versions, but can't confirm at this time. Fans of Bongwater might be familiar with their version of 'The Drum', on *Too Much Sleep*, Shimmy-Disc (1989).

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¹ The spine of the LP seems to call it *Acnalbasac Noom*, however.

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Faust

Rien

USA TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS CR (CHROMIUM) 24 CD (1996)

Faust's latest offering is *Rien*, on Table of the Elements. It has been greeted with caution by many listeners, but we at The Sound Projector give it an unequivocal huzzah. Jim O'Rourke was brought in as producer. From a Wire interview, I was worried he might be trying to recreate himself as a new Uwe N. Such pointless fetishism and preciousness is not unknown, even in the world of avant-garde rock. In fact, O'Rourke does a great job - he quietly selects and stitches tapes together to produce a compelling listen - although sadly, without any of the heavy duty jarring edits like on the first LP. Nonetheless a real winner. It opens with a 10 second silent track, or is it really silent? It signals to me that we're picking up precisely where the Hamburg concert left off. The spoken phrase 'C'est Rien De Faust' kicks off proceedings (and recurs at the very end, after the spoken credits) before that wonderful organ and drumbeat sound crashes in, simultaneously alarming and joyous, a near-trademark sound making a welcome return. As the abstract murk seeps out of the speakers into your room, a species of 'narrative' event-unfolding comes across to this listener's subconscious mind. Somewhere a man is trudging over an industrial dump and calling for his children. Or have I dreamed that bit? The sixth Track uses helicopter sounds, overlaid classical music and Keiji Haino on auto-pilot screeching and grunting - it's a fantastic voyage through unknown territory. The whole record speaks in riddles, and the 'blank' package design has taken a leaf out of Keiji Haino's book. A limited vinyl issue costing around £17-18 has been spotted; probably no longer available by the time you read this. The same anonymous package wrapped round a slab of heavy black plastic.

ED PINSENT from TSP 1



QUID MULTA?

Ship on a better sea. Don't Take Roots.

J'ai Mal Aux Dents. We are the Hallo Men.

Faust

The Wümme Years 1970-73

UK RER MEGACORP ReR FB1 5 x CD BOX (2000)

What can I tell you that isn't obvious? Faust were an important, seminal and revolutionary band, but their obscure history is becoming more well known and I shouldn't repeat it here in much detail. Chris Cutler, the boss behind ReR Megacorp, has personally kept the Faust flame burning ever since Faust toured with Henry Cow in the 1970s. In 1979, Cutler licensed the Faust LPs from Polydor and reissued them on his Recommended Records label. These reissues were done with immense care and were exact copies of the original records. A contemporary advert, appealing for subscriptions to the reissues of *Faust* and *Faust So Far*, from an old issue of *Impetus* magazine, will indicate Cutler's mission statement at this time: 'These records are pressed to the highest classical standards and we have done everything we can to ensure the highest quality at every stage of the process. This practice ought to be normal...we have chosen these two records because we think they are among the most significant of the decade and they have been unavailable for much too long (they are already selling for £40+ in France and the USA, which is crazy).'

He should only have known then what would happen to the LP collector's market! Even those reissues are rare now, let alone Faust originals. Cutler went further and rescued other unissued rehearsal tapes from Faust's 1970s sessions, putting them out as *Faust Party*, *The Last LP* and *Munic and Elsewhere*, some with limited edition screenprinted covers. Selections from these were rehashed into the *71 Minutes Of* compilation CD. This present collection is a comprehensive collection of all the material Faust recorded at the

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Wümme studios between 1970 and 1973: *Faust* (aka 'Faust Clear' by fans), *Faust So Far*, and the unsurpassed *The Faust Tapes* - at last with a track listing! Along with the material mentioned above, there's also the 1973 BBC Radio sessions, and unreleased material.

All the discs are remastered and frankly have never sounded better. The superb packaging, which features 'remixes' of the original sleeve art by Savage Leisurecentre, proposes triumphant solutions to the restrictions of the CD format. The booklet contains rare photos and interviews, conducted by Cutler, with members of the band Jean-Hervé Peron and Joachim Irmeler, Peter Blegvad (who played with them in Wümme and on tour in the UK), the engineer Kurt Graupner, and Uwe Nettelbeck himself - who, although he has always been supportive to Cutler's reissue projects, has never uttered on the history; he's breaking his silence on Faust for the first time.

There are several ways of looking at the bizarre mythology of Faust, and the way the interviews are arranged encourages a certain ambiguity. From a practical angle, you have a situation so chaotic it's amazing anything came out of it. Uwe Nettelbeck, a left-wing journalist and a music and film critic of no small fame, had been commissioned by Polydor Germany to put a band together. The label had just lost The Beatles and were looking for a money-maker. This was at a time when rock was still big business, and the money men were carelessly doling out enormous budgets. Can had started and the idea of potentially successful German Rock Bands was in the air. Never a man to think small, Nettelbeck put his ear to the ground and forged Faust out of members of two separate German underground bands; those on Peron's side were associated with a young avant-garde cinema scene. Using Polydor's money to sponsor it, Nettelbeck set up the Wümme studios, and enlisted the help of talented engineer Kurt Graupner, who migrated from Deutsche Gramophone and brought his equipment and his radical ideas. The hippy-genius musicians of Faust - Peron, Zappi Diermaier, Joachim Irmeler, Arnulf Meinert, Rudolf Sosna, and Gunther Wüsthoff - were let loose in this playground. Nettelbeck remains good-humoured today as he reminisces about the excesses of Faust as they wasted Polydor's moolah; they would sleep all day, lie in the sun, smoke lots of dope, crash cars, walk around naked, and allegedly provide sanctuary to members of the terrorist Baader-Meinhof group (this story isn't here, incidentally). The first six months, spent not at the studio but at the home of Nettelbeck's (wealthy) wife Petra Krause, were pissed away in this playful spirit. They might have appeared less than committed to delivering the promised records on time.

Of course, it's this very irresponsibility that is the essence of Faust; it's their madness, their fire, that makes the records so brilliantly insane and unexpected - even today. Besides, once they were in the studio, it was total music production non-stop; they lived, ate, slept, took dope and probably even fucked girls in the studio. They insisted on total independence and the freedom to create as they wished. There was a political side to their freedom-at-all costs agenda, which led to the inclusion of a recording of a political demonstration on their demo tape for Polydor; they liked the joke of a demonstration on a demo. Even the name Faust was chosen for its twofold protest implications; they saw signing up to a 'capitalist' record company as no different to selling your soul to the devil, as the original Dr Faustus had. 'Faust' means 'fist' in German, so the X-Ray image (concocted by artist Andy Hertel) of the raised fist was translated into a radical power salute.

It's much to the credit of Kurt Graupner - who was something of a 'straight' compared to the deranged hippies he had to work with, and found himself despised on occasion - that he managed to concretise the playing of these untogether loon-boons into such powerful recorded statements. It's to do with making ideas where there are no ideas. Graupner had his legendary 'black boxes', effects pedals filled with tone and pulse generators and ring modulators, and right from the start developed the idea of continuous, live modification

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of the sound. The musicians could instantly modify what they were playing, and that of the others, live in the studio; the variations led to further variations. Evil, constantly-mutating, interactive results; one of the cornerstones of Faust music.

It's also to Nettelbeck's credit that he maintained enough momentum to realise the release of the records, and persuaded the band to play a showcase concert at the Musikhalle. This went horribly wrong; they got the idea of an ambitious surround-sound system using 20 Dynacord speakers, perhaps not unaware of Stockhausen's ideas in that area. But the technology failed, and the venue failed, and they weren't able to deliver much more than a shambles. But the audience still have happy memories of it, and the shambolic approach was carried forward into the UK tours involving the TV sets, pinball machines, and pneumatic drills on stage. (The sort of shock tactics which, when attempted in the 1990s in London, was merely an exercise in nostalgia and pandering to the already clued-up audience. When people arrive expecting to be shocked, how can the situation progress? The 1990s model of Faust simply upped the ante and tried pouring on extra violence, to little or no effect.)

Faust remained obdurate and unco-operative when signed to Virgin Records in the UK, but that obduracy wasn't a one-way street. No-one here has a kind word for Richard Branson. The Manor studios failed to offer the same freedom as their experimental laboratory in Wümme, even though Graupner had been promised total control. More dope was consumed. Faust wasted Virgin's money the same way they wasted Polydor's, and were thrown in jail for non-payment of an expensive hotel bill. *Faust IV*, the record that resulted, is not part of this boxed set. Joachim Irmiler, the organ player, was disgusted by the way things went at this point, and (shortly before leaving the band) made a passionate appeal to his fellow players to recall their misty origins, where it appears they made some dark Faustian pact at midnight while communing with Germanic tree-spirits. This is one of the few glimpses anyone has ever given into the truly deranged nature of this band. 'Hell and night must give this monstrous birth to the world's light'.

In spite of all the anarchy and mayhem, it's fair to state that the Faust project succeeded admirably; and not

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just because of the essential musical documents that remain. Did you realise the first LP sold 20,000 copies? Of course, that wasn't anything like the amount Polydor wanted - who were expecting something in the millions - but it compares favourably with today's etiolated experimental music scene. Many CDs sent to The Sound Projector are in editions of 500, although this is something to do with flooding the market; too many artists and labels chasing after too small an audience.

Also here in this box, to a certain extent, are fragments of the Wümme Studio story - it was home to interesting experimental music. Works were recorded there by Anthony Moore, Slapp Happy, Tony Conrad, the American band Moon, and Dieter Meier (who later became Yello). Faust were involved to varying degrees in these projects, as you'll know if you have heard the original Slapp Happy LPs and Conrad's *Outside The Dream Syndicate*. Blegvad and Moore enjoyed Faust's contributions; Tony Conrad didn't relish the experience much, and tried to overpower their rock sound with his mighty droning violin.

Quid multa? I assume if you're reading this then you already have all these records. I know I do, but I still bought them again. If you haven't, then here's your chance to get five crucial discs, and a big slice of important history, via a single purchasing action.

ED PINSENT from TSP 9



Faust

Faust IV

UK VIRGIN RECORDS CDV2004 CD (1992)

Original issue UK VIRGIN RECORDS 87739 LP (1974)

Black sheep in an otherwise distinguished lineage this album may be, and many tracks admittedly aren't good, but this last original Faust 70s recording has survived the ravages of time pretty well compared to some of its 1973 contemporaries - I mean, apart from tragic UK music monthlies like *Q* and *Mojo*, who remembers that *Tubular Bells* recording? (Well I do I suppose, since I mentioned it.) And after three albums which many consider landmarks in the history of experimental rock / pop, Faust were entitled to, er, relax and have a bit of fun with the fourth - advice they apparently took too much to heart, since it was probably during the *Faust IV* recording sessions that they spent a night in the slammer for running up a debt. Some of that carefree spirit breezes through this album which is lacking in more recent releases and reissues, some of which also carry the stench of someone trying to cash in on the Faust reputation.

Without a doubt, the highlight is 'Krautrock', certainly the first and last and only word in combining shimmering guitar noise textures and a hypnotic rhythm and the track that, in the manner of Helen of Troy, launched a thousand careers in avant-garde music. Of the other pieces, the standard falls away: 'Jennifer' has a hint of glorious showering guitar debauchery which ends all too quickly (I have heard Mike Morley /

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Gate's version of this song by the way and apart from the honky-tonk piano coda I remember it as a mostly heavy-handed demolition job); 'Picnic on a Frozen River, Deuxieme Tableaux', a reworking of a piece from *Faust So Far*, is a three-parter where the first movement is not bad, the second jazzy movement is good but the third movement (the reworked piece) disappoints due to a mundane guitar improvisation after we've just heard 'Krautrock' and 'Jennifer'; and 'Just a Second (Starts like That!)' is a stream-of-consciousness track that becomes quite unhinged with near-deranged piano and searing guitar blasts in the background amid other unsettling effects.

Missing from the CD is a lyric sheet and English language translations of the French lyrics on a couple of tracks which would have helped to gauge how much of Faust's preoccupation with the alienation of modern industrial life actually made it onto the record under Richard Branson's regime. (Virgin Records is well-named, that's for sure!)

The album points in a more commercially acceptable if slightly dissident direction (a path well-trodden by others) for Faust had they continued past 1975 and in that sense could be considered historically important despite its patchy quality. Those of you who already have *The Wümmen Years* set and want TWO CDs with 'Krautrock' (the track features on one disc in the set) are certainly welcome to *Faust IV*, as are first-time visitors - a thousand more (hopefully good) careers in avant-garde music are certainly needed.

JENNIFER HOR from TSP 13



Faust

Ravvivando

UK RER RECOMMENDED FRAV1 CD (1999)

Faust

Faust Wakes Nosferatu

GERMANY KLANGBAD NO NUMBER CD (1997)

Ravvivando is excellent, a tremendous comeback for Faust and about their most powerful record since they reformed. Since this infamous and largely ill-advised reformation there have been many patchy products and patchier live shows; *Rien De Faust* and the two live CDs on Table of the Elements are, let's face it, pretty disjointed, flabby, and badly recorded. This new one returns to some of features that made them good in the first place, in particular that feel for an endless repetitive monotone thrash that you find on *Faust IV*, *Faust Party* and *Faust So Far*. Perhaps the recent acrimonious falling-out between members has proven to be good thing after all! The bassist, vocalist and guitarist Jean-Hervé Peron no longer features; instead here we have drummer Zappi Diermaier; organist Hans Joachim Irmeler; plus the other team players of this latest Faustian incarnation, Ulrike Helmholz, Steven Wray Lobdell, Lars Paukstat and Michael Stoll.

This record is loud, heavy, and packs an almighty wallop. Most of the tracks follow the two star players, so are organ based or drum based, with a massive feel suggesting each track is hewn from granite; each boulder is flung together by giants, in a pretty much continuous-play suite of musical noise (I think there's only about one break for silence in the whole CD). The noise is liberally dosed with sick-making, disorienting effects - reverb and echo applied like hot tar from a huge tub, phasing, continuous sustained guitar notes, and foreign elements of pure alienation. A sustained production, far better than the wet Jim O'Rourke managed - pumping energy all the time - and forever weird, dark and menacing. And with that uncanny treated tape drum sound thrown in, how can you resist? It's as effective as Massive Attack's meisterwerk of last year,

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Mezzanine - making this an avant-garde Trip-Hop album for sure, without even trying.

Kraftwerk, Can and Klaus Dinger have taken dismaying turns with their approaches to their new audience - and not always produced great music. I had worried pretty much the same about Faust, but there's hope for them yet when they remain capable of music like this, insane, doped-up, true experimenters to the last.

However, no marks at all to *Faust Wakes Nosferatu* - one of the dullest records I've heard for a long time. It disguises a near-total lack of ideas with loud volume and endless, pompous droning. It seems disorganised; many of the tracks take too long to get moving; there are too many passages where the whole band seems to have forgotten what they are doing and lost the thread completely. Where the original *Nosferatu* film (directed by F W Murnau, and released in 1922) has development, drama, tension and narrative closure, this music has none of the above. I hate to make too many comparisons, but there seems little other justification for this music's existence. It was created live, alongside a screening of the film; they call it an 'interpretation' of the film. The lineup is once again Irmeler and Diermaier, with Steven Wray Lobdell on Thomas C Martin on guitars, and Lars Paukstat on 'zither and labyrinth percussion'. Not good.

ED PINSENT from TSP 6





Gila

Gila [aka Free Electric Sound]

GERMANY SECOND BATTLE SB LP 021 (1997)

Original issue GERMANY BASF 20 21109-6 LP (1971)

'This album has been a much in demand German legend for long, long years', say its issuers, the Second Battle team in Berlin. 'Regarded by many as one of the finest Krautrock albums of all time', states the Freak Emporium catalogue. No wonder. This is a quite monumental work by the Conrad Veidt group, in which the man himself plays guitars and tabla, joined by Fritz Scheyhing on the organ and mellotron, with drummer Daniel Alluno and Walter Wiedenkehr on bass. Gila features long freaked out jamming tracks, guitars and keyboards fed through cosmic electronic effects, pinned down by a crisp rhythm section and recorded in 1971 to a near-perfect standard by Dieter Dierks in the Tonstudio Dierks in Cologne. Gila impresses with a massive sound, achieved through meticulous mixing desk craft, judicious placement of echo effects and liberal use of volumed up amps; the instrumental jams carry us through a cavernous, massive-scaled soundworld. This ponderosity is reinforced by the perspective-heavy sleeve art - cubist blocks floating out of an imaginary desert landscape, pushed aside by a cobra-like (Gila Monster?) reptile, and in the block-lettering of the band's logo. A heavyweight look for a heavyweight sound!

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It even has a concept LP theme - about man's progress from aggression to communication, and the consequences thereof. This theme is (thankfully, perhaps) stated musically first, lyrically second. Occasional sound effects - a water splash, a crying baby, a flock of seagulls - are inserted to underline key points in this humanitarian essay, and the lock-groove at the end of side one is presumably hammering home a message about man's struggle to achieve his place in the universe. Verily the hippie dream of love and peace, of which this development seems a perfectly plausible articulation, was still shining brightly in Berlin in 1971; guess nobody could have known the horrors the rest of the decade would hold, particularly with the rise of international terrorism - which is more about communication through aggression. Gila's stance registers as drug-free, and pretension-free; I'll take this kind of heavy sermonising over anything by Pink Floyd, The Alan Parsons Project or Jethro Tull, thanks very much.

Veidt was an exceptional spacey guitarist: such control, never letting those effects get the better of him. The beautiful 'Kontakt' and 'Kollektivität' on side two are Eastern-influenced circular guitar tapestries as perfectly formed and layered as anything he recorded during his tenure with Popol Vuh. Gila's 1973 follow-up LP *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* is not apparently as good as this debut. This however is a superlative package from Second Battle, which as far as I can tell exactly replicates the BASF original - gatefold sleeve and poster insert, and a fine pressing on heavy vinyl which sounds superb.

ED PINSENT from TSP5





Gomorrha

I Turned to See Whose Voice it Was

AVANT-GARDE BOOTLEG LP (ND)

Original release GERMANY BRAIN / METRONOME 1003 (1972)

I know nothing about these obscurities, but any record with a Hammond organ is a sure-fire winner with me. Their meaty apocalyptic dirge 'Opening of the Sealed Book' begins with a churchy Hammond-fest, mingling sweetly with acoustic guitar riffs, before it grows into a rockin' beast with seven heads. This New Testament theme continues with ponderous descriptions of the four Gospel-makers, and other bizarre creatures emerging from the Book of Revelations, through lyrics sung in English by a fairly abominable vocalist. But I like this warped bible-quoting stuff. There's some more visionary dreams on the title track, apparently an episode about meeting Jesus or God - 'I am the First and the Last' - at any rate the 'chosen one' who's narrating ends up holding The Keys of Destiny. Very deep! It comes over like a nasty version of Genesis on a bad acid trip - a real antidote to those fey English rockers, much as we all love *The Lamb Lies Down...*

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I'd like to hear a lot more of that Hammond (played by Eberhard Krietsch) - just listen to the intro and exit to 'I try to change this world', where it's fed through a killer distortion effect (a Leslie speaker?). Such grandeur! Most of the songs are led by loud conventional guitar riffs from guitarists Ali Claudi and Ad Ochel. 'Kreiselstanz' is sung in German, lapses into pastoral flute interludes and goes through other delightfully baffling changes, only to end with an arty tape section of a NASA space rocket. It's fabulous! The band can rock out with tasty psychedelic instrumental jams in that clumsy and ungainly fashion that only the best Krautrockers can; there is, I find, a certain pleasure to be derived from hearing music that isn't played or even recorded perhaps as well as it could be. This is their third LP. The cover boasts one of those great gouache painted Surrealist sleeves that seem so typical of the period. Their first equally rare LP, *Trauma*, has been reissued by Second Battle.

ED PINSENT from TSP 5



Guru Guru

UFO

GERMANY OHR/ZYX 556005-2 CD

Original issue GERMANY OHR OMM 56005 LP (1970)

Guru Guru

Hinten

GERMANY OHR/ZYX 5556017 CD

Original issue GERMANY OHR OMM 556017 LP (1971)

Out of control. This bunch are a trio of greasy truckdrivers, out of their heads on amphetamines, in a huge juggernaut speeding up the Autobahn with a cargo of high-explosive Bratwurst. Guitarist Ax Genrich pushes the pedal to the floor, Mani Neumeier steers with a black bag over his head, while Uli Trepte sits in the back with an inane grin on his face, playing the nodding dog. Seriously deranged detuned guitar lines search in vain for the centre of each tune, while the drums and bass pull it inside out like a team of wild horses dragging it uphill. In fine, ultra-heavy psych played by ham-fisted yobs.

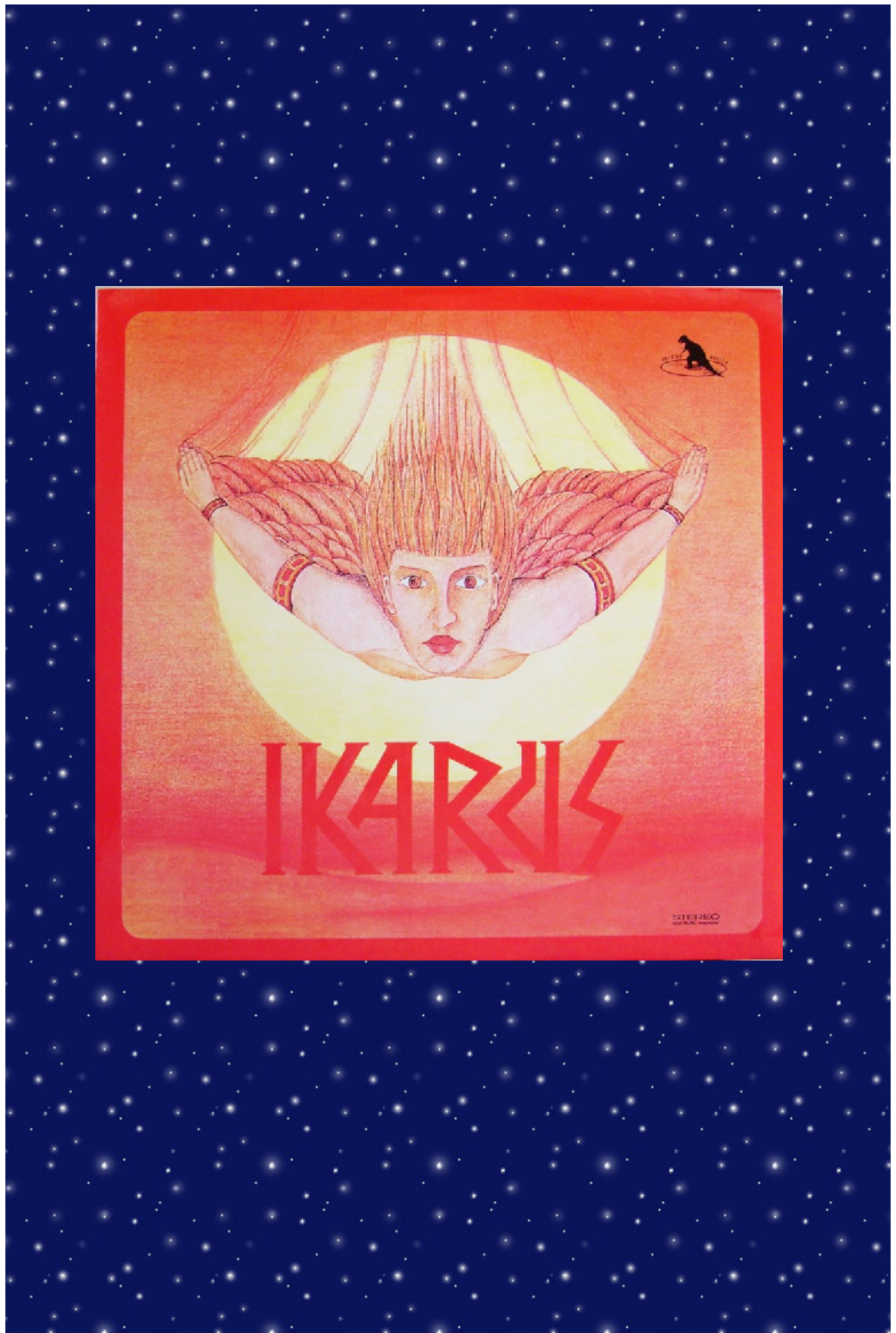
On *UFO* they take no prisoners with 'Stone In', a dirty reverb lick that's ready to smash its bottle of Pilsner in your face. 'Girl Calls' is deliciously politically incorrect, leading off with the guitars cackling at you with menacing intent before they gang-rape you with juddering sheets of wah-wah effects. 'Next Time See you at the Dalai Lhama' is a brutalistic two-note figure like a wailing fire engine siren working its way up the fretboard, while the band stand there laughing at the burning wreckage of the building they just set on fire. 'LSD-Marsch' leaves us stranded in a bleak rubbish tip during the Mother of all Bad Trips. 'UFO' the title track is a far darker version of cosmic space trips than even Tangerine Dream could muster, a real abduction-by-aliens special, dragging us unwillingly through a forest of pine trees, past mysterious metallic rumblings, a visit to the engine rooms, nuclear reactors overloading...a single-take improvised masterpiece of dynamics and textures, the sort of thing that gives 1970s prog a good name.

Hinten contains more humorous moments, such as the first cut 'Electric Junk' built out of the sort of fast-switching time signatures Zappa's 1980s bands could perform eyes closed, and some stomping riffs which stop just short of turning into a Keith Emerson organ solo on the guitar - but souped up with gallons of greasy lubricant! No less a jokey schlockfest is the excellent 'Bo Diddley' which is a monstrous barrelful of cobra snakes slithering on top of a scratchy rhythm guitar, punctuated by mad Monty-Pythonesque cries of 'Bo Diddley!' Plus another two cozmik jaunts, 'The Meaning of Meaning' where the band let rip inside an echo chamber (and perhaps have fun with Mani's 'Zonk Machine'), and 'Space Ship' which simply continues the nightmare flight started on 'UFO', although its use of radio waves and distorted voices indicates an outdated piece of rusty space-junk on a highly unstable orbit across the Crab Nebulae.

ED PINSENT from TSP 1

The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium





Ikarus

Ikarus

GERMANY SECOND BATTLE SBLP 032 LP (1995)

Original issue GERMANY PLUS 4 LP (1971)

A reissue on the Second Battle label of a 1971 German Rock LP, an example of music which I hesitate to label 'Krautrock' but which has probably been snapped up into that canon by other expert listeners and scribes. It's actually a lot more like your basic progressive rock and contains few traces of what might be deemed electronic or experimental grooves – just great solid rock playing, here and there tinged with certain soft jazz and fusion elements. There's plenty of tasty organ licks – one of the main appeals for me. Hammond B3 organ perhaps, played with gusto, confidence and meaty fingers by Wulf Dieter Struntz. And some occasional woodwinds adding colour effects and soloing, contributed by Jochen Petersen, calling to mind the sorts of musical comparisons with Soft Machine / Wyatt / Zappa that I'm sure most writers love to make. Talk about your eyes being bigger than your belly. Some critics are so insular they're like English gluttonous peasants gorging on the pork pie that is English progressive rock, while simultaneously proclaiming how wholesome and delicious is the exotic flavour of a good German bratwurst!

In fact Ikarus have a lot going for them. Even the lead singing voice is acceptable, which for many German Rock records made between 1969 and 1976 is something of an event. There are four long tracks, whereon the band can demonstrate their 'chops' and indulge in some soloing, but these are not self-indulgent jams, rather structured events taking place in a very dynamic framework. The band mostly play modal and melodic workouts, with only a few tentative sidesteps into 'free-form' noodling, and only then when the narrative of the song calls for it. And yes, we do enter concept LP territory more than once. There's a version of Poe's poem 'The Raven', which was pretty lugubrious, stultifying and leaden to begin with; just wait till you hear how it ends up in the hands of Ikarus! There is also 'Eclipse', a long contemporary poem fashioned from flashy music and portentous lyrics where the band unburden themselves of their critical views on modern urban life (as it obtained in 1971, of course). If I tell you this suite includes interludes entitled 'Scyscrapers' (sic) and 'Sooner or Later', you should get the drift of this polemic, the cause of their disquiet; large urban conurbations are probably harmful to the soul, and there's a high price to be paid for the luxuries afforded by modern Capitalism. In support of this, Ikarus adopt a Green / ecological slant (perhaps aping actions by forward-looking visual artists such as Beuys or Hundertwasser) and urge us to 'Save the Nature...because it's a treasure'. How any of this philosophy ties in with the name of the band, one struggles to guess; the sleeve image invokes Icarus, the famous son of Daedalus who built the labyrinth that held the Minotaur, and seems to depict him making good his escape with the wings engineered by Dad's skills. As you know, in a fit of youthful exuberance, Icarus flew too close to the sun and the wax holding his wings together melted away. This tragedy is not explicitly depicted on the Ikarus cover. But then, neither is the exuberance – in fact the winged one on the cover looks positively bored by the whole experience. No matter. This piece of solidly-layered and well-executed Hamburg rock deserves to be filed alongside the music of Agitation Free and other overlooked Krautrockers who perhaps didn't experiment wildly too much, but nonetheless delivered great rock music, the likes of which they genuinely don't make anymore. 500 copies, with insert, and I note these Second Battle reissues are getting tough to find on vinyl now!

ED PINSENT from Vinyl Viands 2006



Kluster

Klopffzeichen

USA HYPNOTIC CLP 9724-2 CD (1996)

Original issue GERMANY SCHWANN AMS 511 LP (1969)

Kluster

Zwei-Osterei

USA HYPNOTIC CLP 9737-2 CD (1996)

Original issue GERMANY SCHWANN AMS 512 LP (1970)

A brace of very desirable objects from 1970-71 reissued with care and attention by the Hypnotic label in California. A real history lesson: the original Kluster predates Cluster slightly. Moebius and Roedelius + Conrad Schnitzler = Kluster with a K! Moebius and Roedelius by themselves = Cluster with a C! (That's the better known of the two, who worked with Brian Eno). Both combinations are and were excellent. Schnitzler was influenced by the great Joseph Beuys (he trained as a fine art sculptor) and seems to come at the project from a gallery/conceptual viewpoint. I think he has made records for installation environments. The Kluster project has its roots in the Zodiac Free Arts Lab in Berlin, where Conrad held sway in 1968. A commitment to experimental free-form work across 'various disciplines' is indeed easily detectable in these records, if you listen hard you can discern the techniques at work and you can almost hear parallels with collage, concept art, or film-making. Both records, made in late 1970 with Conny Plank co-producing, feature stark treated electronic sounds, minimal layering and editing, but extremely disjunctive effects. Overall you find a determined refusal of anything conventionally 'musical' -

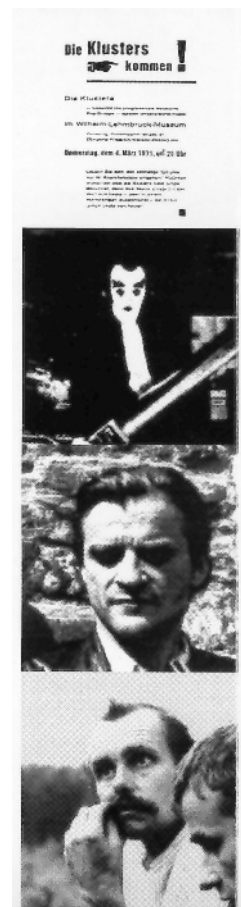
The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium

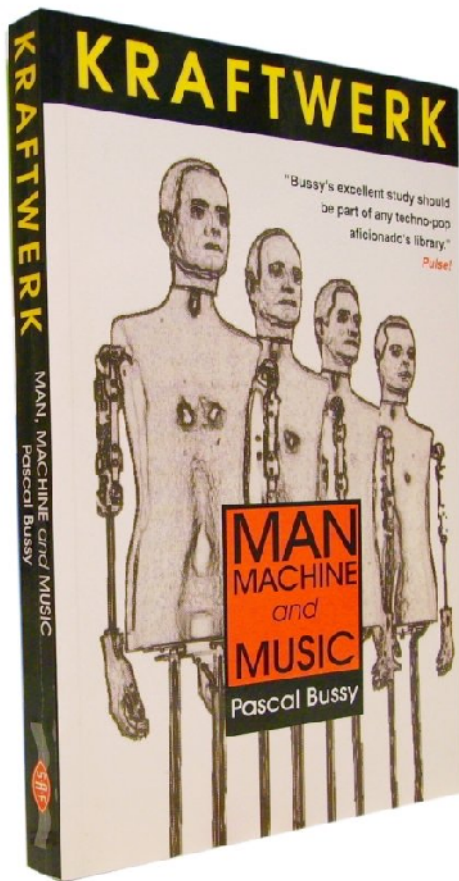
shape, development or dynamics; instead the sounds are explored and employed for their own sake, and allowed plenty of room to grow, to echo, to meander, and to repeat themselves. Yet each looping or repetition is always somehow out of synch, so that each sound-event yields a slightly new configuration, kaleidoscopic, shifting into new patterns like a snowflake melting on a microscope slide.

The religious texts intoned over the music, performed by Christa Runge and Manfred Paethe, also play a significant part. The piece(s) were commissioned by an organist in the German Church for a specific project, so who knows what evangelistic exhortations or prescriptive dogma these texts comprise! Technically this aspect renders the project slightly compromised in the eyes of some (it was the only way they could get the money to make the record at all), yet to my mind it enhances the entire listening experience. Paethe's foreboding tones in particular add to the general unease and terror that these austere records generate. *Zwei-Ostere*'s first part at 4.45 yields up a personal favourite moment, and one of the most unearthly sounds ever put to tape - a wounded moose blurt factory hooter trumpet of the Apocalypse blast!

Another history aspect - both of these records have been sought after for many years by those of an Industrial persuasion, as they are supposed precursors and big influences on that scene. This surely makes these reissues all the more welcome. Each one is remastered very well from a vinyl disc (original tapes missing) and each contains a bonus cut of Cluster with a C playing live in 1980.

ED PINSENT from TSP 2





Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music

by Pascal Bussy

UK SAF Publishing (1993)

192pp, ISBN 0 946719 09 8, £12.95

Peter Colville was excused games because he had polio. His house was a few hundred yards from school so a not-too-risky stop off when you wanted to twag a school games. It was one of these afternoons that I got my introduction to Kraftwerk. Peter's favourite LP was *Autobahn* and he insisted I heard it. I'd been through a pile of his records already, wincing as I flicked past Rick Wakeman's *Six Wives of Henry VIII*, *Tarkus*, and the Alan Parsons Project, so it wasn't as if there was anything else I was desperate to hear. I didn't hold out too much hope for this Kraftwerk LP either as I turned it in my hands and discovered the title track took up 22-odd minutes - the whole of one side! More bloated self-important classical - progressive posturings? Peter played it anyway and I had to swallow my misgivings. I was immediately (and remain now) in thrall to what Jane Egypt calls 'boy scientist rock.'

It was easy to see why Peter would be attracted to *Autobahn*. Almost every day he'd

get ragged about his eccentric hobby: truck-spotting. Most weekends he'd head out on his ownsome to the A1, M1 or M62 (all in fairly easy reach of our town) and note in his journals the make, model, registration number and direction of travel of any passing trucks. He's spend his evenings cross-referencing recent with previous sightings, to what end none of us could figure out. Now I don't know Pascal Bussy, but it's not hard to imagine him frittering his youth away pursuing similarly pedantic paths. He and assistant Mick Fish stress that in compiling this book they've tried hard to 'avoid rumours'. The sticklers.

Bussy's writing is absurdly stilted and doggedly literal, wholly appropriate as it turns out to the obliqueness and dry humour of Kraftwerk themselves. Here's Karl Bartos explaining why Kraftwerk mostly appeal to male constituency: 'If you are Bryan Ferry and you talk about your feelings and how you are a Jealous Guy then you reach the girls.' Information about the formative years of Kraftwerk members is sketchy but what there is is a delight. Florian Schneider, the boffin of the group (known to wrap up a long night at their studio / lab with a satisfied 'Oh, what boredom!') grew up with a famous modernist architect for a father, a man who was stringently self-disciplined but liked to put his feet up and relax with a schnapps and a touch of Pierre Henry's *musique concrète*. Ralf Hutter in an atypically eloquent moment sheds further light on their

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motivation - 'The culture of Central Europe was cut off in the 30s and many of the intellectuals went to the USA or France or they were eliminated. We are picking it up again where they left off, continuing this culture of the 30s and we are doing it spiritually'.

There's plenty to be enjoyed in Bussy's book, once you get past idiosyncrasies like his inability to go more than five pages without making barely-relevant reference to either Andy Warhol or Fritz Lang. But he gets onto shaky ground with his thesis that Kraftwerk's whole career is just a series of steps progressing up to the conceptual consistency and high-gloss sheen of *Trans-Europe Express* and *The Man-Machine*. I can't swallow it. *Kraftwerk*, *Kraftwerk 2* and *Ralf and Florian* may be less focused than later discs but they're no less astonishing. Listening to 'em now they don't, it's true, appear to be pushing the envelope of technology, but what kind of criteria is that to judge music on? It's hard to imagine how *Kraftwerk 2* must've been perceived on its release in 1971, it sounds almost fashionably lo-fi now - a raw, home electronics formulation, fresher and less dated than say 'Showroom Dummies' from *Trans-Europe Express*. *Kraftwerk 2* is brain-battering in its sheer scope, from the metronomic proto-definitive Kraftwerk of 'Kling Klang' and the melodic pop concrete of 'Spule' to most impressively, the freewheelin' improvisational - stop me before I say 'organic' - 'Wellenlange', prefiguring by a decade and a half *Bad Moon Rising* / *EVOL* - era Sonic Youth's live chill-out sections - those bits where half the audience would be mesmerised, the other half glowering or barking 'get on with it!'

Radio-Activity gets a rough ride from Bussy. It didn't sell as well as the previous LP, their breakthrough *Autobahn*, so Bussy feels he has to make excuses for the dull-witted public. And blow me down if *Radio-Activity* isn't about their best record: it saved Chris Petit's film *Radio On* from being just a dull British B-Movie; Fassbinder loved it and forced it on the crew while making his 15-hour epic *Berlin Alexanderplatz*...give me a little time and I'll haul in a sack of testimonials from friends and prominent personalities!

Of course the next two records eventually made a huge dent in popular culture, exerting an influence that stretches through electronic pop and hip-hop to techno, Mo Wax, etc. *Man-Machine* does sound a million years on from the early records, but mostly through advances and availability of technology, but there's a constancy to the group's work so that 'Neon Lights' (at one time available on an impossibly exotic luminous 12" pressing) has that freedom and playfulness in development, a looseness that's right there in early tunes like 'Tanzmusik'. Kraftwerk's carefully contrived image had become that of robotic demi-men, subjugating themselves to the computer age, but the music couldn't help but betray the twitching of human ears. Lester Bangs wasn't being frivolous when he described Kraftwerk as the teutonic counterparts of Brian Wilson's Beach Boys.

Maybe Kraftwerk's summer of 1983 hit 'Tour De France' is, as Pascal Bussy tells it, the result of the 'the fascination of the comparison between the ever-turning wheels of their bicycles during the day and the non-stop revolving of the spools of their tape machines in the studio at night. And maybe it ain't. It's enough to make a sport-avoiding shirker like myself want to jump on a bike and ride...if only to bomb over to Missing Records and see if a copy of *Ralf and Florian* has turned up in the second-hand bins.

MARC BAINES from TSP 1



La Düsseldorf

La Düsseldorf

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD 064 (1997)

Original issue NOVA/TELDEC 6.22550 LP (1976)

La Düsseldorf

Viva

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD 065 (1997)

Original issue NOVA/TELDEC 6.23626 LP (1978)

La Düsseldorf

Individuellos

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD 066 (1997)

Original issue NOVA/TELDEC 6.24524 LP (1981)

La Düsseldorf music is fun, cheap and easy - real supermarket shopping for your mind, everything you need is there in one user-friendly wire trolley spin! In the late 20th century the demands of the marketplace always win. The UK's community of young Kosmische clubbers, all equally clued-in on great Krautrock classics, have insisted on the reissue of the first Neu! album with its spraycan dayglo red slogan cover, on a heavy slab of vinyl at a price that modern shoppers love to pay. You can't beat the great Neu! but it sometimes seems I play La Düsseldorf more - these are 'useful' records. Some people seem to

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neglect this period in favour of earlier or more obviously weird and cosmic krautrock, but to ignore La Düsseldorf would be a grave error. Here we have a genius simplicity, a somehow sophisticated dumbness, a basic conceit spun out to an infinite length, like a sugar strand one hundred miles long and one molecule thick.

You should know all about this scene as guitarist Klaus Dinger's 'supergroup' project, following on from the great Neu! records he made with Michael Rother. Klaus plays guitars, keyboards and 'synthies' (turns out that one 'Nikolaus Van Rhein' credited with keyboards is in fact an alias for Klaus), joined by brother Thomas Dinger and Hans Lampe on percussion, both of whom had played on the third Neu! LP. Lampe was an assistant of Conrad Plank the legendary producer, and Plank was in the control room for the first LP *La Düsseldorf* recorded in 1975. It was reissued on Radar in the UK in the later 1970s, and became something of a favourite with your post-punk and new wave hipsters; not hard to see why, La D. managed an art-school mutant disco sound without being at all pretentious or resorting to day-glo sound production; they were more successful in every way than say X-Ray Spex, Talking Heads or Magazine.

On the first LP, 'Dusseldorf' is a hymn to the city, an endless chant singing the praises of the new Jerusalem, the Heimat of Klaus Dinger who found so much beauty in the rugged post-war industrial estates that the warehouse door he poses the group in front of becomes nothing short of a cathedral. A continuation of Kraftwerk's themes applied to a slightly more mundane environment. The beautiful 'Silver Cloud' is here, a hit single in their home country. There's a football connection here too. I hate the sport football but I liked the Wim Wenders movie *Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*. Really that film was a psychoanalytical thriller and not a football movie at all. Similarly, Klaus Dinger plays football as though it's a scientific experiment and plays rock music as though it's nuclear physics. The sound of these records is so perfectly seamless and continuous, yet not simply the sound of machines playing on autopilot. Primary colours applied to a huge canvas using Dulux rollers, leaving no trace of brushmarks. Endless string ensemble synths over a basic drum pattern, two perfect chords which never change. A winning formula.

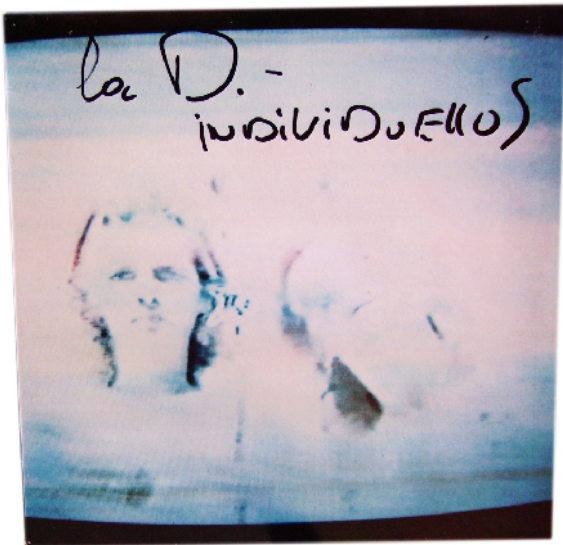
1978's *Viva* has the ludicrous self-deprecating 'White Overalls' song, alluding to the band's chosen 'futuristic' fashion statement at that time... 'new style hit the city... sons of the city, sons of the future, we are like roses.' Would that Bowie, the original Thin White Duke, could have seen the funny side... undercutting any seriousness, there's a photograph of their white overalls drying in the airing cupboard! The side-long 'Cha Cha 2000' is a superbly overblown epic, triumphant synth trills rising and falling in crescendo after crescendo, anthemic punk chants vying with Andreas Schell's piano riffs. The scope of this LP's vision almost anticipates Spandau Ballet and all the other clueless New Romantics, the only difference being Klaus Dinger



Der Klang-Projektor Krautrock Kompendium



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had style, humour and got it right; the UK blanket-clad ninnies were clueless clothes-horses, produced lots of shit records, and got everything wrong. A fantastic back cover artiste-with-animal photo that takes the weirdness of *Pet Sounds* one stage further.

Individuellos is from 1981 and does little to change the winning formula, although there are fleeting and intriguing experiments with foreign materials, backwards tapes, and impenetrably alienating lyrics. Not that Klaus ever lost his warped sense of humour at any time. This CD reissue includes both sides of a maxi-single 'Ich Liebe Dich' c/w 'Koksnode!', the A-side quite naturally being the very opposite of a heartfelt love-song, Klaus moaning the words to his loved one like a speech-impaired ogre on his deathbed.

The artwork for all three items has been successfully rescanned and refitted into glossy foldouts for the cramped CD format by Klaus in collaboration with Captain Trip himself, Ken Matsutani. *Individueller* displays some trademark Dinger 'messy' layouts, blurry polaroids, washed-out video grabs that reduce the subjects to hollow-eyed zombies, surrounded with writing in a scribbly thick-point marker pen. I like this clunky style as it seems to cast Klaus Dinger as an insane factory foreman writing on his clipboard. Touchingly, one of the back cover portraits was his grandmother Anna Miszewski, who has since passed to a better place...

ED PINSENT from TSP3

1-A Düsseldorf

Fettleber

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-160 CD (1999)

I've only heard a handful of Captain Trip releases and at last I've found one that isn't a side project, live performance, archive material, rarities, assorted left overs, or Klaus Dinger having a bath and recording the event for posterity (although admittedly 'Shit! I've dropped The Soap' (0'45") from *Long Hot Soak Volume 7* was a tour de force). This actually sounds like a proper album, as in something to be listened to rather than just added to a collection.

1-A Düsseldorf is Thomas Dinger (of Neu! and La Düsseldorf) and Nils Kristiansen. That is to say this is the latest work by Thomas Dinger, rather than an album by Thomas Dinger who did stuff in the 1970s and is still soldiering on, which is a subtly different definition. My only real criticism is that sometimes the vocals are mixed a bit louder than they need to be, on occasions threatening to reduce the music, particularly the percussion, to the status of a backing track. But leaving this minor point aside, it's top quality all the way. Although reliant to a degree on droning guitar, sequencer, and repetition, as have been his earlier records, this particular Dinger boy seems keen to experiment and try out new angles and approaches, which explains the overall quality of freshness and originality. At a guess I'd say Thomas Dinger has yet to lose the sense of exciting possibilities that must present themselves at the door of the recording studio. Where many others who've been doing it this long end up repeating old tricks in an attempt to stimulate a flagging organ into emulating its former fertility, old Tom's yet to suffer from that particular problem, if you'll pardon the double entendre. *Fettleber*, meaning 'Fat Liver', doesn't sound much like those early La Düsseldorf albums, but I am reminded of why I found them so exciting in the first place.

WAR ARROW from TSP 6

La! Neu? / Die with Dignity Kraut?

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-098 CD (1997)

A lot to recommend this CD of what almost amounts to modern Krautrock, recorded in a lesser-known town in Germany by a band of young and unknown experimentalists who are protégés of Klaus Dinger. They play some decent rock music with guitars, basses and drum machines, and although they sometimes lapse into some dreadfully cloddish rhythm guitar strumming, their plusses are many. There's a very experimental feel, evidenced by their use of found tapes, distorted voices, and electronic effects and treatments. They have some nice valve-operated audio-generators which they feature prominently in photos inside. This harks back to a period when Krautrock might have been genuinely weird and experimental; indeed some tracks here, like 'Phone Call from Brazil', recall the first LP by Faust, even if it's only possessed of one-thousandth of the wildness factor. Another strange feature is the lyrics - I think they're mostly intended as ironic and humorous, but some of them verge on paranoid, angst-ridden, psychologically very distressed tales.

As regards letting the dead die with dignity, there's a track here called 'Are You Sure About It?' which refers, perhaps rather bravely, to those deluded revisionists who try to deny the Holocaust ever happened, and manages fairly successfully to debunk this notion. Good to see Die With Dignity don't align themselves

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with the New Right youth groups which seem to be springing up in many parts of Europe. On the other hand, there is not one ounce of empathy with the victims of the Nazi regime, indicative of the problem which others have identified: ie the German psyche seems unable to mourn the past with any dignity.

ED PINSENT from TSP 6

La! Neu?

Gold Regen (Gold Rain)

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-123 CD (1998)

Since the house is now bulging with a surfeit of recent Klaus Dinger product, I find this one the most acceptable of the batch and will probably leave the other records - including *Year of the Tiger* Captain Trip CTCD-124, to be reviewed some other time. Like similar releases from last year, this one features the Dinger family and associated friends having a sing-song at home - sounds of friendly chatter included, and a tape recorder that doesn't start on time. They gather around the grand piano played by Rembrandt Lensink, with some scrapey violin added by brother Thomas, and out of tune vocals mostly by the lamentable Viktoria Wehrmeister. In all it's sombre in tone, even moving at times - suggesting the ancient Germanic romancing of forest and mountain, only applied to autobahn and factory-works. So, either thematically or musically, Dinger's recent work is in no way an improvement on Neu! and La Düsseldorf's fine recordings, and this is far from being a necessary release.

ED PINSENT from TSP 6

La! Neu?

Cha Cha 2000 - Live in Tokyo 1996 Volume 1

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-100/101 2 x CD (1998)

As I listened to this I turned on the television (blowing in its ear usually works) keeping the sound down for some random visual accompaniment. A programme about chimpanzees caught my attention, and I was instantly put in mind of 'Monkeys In The Zoo'. Many years ago in a scummy West Midlands comprehensive school, my fellows and I had sought amusement during one break time by swinging around on the railings in the cloakroom. Mrs Stanley, our headmistress, a woman who had surely not been born but rather built in some imposing northern shipyard, happened upon us in our folly and, rather than rebuking us, chose to utter a single sardonic remark about 'the monkeys in the zoo' before passing on. This event was later reported in a song of the same name, performed by the cardboard-box drum kit punk band we had formed in order to fill the time we might have wasted by trying to learn anything.

Er...anyway...here is a double CD of Mr Dinger and pals, doing live that thing that they do, that strangely iridescent drone rock which he perfected in Neu! and particularly La Düsseldorf. It's a while since I listened to any Dingerabilia, and I hadn't forgotten how dynamic it can be when done right. Much of Dinger's output is a vivid reaffirmation of the Eno maxim that 'repetition is a form of change'. Prime Dinger manages to sound as though it is undergoing a continuous process of renewal, even when it's the same riff the band started playing three days ago. What I'd forgotten is how punky it sounds. The nihilistic snarl of punk is absent, instead one finds a friendlier sentiment, a sort of innocent sense of elation. With mild surprise I realise that Dinger's music isn't too far removed from 'Monkeys In The Zoo', except that where we reported the event as

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another signifier of the onset of 1984 in name as well as symbolic import, Dinger would have offered a celebration.

This CD appears to have been recorded from a position in the audience, rather than through the mixing desk, thus faithfully capturing some of the live atmosphere. With your eyes closed and the speakers in the right place it's a lot easier to imagine you were there than with many live albums. Paradoxically this is a little frustrating. While much of the album is fairly sharp and pacey, there are passages (the long, slow introductions) that although doubtlessly riveting at the time, tend to flounder a little in your living room. *Cha Cha 2000* doesn't always shimmer with quite the clarity of the La Düsseldorf studio albums, but after all this is a record of an event, and not the event itself. Once it gets fired up and running on all four cylinders, that's when the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Not one for the casual buyer, but it should be enough to raise a few lighters aloft in the ranks of the Dinger barmy army.

WAR ARROW from TSP5

La! Neu?

Zeeland (live '97)

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-086 CD (1997)

One from the veteran Neu / La Düsseldorf mainmain autorocker Klaus Dinger. Will he never give up? He's the only original member of either band represented here, with a pickup combo of friends and musos of capable mien, but rather less-than-genius status. The thin sound is the first disappointment to reach your ears; this item is seriously underproduced, lacking in the studio polish and sturdy sound we know Dinger's great LPs for. Each track sorely misses the solid underpinning of good circular



Photograph: Franklin Berger 20 Sept 1997 (from <http://www.gawl.de/Dingerland/>)

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riffs, good production (balance sounds very rough indeed) or even new ideas. The la-la chanson (often in French) of vocalist Victoria is the second drawback; it makes many tracks sound like Stereolab - ironic, is it not, given that UK band's penchant for Krautrock copycatism? That Dinger should come to this - a bit like Marlon Brando wishing to emulate Leonardo DiCaprio, or whatever vapid Hollywood toy-boy the media vampires have singled out as 'the new Brando'. I would like to support Klaus Dinger for his new work, nor have I any desire to live in the past - but this item just doesn't have the necessary energy, witness these rather tired-sounding, lacklustre guitar and keyboard parts. The best moments come from, firstly, what we could all bits of inspired chaos - where on track 2 reverb and feedback threaten to swamp everything else. And secondly from the spoken word and attempted singing parts of what I take to be one of Dinger's aged relatives. Producing an album informed by a 'home movie' aesthetic appeals to me, even if the results aren't always great.

ED PINSENT from TSP 4

La! Neu?

Year of The Tiger

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-124 CD (1999)

It doesn't get off to a good start. Random drum pummelling, drunken wino shouting and a French housewife trying to sing. One big fucking discordant racket basically and it doesn't bode well when I realise the playing time is over an hour. Over an hour of this shit?!?

Thankfully it comes to a sudden stop as La!Neu? really get down to business. At first, a Michael Krassner-style minimal piano chord is repeated. Gentle swells build behind it, surging forwards, filling the void. The music stirs images - helicopters flying over a barren landscape, a jet black Plymouth Barracuda surging through Monument Valley under a sky loaded with storm clouds. A drumbeat is the rotors, the engine roar echoing against the rock walls, throbbing against the melody and establishing a perfect soundtrack for the next David Lynch film. It's an offbeat road movie and the chase is on. This is a long track and develops along vaguely 'symphonic' lines with recognisable movements and shifts of emphasis and mood. It never degenerates into the cacophony threatened with Track 1, finally gliding into shore at the 30 minute mark with the 'post rock' flag hoisted high.

The final track is Maori war drums and Viktoria Wehrmeister delivering bored intonations of 'Notre Dame' that suggest early Kraftwerk and Human League but to be honest, it's little more than Enya with art school knobs on. It's not unpleasant but hardly the successor to track 2 where La!Neu? clearly shot their wad, creatively speaking.

Having approached this record with no preconceptions or real idea about the band I'll admit to being pleasantly surprised by what they can achieve when they really pursue an idea to its bitter end. Emotions remain distinctly unstirred, which may be the intention, and what we're left with is restrained atmospherics that might make good background music for painting empty car parks but there's better examples already out there so this is just more product to fill the shelves. Only for the committed fan, I reckon.

RIK RAWLING from TSP 7



Mammut

Mammut

GERMANY LITTLE WING OF REFUGEES LW 1048 LP (1996)

Original issue GERMANY MOUSE / MOTOFONIC TTM 5022 (1971)

Here's a vinyl reissue, done by Germans, of a 1971 German rock LP...under the circumstances, you'd think everything'd turn out OK, but I know of at least one connoisseur who turns up his record-sniffing proboscis at anything to do with Little Wing of Refugees. Maybe it's because they can't just do a simple reissue job without adulterating it. This one, for example, includes a couple of related but not quite related tracks from another separate contemporary LP called Under Party Ground. And the sleeve art, though distinctive in its own right, seems unlikely to be the original imagery that graced the cardboard housing and delighted many a Teutonic browser at the 1971 equivalent of the HMV shop....but I wouldn't know for sure. The addition of 'bonus tracks' has of course been a staple of the CD reissue market for about 15 years now – how else could the powerful conglomerates get halfwit consumers like me to buy that 1967 Byrds LP again? After all this is the vinyl world we're talking about. How hard could it be to repress/reissue an album in its original format, with nothing added? The biggest culprits in this regard are those Italian clowns at Akarma...but I'm getting ahead of myself.

Musically, Mammut disappointeth not the lugs and it turns out to be quite an inventive and even extremely

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interesting rock record. As I said about the Ikarus LP, only an indiscriminate ninny would mistake this for an example of Krautrock. Mammut were progressive; they claimed their influences as Deep Purple, oriental sounds (whatever they are – does the sound of smashing a Ming vase into smithereens qualify?), and folk tunes. Notice they put Deep Purple at the top of that list. Their music is basic guitar and organ boogie, with great pounding drum work, tootling flutes, fast speeds...but thankfully, no absurd time signatures, probably because the Mammut are too simple even to decode 9/8 time on a piece of sheet music, let alone play together in that rhythm. Or the key of A major seventh, unless they stumble on it accidentally when the keyboard player falls over after a night on the Schnapps and

leans his leather-lad arms across the keys. What we mostly get is good old-fashioned excessive jamming. I can't get enough of that commodity, when the weather is just right. And Mammut are far too quirky to have been as popular as Yes, Genesis, Greenslade or even Flash. And that's saying something!

What's more these unreconstructed hippie dudes even have a 'heavy' message which they are keen to 'lay' on us...for the most part this is a protest message, voicing anger and deep concern at the pain and suffering that seems to be the lot of all men born into this world. Anti-war sentiments can also be discerned. How they can be discerned by me is something of a mystery, as the vocals (although sung in English) are kind of lost somewhere in the murk of the clumsy recording and inept mix. This is compensated by the odd sound effects which are layered throughout this record, punctuating its flow at unusual moments. What happened to sound effects on records? *Song Cycle* by Van Dyke Parks is full of them. Maybe everyone thinks it's too corny now. In this instance, perhaps those 'oriental sounds' helped our German buddies to reach a highly evolved state of Zen-like oneness with the world, unless their other interest included certain oriental herbs and preparations...such as those deriving from the poppy. Know what I mean!

Mammut, it seems, arose as a project from the aspirations of one Aki Kienzler who was associated with the MPS festival and label in Germany. Said label did issue certain jazz records of note. But Kienzler had ambitions to do rock, and found he was thwarted by those conservative squares at MPS, such that his only option was to found his own record label Mouse Trick Track Music. This Mammut emerged on Trick Track in 1971 as TTM 5022. *Under Party Ground* was another release in the catalogue, a compilation LP of other bands from his roster, which may have included bands who shared members with Mammut, such as The Rope Sect and Those. Mammut presumably translates as 'mammoth', referring either to their 'massive' and 'lumbering' sound, or the fact that, even in 1971, prog rock bands knew they would be labelled 'dinosaurs' some day by self-righteous rock journalists hoping to ingratiate themselves with punk rockers. And the joke's on those twats, because mammoths aren't even dinosaurs – they're pachyderms! Sleeve art features museum photos of mammoth skulls, printed on a black ground for added drama. The only other LP I have that boasts comparable imagery is *Cultosaurus Erectus*, by the Blue Öyster Cult. I would file these LPs together for visual consonance, but that way I'd never find Mammut again.

ED PINSENT from Vinyl Viands 2006

Necronomicon

Tips zum Selbstmord

NO LABEL 60634 LP (ND)

Original issue BEST PREHODI F 60.634 LOP (1972)

Not a contemporary Black Metal band, though Heaven knows there must be at least one current Black Metal band who perform under this nomenclature! Nay, the present object was originally recorded in 1972, and I gather 'tis a sought-after oddity of German underground rock, of which this is a passable boot which I purchased at a price appropriate for listening purposes at a Wembley Record Fair in 2005. I recall that *Forced Exposure* took note of, and commended, a limited-edition luxury boxset reissue of this record, or perhaps the complete works of Necronomicon, but I've never seen a copy of that. The title of this release means 'tips on suicide', but in terms of its content it's not exactly a detailed instruction manual with specific suggestions and illustrations on how to succeed in self-murder (eg useful diagrams of gas ovens, ropes, poison bottles etc). Rather, the record seems to be a grim and depressing warning of doom, and so perhaps a more fitting translation of its title might be 'suggestions for why suicide



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seems a good option, given the current circumstances of the world today, which are intolerable'. All the lyrics and titles are in German, but mustering my meagre linguistic skills I think the songs include 'Requiem of Nature', 'In Memoriam', and 'Final Requiem', all amounting to morose (and quasi-religious?) speculations on the general morbidity and unprofitability of everything. But the sound of the record is not that of a torpid, lethargic slug-a-bed sunk in apathy as he helplessly contemplates the doom of this dark globe - rather it's energised, pounding, loud, excessive and generally monstrous guitar-metal swill of the first water. Two axes, bass, drums and a keyboard all clash together vying for space in a dense, murky mix to produce a racket as thuggish as the music of early Guru Guru, but the playing's more ramshackle and there's more elements of nascent heavy metal riffdom. In sum: themes of misery and futility explored ad nauseam in the lyrics; sung in German by a singer who sounds like he'd rather be sewn up into a canvas sack and tossed into the Rhine than front this band; and pompous metal music played with an audible bloodthirsty relish by ham-fisted gonks on speed. Overblown doom-prog doesn't get much better than this! This boot edition has a paper-thin cover – in fact it is just two sheets of paper. And despite proclaiming its 'limited and numbered' status, my copy has no number at all. Rats! The sleeve art is exceptionally odd and induces feelings of physical unease: a line drawing of a naked torso of a man, bound and restricted by the strings and tendrils of a bizarre cage framework that envelops him. To what unutterable and painful mental condition might this image correspond? Only Necronomicon know the answer to that!

ED PINSENT from Vinyl Viands 2006



Nektar

A Tab in The Ocean

UK UNITED ARTISTS UAG 29499 (1972)

Original issue BACILLUS / BELLAPHON BLPS 19118 LP (1972)

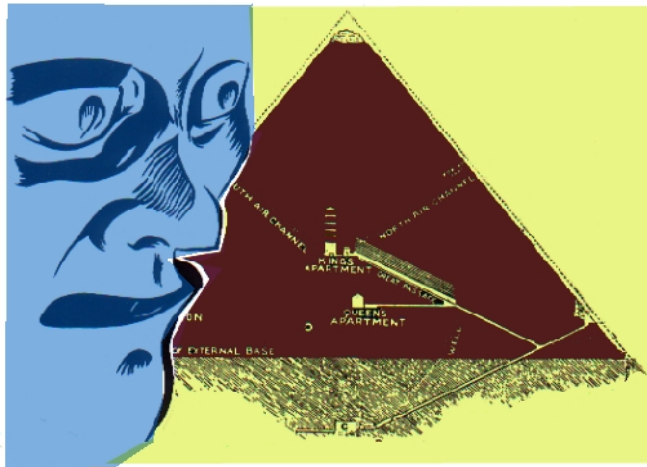
A minor Krautrock band perhaps, but still worth a darn - much more like progressive rock than some of the more experimental and electronic bands, which I suppose is why they were signed to United Artists (along with Can and Neu!). This is from 1972 and recorded at the famous Dieter Dierks studio. The title track is a side-long meisterwerk, which opens with the lyric 'Climb Aboard imaginary waves of thought beneath the veils of bluey green...' suggesting the label was trying to sell this LP to the Genesis audience in the UK. The cover painting and collage doesn't deny this possibility. Actually very good stuff indeed. Lots of great Hammond organ. I liked this ever since I first saw the cover in the *Album Cover Album* book. Somehow I always knew I would eventually own it. So good to finally hear it.

ED PINSENT from TSP 9



The Horrid Mysteries

Records from the Pyramid Label



Some rare examples of fascinating electronic music reclaimed from a very obscure time and place. Their release at this time chimes in with the current high level of interest in German 1970s Kosmische music. It isn't immediately obvious how to connect these oddities to a defined sense of a 'Krautrock continuum', which is good as this confounds lazy journalists who think they've got this scene all figured out. Some Doubting Dans have even suggested in print that these records must be 1990s hoaxes, which is absurd. Others have placed too much emphasis on their obscureness, playing up the angle of 'not even the heavy-duty Krautrock collectors have heard of this label', which is an indication of how the specialists want to appropriate everything for themselves. However, such specialisation and selfishness is overturned by democratising releases like this which put the music back in the public domain, where everyone with a CD player who's so inclined can share in these delights.

The facts are simple, the records were made in Cologne by Toby Robinson using Dieter Dirks' studio. Some say the 1972-73 date is wrong and a couple of years later would be more accurate. (I heard a rumour that the actual names of the bands were added on later, implying the records could have been made by studio session players - but don't quote me on that one!) The music is excellent. The context in which these records were made suggests there was little concern for commercial potential, or even for audience appeal - it was just artists making the music they wanted to make. If this be the case I'm delighted if there is now a slightly larger audience for this material - or at least a more attentive one! Perhaps at last the world is ready for these sounds. To 1996 ears they sound excellent and not even especially challenging, although heaven knows what a 1972 listener would have made of them. Below, John Bagnall reviews *Unknown Deutschland*, EP the Psi-Fi threesome.

Various

Unknown Deutschland : The Krautrock Archive Volume One

UK VIRGIN CD OVD 468

Now the dust has settled on last year's pop-press paranoia (ie 'Is this compilation a fake?') let's just cock a snook and gauge the varying merits of these lost probes of kosmische slop. Most primary age mopes know your current NME staffer only considers a disc 'real' if accompanied by a ribbon-wrapped crate of bilberry Hooch from Suede anyhow, so why get anxious?

Culled from Toby Robinson's mid-70s art-gallery distributed Pyramid label, these six groups are a sandalwood-scented reminder of just how hippyesque much Krautrock was. The motorik pulse of Neu! and Kraftwerk or the abrasive anti-logic of Faust account for only a ripple in a glistening lake of mystic doodling, some great, some not. And this comp truly is like a time-travelling wander through some Rhineland art-commune, so thick is the whiff of loon pants drying on decaying radiators. Some corners you won't wish to hang out in twice (The Astral Army's cod-metal 'Interstellar Shortwave') but I guarantee you'll soon be feeling right at home. Take Galactic Explorers' unforced globular lobe-tickling which uncoils at a snail's pace. Their analogue simplicity is as enriching as two full days of sleep. Temple sternly lead you into a glow-worm infested Bavarian forest. Here a Kohl-smeared émigré from Notting Hill recites her psych-poetry from a pulsating puffball. And there's more wonderment: over thirteen minutes Ferrote silk-spin long strips of metallic webbing which hang vibrating in the feedback soaked air.

The Psi-Fi label have released three facsimiles on CD of these nearly forgotten neuron-shatterer's LPs (with vintage sleeve art even Daevid Allen would balk at). While I appreciate discerning types will prefer to bask in completeness, the tidbits gathered on *Unknown Deutschland* offer the alternate thrill of finding a box of bright baubles in the back of a dim and musty cupboard. Here's hoping there's more to discover.

JOHN BAGNALL from TSP 2



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Cozmic Corridors

Cozmic Corridors

UK PSI-FI PSCD0001 CD (1996)

Original issue [1973]

The recitative by Pauline Fund here passes over the head of this non-German speaking listener, but a certain iambic pentameter can be perceived suggesting some hippy poetry reading. At one level this record is just a celebration of the enjoyable sounds of Hammond organ and Mini-Moog, manipulated here with grace and charm by Alex Meyer, which in itself is surely more than enough justification for constant replaying. At another level, some fine keyboard playing which strikes me as both true to the limitations of the electronic instruments (all very simple textures and patterns) and simultaneously imbued with real human qualities; one track seems to match exactly all the biological and physical properties of the act of breathing. To hear it is like inhaling a sudden blast of cool mountain air.

ED PINSENT from TSP 2



Galactic Explorers

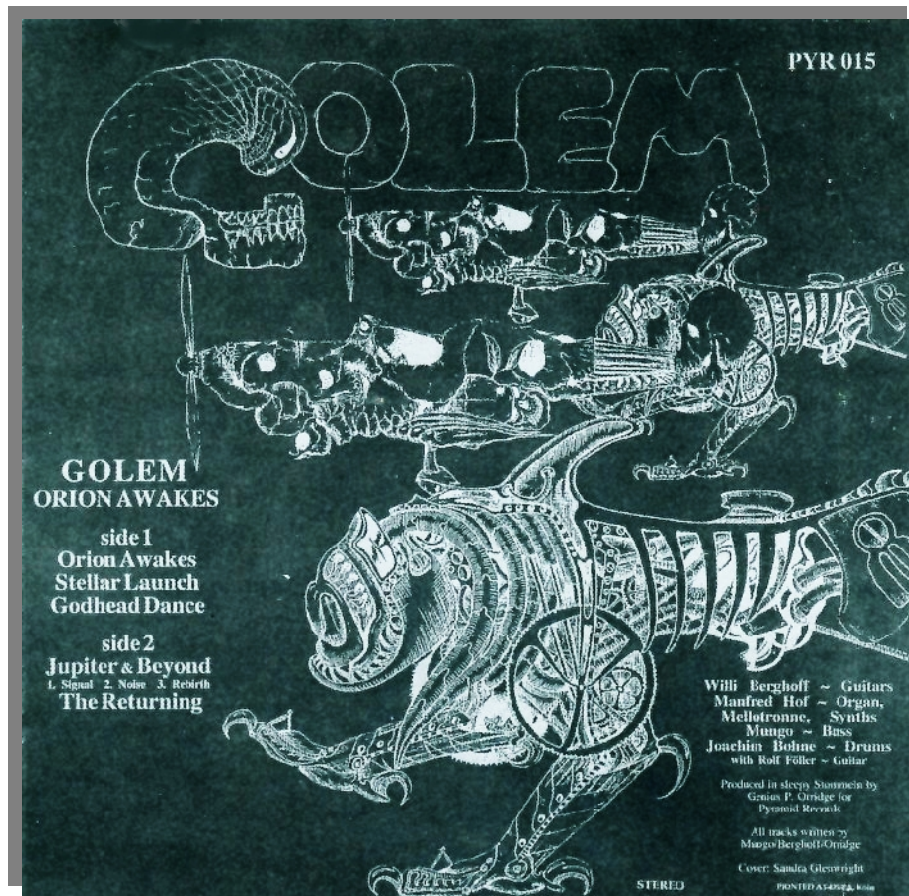
Epitaph for Venus

UK PSI-FI PSCD0002 CD (1996)

A candidate for being dubbed 'Ambient' before Ambient existed. All the signs - song titles and sleeve art especially - can seem so unpromising, as if you're about to get something as lightweight and fluffy as Camel's 'Lunar Sea', but on the contrary this is a work of crystal clear simplicity, 'pure' electronic sounds, and beautiful minimalism. Although not structured minimalism in the way that Terry Riley might wish, rather the players work to their inner vibrations and let these forces guide them where they will. Johannes Lutz, Holst Seisert and Reihard Karwatsky are the trio of unassuming synthesists sailing this boatload of bliss.

ED PINSENT from TSP 2





Golem

Orion Awakes

UK PSI-FI PSCD0003 CD (1996)

A powerful blast of more conventional cosmic rock, although less beguiling than the two above, it works at loud volume. This features Willi Berghoff on guitar and Manfred Hof on the Hammond and Mellotron, backed up by a wah-wah bass from Mungo that beats John Wetton six ways from Sunday. Only the drummer lets them down - 'Stellar Launch' is prevented from soaring into space by his leaden, unimaginative bass drum. Skip to 'Jupiter and Beyond' for a truly unashamed science-fiction spacerocket romp, built from a sharp organ figure doubled by the guitar line and enhanced by the sparing use of the phaser. Here, and on the title track, the band summon up that sense of monumental scale, as of some lumbering dinosaur, as only unreconstructed hippies can. 'Godhead Dance' is as dismal an attempt at funkiness as you could imagine, with the possible exception of Keith Emerson's Hammond riffs. Sound-wise at least, with the wah-wah rhythm guitar, bongos and mega-heavy bass as its anchor, this track almost predicts the rise of George Clinton and P-Funk - but Golem lack the soul, finally.

ED PINSENT from TSP 2



Pyramid

Pyramid

UK PSI-FI PSCD0004 CD

The Nazgûl

The Nazgûl

UK PSI-FI PSCD0005 CD

Temple

Temple

UK PSI-FI PSCD0006 CD

Original issue 1975

Three more strange and exotic rarities from Toby Robinson's Pyramid label. These are neglected 1970s art-gallery only releases, originally available in limited runs of 100 copies.

I'm still cultivating my suspicion that none of these bands had much of a life outside the studio. One envisages a series of projects emerging under Robinson's direction, musicians drawn from a pool of talent, working in Dieter Dierks' Cologne studio during down-time, with 'The Mad Twiddler' producing; once sufficient album tracks had been gathered, sleeve art would be concocted and a name assigned to the one-off item.

The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium

None of this really accounts for the stark horrors of The Nazgûl, though. Looks like three serious acidheads escaped from their cell for long enough to make this one record, then returned to re-read Lord of The Rings for the billionth time. They call themselves after Tolkien characters. The heart-stopping atmospheres conjured from their doomy organ, synths, and slow percussion dirges would have been achievement enough, but they add that killer touch with their mournful horn blasts and treated tubular bells. This record is so powerful, it's more than simply depressing; it makes you feel your very soul is doomed.



The Pyramid record, though it could be situated in the Tangerine Dream pre-Ambient drifty-wifty school, is still pretty insane. One track only, 35 minutes of 'Dawn Defender' played by persons unknown on guitar, moog, mellotron, Hammond organ, electric piano and Tibetan bells. It occasionally reaches cosmic heights - mainly, one suspects, due to the sterling efforts of the producer with his fade-out levers. These tools can be your best friend when there's a crew of self-indulgent long-haired people on the other side of the glass, intent on laying their trip on the world. An idealistic sleeve note from the original LP cover catalogues all that superstitious baloney about Pyramid Power, probably long before it was as commonplace amongst the Fortean Times brigade as it is today.

Temple verges on being a progressive rock nightmare, with its ponderously sung poetry lyrics from another stoned-out Hippie rejoicing in the name of 'Poseidon'. It would be nice to think of Poseidon performing wearing a large fish-mask à la Peter Gabriel (certainly his distorted voice sounds like that's how it was recorded) but no such luck. 'Heathen' and 'Kingdom of Gabriel' are pretty manic guitar-led chanting anthems, the latter in particular buried within myriad layers of additional synth, guitar and percussion solos; they

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genuinely don't make records as cluttered as this any more. The mood is lightened by the welcome reappearance of vocals from Pauline Fund (also on the Cosmic Corridors LP). From the name of their keyboard player (Zeus B Held), the Trojan warrior helmet on the cover and the track 'Ship on Fire', you might be able to construct a prog-rock version of The Iliad and the Fall of Troy from their work, but it's more likely just a grab-bag of the sort of imagery that fascinates these pseuds.

Krautrock one-upmanship is one thing - in fact any kind of boasting about rare unheard 1970s LPs is pretty dumb, as they frequently turn out to be very boring records. But not these; they are genuinely strange and beautiful musics all. As I've said before, probably best to ignore the Virgin *Unknown Deutschland* samplers (where some of these tracks are compiled) and just get the raw uncut stuff right here.

ED PINSENT from TSP 5

Various Artists

Unknown Deutschland : The Krautrock Archive Volume 3

UK VIRGIN RECORDS CDOVD 473 (7243 8 41967 21) CD (1997)

More obscure items from Toby Robinson's Pyramid label, which we discussed in brief last issue. This Virgin set is a rather shoddily produced series, and I wouldn't really recommend it but this particular volume contains The Nazgûl with 'The Dead Marshes', a 12 minute extract from their sole LP. I believe the LP in its entirety will be available on CD before long, but if you can't wait then by all means pick up a copy of this (it's budget priced) and make Mr Branson that little bit wealthier. The Nazgûl is a rarity among rarities, as it genuinely stops you in your tracks, and lingers for some time afterwards...even the memory of hearing it disturbs you. One assumes the trio of hippies behind this were seriously into bad acid trips, but with or without the drug culture this is an extremely sinister piece of music. The remainder of this CD contains further extracts from the Galactic Explorers and Golem LPs, but also some real stinkers by Baal, Chronos and Temple. The sketchy sleeve notes are not a very satisfying read, and the cover art is hideous - presumably a triptych to be completed by buying all three products. I've seen Volume One in the 2nd-hand racks more times than I care to remember, and expect the same fate to befall the other two in this series.

ED PINSENT from TSP 3

The Nazgûl

Habitually c/w Plujectories

UK DAY RELEASE RECORDS 12" VINYL DR103 (1999)

Acherished illusion or two bites the dust with this issue. You may recall The Nazgûl's sole release - and associated records from the mysterious Pyramid label - being reissued by Gary Ramon's Psi-Fi label in recent years, under the Krautrock banner. There was a mini-brouhaha as Krautrock devotees claimed these unheard obscurities were modern 'fakes'. Turns out that Toby Robinson is still alive and well, and a thriving record producer. The Nazgûl was him and his assistants, working under aliases - and as an Englishman abroad in Cologne, he produced all of the Pyramid releases. They now emerge as Krautrock-manque records - ie they happened to be have been produced in Germany in the 1970s. I suppose if the same music had been issued in England, say on the Harvest or Neon labels, it might not have

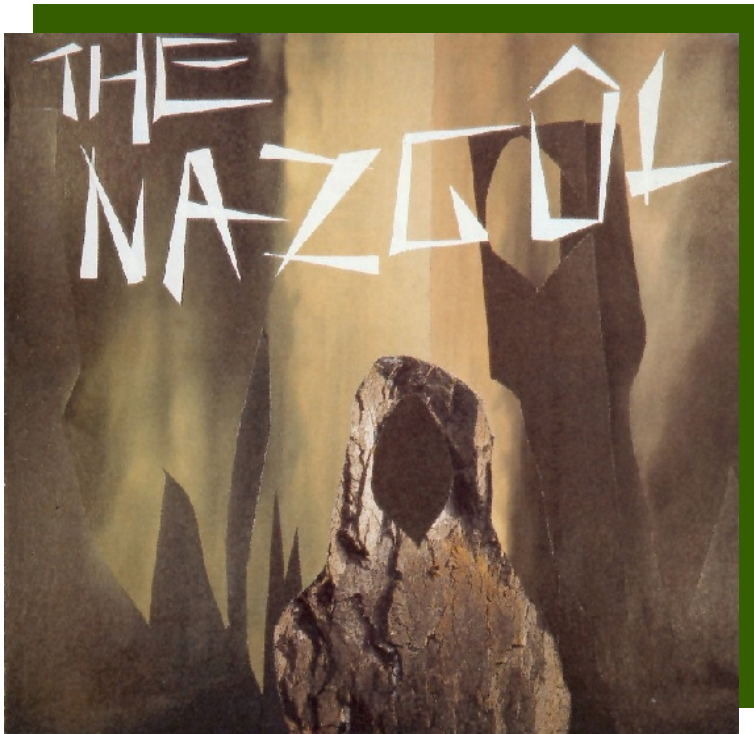
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had quite the same cachet.

No matter - the music still resounds mightily. Persuaded to resurrect The Nazgûl alias for one last dying burst, Toby Robinson and crew returned in 1999 for this single vinyl release, and a short (very short!) live final performance at the Water Rats in Grays Inn Road London, on the 6th September. That live show will stick in my memory, mainly for its visual bravado - one of the players dressed in a white boiler suit, with headphones over his face, and manipulating a makeshift trumpet (paper cone over a length of metal pipe) along with bits of scrap metal and a stepladder. Those were fifteen minutes of awesome and terrifying noise. Robinson, of course, appeared as though he couldn't care less - seems he had been dragged away from working on the latest Gong LP in the studio for one night, to blast out the sort of nonsense he could probably do in his sleep. An admirable attitude.

This isn't a bad little record either, although without that sense of portentous doom that I have come to associate with The Nazgûl's LP. Two sides of reasonable atmospheric chattering drones, created using 'an accordion, a 20 foot drainpipe, human voice and 270 metres of microphone cable as their sole instrumental sources'. It's housed in a totally inappropriate designer sleeve and I'm not sure if it plays at 45 or 33. The latter speed however makes it last longer, fit for savouring a cherished illusion.

ED PINSENT from TSP 7



Popol Vuh: Musical Mandalas



Popol Vuh

Das Hohelied Salomos

FRANCE SPALAX 14211 CD (1992)

Original issue GERMANY UNITED ARTISTS UAS 29781 LP (1975)

Popol Vuh

Letzge Tage - Letzte Nächte

FRANCE SPALAX 14213 CD (1992)

Original issue GERMANY UNITED ARTISTS UAS 29916 LP (1976)

A hh, the great Florian Fricke - in my mind I have built a shrine to his genius! Without doubt Popol Vuh remain an intense, spiritual listening experience. If we can dispense with the commonplace remarks about this music - raga-like, organic, trance music - we still have something quite magical and mysterious to deal with. They seem to create pure mandalas of sound, symmetrical music with no apparent centre, a pattern of such perfection as to embody all music, all sounds. I also testify to the healing power of this music - it can genuinely restore your equilibrium, impart a true sense of inner well-being, of spiritual peace. Where some Krautrock proceeds from an improvised basis, Fricke brought classical elements to his music, there is a certain composed dimension to each piece, repeated melodies and themes, and overall shape to the works; this in balance to the purely improvised component. Somehow the shape, although composed, is non-linear; where a mainstream classical composition starts at the beginning and

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finishes at the end, Fricke somehow manages to start at the centre and work outwards, in slow-moving ripples of thought. The overall structure is only revealed by listening to the entire piece. The normal 'logic' of linear progression is confounded.

Like many listeners, my first exposure to Popol Vuh came from the films of Werner Herzog. My favourite has to be the soundtrack to *Nosferatu The Vampire*. In my Vuh collection, I've been making do with an assortment of vinyl reissues and weird compilations for some time. After years of waiting, there are now many Popol Vuh CDs available, a lot of which endeavour to replicate the original issues in terms of track listings and sleeve art. A useful printed guide to these has appeared in *Record Collector* magazine. I mention here *Das Hohelied Salomos*, SPALAX 14211, and *Letzge Tage - Letzte Nächte*, SPALAX 14213. Caution on the latter, which sounds muddy-ish on CD; I believe some of these remasterings inadvertently used deteriorating master tapes. But play either of these fine recordings in all weathers and just watch your room fill up with sunlight.

Das Hohelied Salomos was recorded in 1975 and features Daniel Fichelscher on guitars and Djong Yun on vox. This disc contains the unbearably beautiful 'Der Winter ist Vorbei', guitars join forces with a Tabla and

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Sitar to transport you over a snowy landscape, bracketed by a few precious seconds of voice singing the most celestial sequence you could wish for. At around 2.00 a harmony vocal is added and comes close to beating the Voix Bulgares for sheer breathy mystery. In 'Du Sohn Davids', church bells give way to a warm stream of piano chords and a syrupy bass voice choir humming a drone. Also listen out for 'In Den Nachten auf den Gassen part I', which in less than a minute builds from a spooky moonlit vigil into a passing parade of emperors seated on elephants in full gold regalia.

Letzge Tage - Letzte Nächte = 'Last Days, Last Nights'. Many tracks hint at the ceremonies of unknown religions, such as the 'Haram Dei' chant suggesting a procession of brightly-garbed feathered acolytes climbing up a ziggurat. Conversely, 'Kyrie' is simply a Catholic liturgy with angelic voice set to piano and acoustic guitar, exhibiting the more conventionally devotional side of Vuh. This is a good example of how the layering in of more and more guitar lines sets up a complex pattern of rhythms and intricate sub-melodies - like weaving a tapestry. On 'Oh Wie Nah...', you realize Popol Vuh have found the two perfect chords, and they're not about to change them! There's a lot of guitars on this album, but nobody anywhere is showing off - just adding the right contribution. The lack of ego in Popol Vuh's music is to be cherished. 'When Love is calling you, turn around and follow' sings the voice (in English) on the title track. Indeed, you could do worse than renounce all worldly pleasures and make a pilgrimage to the beautiful land of Popol Vuh.

ED PINSENT from TSP 1

Note: a tangled tale lies behind the soundtrack[s] to *Nosferatu the Vampyre*, which I can't begin to explain. You can however buy a fine Italian CD on HIGH TIDE (TIDE 9113-2) (1992), which contains both *Brüder des Schattens - Söhne des Lichts* and *On The Way To A Little Way*.





Joachim Roedelius

Selfportrait VII: Dem Wind voran

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP RECORDS CTCD-193
CD (1999)

Listening in ignorance so often takes one back to one's formative years, it seems, even if inadvertently. Here I am already finding it impossible to hear innocently, already bringing my own listening experiences to bear and - coming up with an experience that does not seem far removed from the musicians' own listening histories. Perhaps this is the only way for an inveterate listener to be ignorant: to come to each new music not trying to deny one's own accumulated experience, rather being ignorant of the values, histories and intentions of the musicians.

Would that the route back to one's own listening histories was always so revelatory. In the case of Joachim Roedelius, I merely ended up where I knew I'd be. I really didn't want to trust my map; I wanted to be taken on another mystery tour. Soaked in the music of Kluster/Cluster, Harmonia, Eno, Moebius and Roedelius, I hoped that his *Selfportrait VII: Dem Wind voran* ('ahead of the wind') on Captain Trip would go beyond the predictable 'New Age-with-a-few-rough-edges-but-not-so-many-that-you'd-notice' sub-sub-genre he's carved out for himself. But this forty-odd minute set of eight pretty, occasionally wheezy, tunes disappoints. Even our good friends at C&D Services seem to have lost patience with him, writing much of this later output off as 'the rather boring New Age stuff.' They describe it as 'crystalline', which is precisely the word my partner used when she heard it. What she meant, though, was that it sounded just like the music that you'd hear in shops selling crystals. And it does. And there's shedloads of it, by all accounts. Roedelius whistles on the last track, accompanying a horrible, sugary piano ballad. You really don't need to know any more. Given the label's Japanese provenance, it'll probably go for top price in the UK. Avoid, unless you like your heroes making the same record for decades on end.

CHRIS ATTON from TSP 7



Sand

Ultrasonic Seraphim

UK UDOR 2/3 CD 2 x CD (1996)

Original issue of *Golem*: GERMANY DELTA-ACUSTIC LP 25-128-1 (1974)

Yet more treasures from the heritage of German rock. What an amazing collection. This one has been salvaged from oblivion by the efforts of David Tibet, and a real labour of love it's proved to be: transferred from vinyl so as to provide their 1973 LP *Golem* in toto. It used the 'Artificial Head' recording technique which endeavoured to give 'an illusion of perfect surrounding space'. Needless to say this effect did not translate to vinyl with complete success. Sand split after this first record. *Born at Dawn*, also on this CD, was an unreleased 1975 solo project by mainman Johannes Vester. There are also unreleased versions of songs from *Golem*.

To these ears Sand are the closest thing to the great Blue Öyster Cult that ever came out of the Krautrock scene. They are surely the alchemists who 'see with their eyes closed'. 'Old Loggerhead', for example, a tale of a grotesque loner with supernatural undertones, sings of a character twisted enough to be the evil twin of BÖC's 'The Inhuman', say. 'Actually, long ago, he is dead...' chants the dirge-like lyric, delivering the bewildering payoff to a litany of Loggerhead's attributes and achievements. Other song tales give me

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glimpses of castles, princesses, travelling hucksters and strange journeys, hinting at the fairytale aspects of BÖC's unreleased Stalk Forrest LP *St Cecilia*. 'When the May Rain Comes', along with the unrelenting desert imagery that seems to crop up subliminally in each song, connects us to 'Then Came The Last Days of May'. Melodically, many tunes come within an ace of the eastern-tinged 'She's As Beautiful as a Foot'. And Sand's generous use of the A Minor chord as a key setting for so many of Sand's songs would not be unappreciated by Albert Bouchard!

Of course, Sand have many other strings to their bow, including an overdeveloped sense of the power of the diabolical drone. This is particularly noticeable on 'Helicopter', where having found a groove that works they explore it way further and for longer than many lesser men would manage. A choppy rhythm guitar fed thro wah-wah, and a loud, deep organ chord resonate together, generating their own oscillating vibrations, shaking the very bones of those musicians who dare to play them - and shattering the minds of those who dare to listen. There's a driven, ritual quality to these performances that's almost frightening, something so rarely captured on record.

Does anyone remember La Dissidenten? John Peel used to play their records regularly, they too used a similar Eastern scale of notation (very close intervals) which Sand seem to favour, perhaps a certain East European influence creeping in to certain parts of Germany (recall Bowie's 'Neukoln' recorded in Berlin, his hamfisted attempt to make his saxophone emulate Turkish folk melodies). Where La Dissidenten were upbeat and joyous, Sand provide a terrifying downer of an experience, crawling back to sanity from a hideous acid trip, along the lines of Dom's *End of Time*. But Dom seemed to have gained something from the



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trip, where Sand just appear to be resigned to their doom.

Tibet's personal attachment to this record is shared warmly with the purchaser of this CD, in a stirring story where he describes his driven passion to realise this project, coming across like a man possessed - which can only be a good thing. This release can also serve as a barometer of the manifestation of Krautrock in the United Kingdom in the 1970s - when Virgin Megastores had their German Rock sections overflowing with precious booty - and Steve Stapleton's pioneering work in collecting it. Such local history is of interest to a novice like myself. Early issues of this release came with a CD single (UDOR 4 CD) featuring Current 93 playing their version of 'When the May Rain Comes'. The cat illo by Louis Wain (an artist venerated by Tibet) on its cover salutes the Electronic Cat photographed in the Sand inlay, a Siamese beauty feeding off the electrical current from a pulsing old amplifier until her eyes glow. A similar metamorphosis awaits any listener brave enough to venture into the dark universe of Sand!

ED PINSENT from TSP 2

Conrad Schnitzler

The Piano Works Volume 1

GERMANY INDIVIDUELLE

MYTHOLOGIE IM 001 CD (1998)

Conrad was led into using the piano keyboard by default. His electronic works were his primary interest, but he found he was sometimes required to play or compose them (often the same thing for him) using a conventional keyboard. Synthesisers and sequencers - what miserable inventions they turned out to be. They could have been limitless in their scope, but for whatever reason, manufacturers continue to configure these devices so that they can be played like a piano with the familiar black and white keys and twelve notes to an

octave. A daft concession to user-friendliness that curtails creative potential. Conrad also found himself running up against another common pitfall, the very limited pre-programmed piano sound. (This can be perhaps a tape sample as I believe Yamaha have done in their commercial instruments, although there is a way to imitate a piano sound electronically by means of a 'patch'). At first he used this piano sound as one more element in his patchwork quilt of bizarre noises, until he began to experiment with piano-only pieces.

This move coincided with a switch from playing a 64-key synth (set at 'piano' mode) to an 88-key electric piano. Physically, this simply meant more of a challenge regarding where to move your arms, or place your fingers. But no percussive-acoustic Cecil Taylor approach for Conrad, as he continued to eschew the acoustic piano. He remained electronic, but the attributes and dimensions of a piano began to be an important part in the compositional process. A bit like a carpenter who switches from Black and Decker power tools to an old fashioned hand-saw.



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Then the dreaded disk piano comes into the picture. This grotesque digital invention has a vast memory of megabytes which allows its user to record himself playing 'live' at the keyboard, but then perform editing in the computer memory later. Thus you can change tempo, copy phrases and alter them, and transpose entire sequences of notes. (Wouldn't Raymond Scott have loved it?) Or, method two - you can write a composition direct to the hard drive without even playing a note, then continue to reconfigure the work as above. Conrad Schnitzler used both methods for *Piano Works*, and either way the result is always brilliant, a whirling dervish of impossible sounds. Conrad, arriving at the same point as many synclavier players, delights in two aspects of this impossibility: one, that he produces a combination or sequence of notes which no human being could possibly perform in real time; two, that the disk piano effects sounds which cannot be generated on a real piano. That these things can be so intensely troublesome to classically trained pianists is clearly a source of great satisfaction to our hero.

But this intractability also fits in with what I consider to be Conrad's anchorite, isolationist approach - and make no mistake, he's been true to that aesthetic for longer than any modern electronic upstart on Kevin Martin's *Isolationism* showcase. He insists on self-sufficiency to the max - the composer is his own performer, and the machines that he commands do precisely what he wants them to do. The evident mastery of technology is something, I suggest, that he has achieved far more successfully than virtually any Krautrock - associated synthesist you could bring before me on the podium - and this would have to include Edgar Froese and Klaus Schulze, impressive as they may be. I love their music, but it's soft-centred compared to Conrad's; Tangerine Dream always seemed to settle for the first nice sound that emerged ten minutes after they plugged in. It's easy (even more so nowadays) to let the technology make decisions for you; this facileness is something that Conrad would never dream of accepting into his disciplined regime.

Finally, let me say that because the piano sound here is familiar to us (more so than the abstract electric terrors of *Rot* for example), it gives us a point of access to Conrad's distinctive ideas. The construction and composition remains strange and exciting, but this way the process seems that bit more transparent and approachable, showing us more clearly the depths of his unconventionality, and the capabilities of his constant invention.

ED PINSENT from TSP 4





Klaus Schulze

Irrlicht : Quadrophonische Symphonie für Orchester und E-Maschinen

FRANCE FNAC MUSIC 662012 WM 332 CD (1991)

Original issue GERMANY OHR OMM 556022 LP (1972)

An essential 1972 release from Ohr records on budget-priced CD. Schulze's other great shimmering moments in his musical career were as one-third of the great Ash Ra Tempel, and notes regarding this are included in the bio here by Schulze. This gem will feed you solid chunks of caramel-flavoured nougat to eat. The waves of oceanic glass keep on building up - Klaus is determined to bring you to point of orgasm, even if it takes all night! As an intro, he wipes out an entire orchestra using only his buzzing mono synth. At 11.00, the organ kicks in with its relentless grind; floating somewhere around that mind-massaging pulsing noise is another sound, a free-form wailing of the wind like an electric banshee in a forest. At 18.00 the whole thing starts to freak out with added oscillation, setting the piece spinning like a mirror-ball of the gods. Musical events that were previously separated in the pattern now begin to fuse together, as Schulze ups the tempo and raises the stakes. At 21.00, Saturn V rockets are launched into the mix; the last one unhinges everything and sends you whirling off into a new orbit. NB - I have a feeling that some of Schulze's later work is not as compelling. I have 1977's *Mirage* on tape and, if we must make comparisons, it has nothing like the intensity or the dynamics described above, just a lot of pleasant but pointless synth sounds, as aimless as Jean-Michel Jarre really.

ED PINSENT from TSP 1

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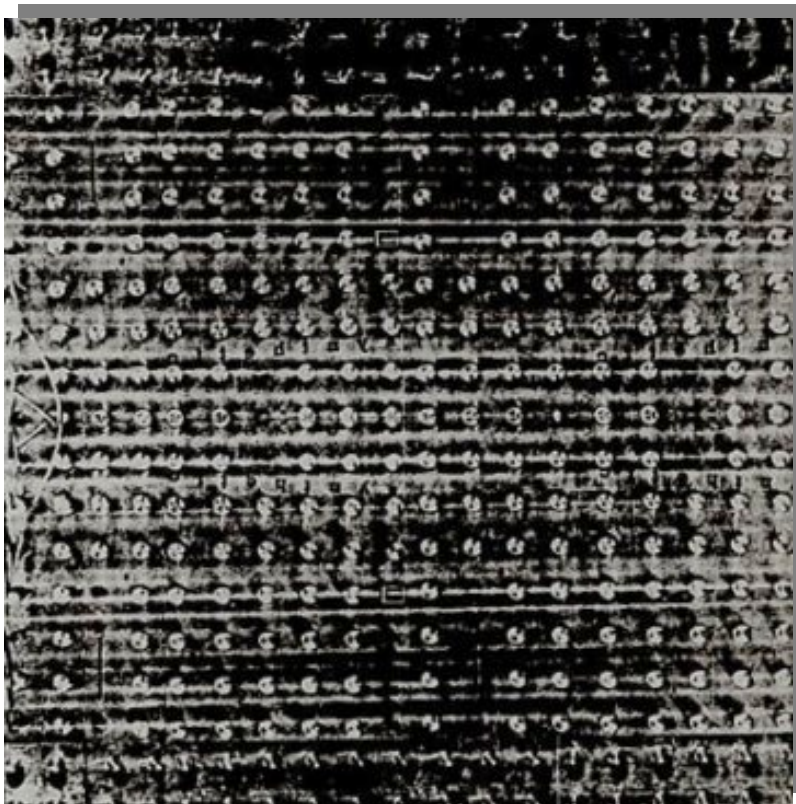
Seesselberg

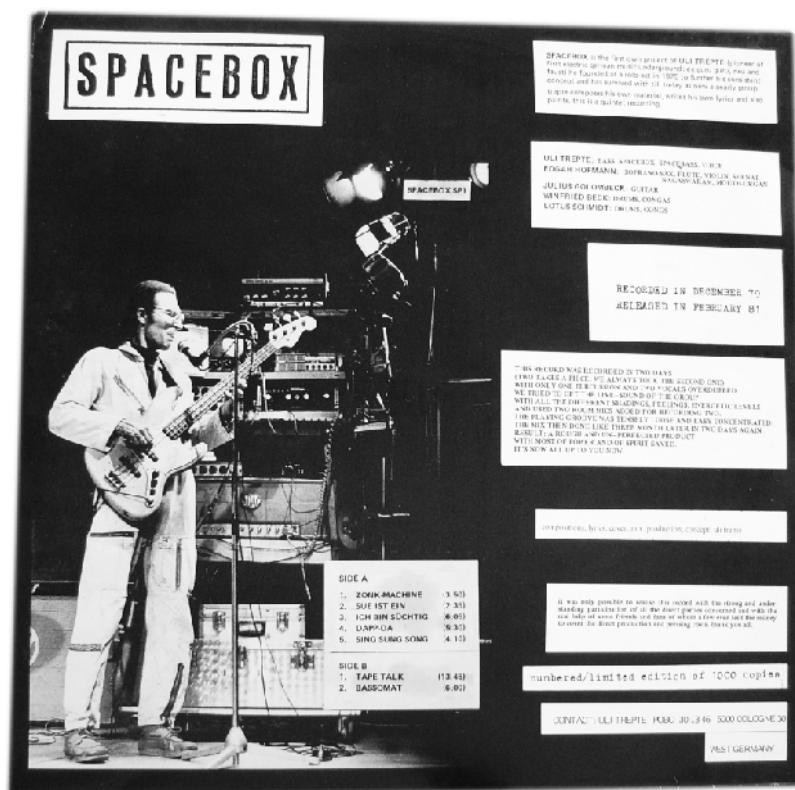
Synthetik 1

GERMANY Private pressing SYN 1 LP (1973)

Dusseldorf was the electronic / industrial wasteland that spawned Kraftwerk, Cluster and Neu!. It was also the stomping ground for Eckhart and Wolf-J. Seesselberg who partly produced this excellent album there (the other location being Hamburg). Rather than go for extended electronic drones, however, the brothers came up with a selection of shorter pieces, adding variety to their record which others failed to imitate. Seesselberg have been compared (somewhat clumsily) to early Kraftwerk and Conrad Schnitzler's Kluster, but to my ears they have more in common with New York's Suicide and The Silver Apples (minus the vocals natch!) than any of their German contemporaries. There is pure avant-pop being played out here and someone should reissue this classic pronto. Only 600 copies were originally pressed up in 1973 and these have long been snapped up by collectors or overpaid disc jocks who feel the need to sample stuff like Seesselberg into their retarded backing tracks for E-guzzling dancing fools. A pox on them!

EDWIN POUNCEY from TSP 1





Spacebox

Spacebox

GERMANY SPACEBOX SP1 LP (1981)

This is Uli Trepte, the bass player of Guru Guru that was. Spacebox shows us what he got up to in 1979, and I suggest faint-hearted listeners should steer well clear. Side 1 blurts out a set of clunky songs driven along by Uli's bass, and enhanced with saxophone and primitive electric treatments. Side 2 is a feast of noisy relentless gibberish, as shrill and painful as having your torso fed through the mincing machine, and it receives full support from our Depression Therapy department who recommend playing it when a good cleaning out of your psycho-cobweb zone is needed. Listeners who have sampled *UFO* by Guru Guru should be gratified to hear the first track, a tribute to the legendary Zonk Machine. I wonder if this device has now transmogrified into the Spacebox, a device which gives the band its name; perhaps this is the Zonk Machine Mach II, now souped up with additional digital technology by now to enable the delivery of even cleaner and mightier Zonks. I have managed to snarf a vinyl copy of Spacebox but something (an expensive retrospective collection, I think) has recently surfaced in the CD mode. Original packaging (ie insertion in a plain corrugated card box) has been to some extent reproduced in the new package.

ED PINSENT from TSP 2

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Space Explosion

Space Explosion

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-067 CD (1997)

Is the world ready for this, I wonder: a virtual Krautrock Survivors SuperGroup? First off, here's the roster of the guilty Cosmic Explorers in full: Jean-Herve Peron and Zappi Diermaier from Faust; Dieter Moebius of Cluster fame; Mani Neumeier, from Guru Guru; Chris Karrer of Amon Duul; Jurgen Engler from Die Krupps. Engler's the joker in the pack, more of a Industrial Metallist than a bona-fide Cosmische traveller. Recorded live in a studio in Cologne, it was mixed and produced by Moebius and Neumeier with help from recording engineer Chris Lietz. It would be nice to know who organised this, and why. Each player here has his own identity, and further developed it through years of activity since the 1970s. Each has in their own way explored unknown regions of weirdness through unaccountably strange records and musical events. Maybe Space Explosion was concocted in the hope that if you combine enough 'weirdies' in one chemical cocktail, a supernova - a Space Explosion - will be the electrifying result.

Well, not really I fear. They have never played as a group before, and so (presumably for everyone's

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convenience and comfort) often resort to bog-standard plodding 4/4 rhythms as structures. As any artist will tell you, if a drawing starts off with too many wrong marks, then no amount of later modification will ever make it right. These lumbering beats used by Space Explosion are like the foundations for the house, and unfortunately turn out to be rotten lumber and crumbly concrete. No matter how many layers of decoration are added afterwards - Jean-Herve's vocal ravings, Engler's 'Talkbox' interpolations, Karrer's violin solos, tons of dubby echo, or a cosmic synthesiser wash - they amount to empty baroque ornamentation on a basically unsound structure. In fact the rhythm track is relied on to underpin the work; whenever the drums drop out the remaining players stumble into a hesitant, turgid stretch of long tones, drones and groans. On the other hand, 'Krakatau' starts off with some refreshing free jazz-ish percussion and continues with exciting dynamics in the same vein.

Still on the positive side, this CD has a big, deep and rich sound - crammed with as much digital steeliness as today's production techniques can muster. There is usually just enough playing going on to keep your attention, and many of the musicians perform valiantly - Chris Karrer's violin parts cut through the cosmic bullshit, Jean Herve's bass works overtime, as does his subliminal acoustic guitar. There are some truly abominable synth noises for which it appears we could blame either Moebius or Engler. Space Explosion is a bit like a silly Quentin Tarantino film bolstered up by great team acting from big name stars. Arguably a reunion like this is far better than say a 1970s UK Progressive supergroup like Asia or UK, or any monstrous combination of creeps from groups like Yes, Genesis or Pink Floyd. But perhaps as UK listeners we became too familiar with our homegrown stars and dismissed them, like sports fans dismiss clapped-out football players. The German stars are one step removed, less familiar to us; but maybe in their German homeland this Space Explosion CD is being greeted with total neglect by jaded fans.

ED PINSENT from TSP 3

Damo Suzuki Band

V.E.R.N.I.S.S.A.G.E.

GERMANY DNW 007 CD (1998)

And speaking of Damo, here's another Can-related item. Remember the elegance, grace and wonder of Damo Suzuki's vocals on 'Future Days', or the impenetrable dementia of 'I'm So Green'? Then stay with those records, and avoid this at all costs. It is incredibly boring, tedious, conventional funk-based rock music in no way distinguished by the tedious mutterings of Damo Suzuki, nor by the drumming of Jaki Liebzeit who inexplicably also turned up to the gig. Suzuki used to intrigue me on Can recordings because of his place in the mix, not up-front like a conventional rock singer, but used as another instrument. You couldn't really make out every bit of the lyrics and his eccentric observations seemed to promise high weirdness. Now he's become like any other singer, you can hear his lyrics and they're just plain banal. I'll concede that if you just like the sound of his voice (which is certainly distinctive), you won't be too disappointed. A resurrection of old Can hits 'Halleluwah' and 'Mushrom' doesn't really help matters. My golden idol is tarnished. The remainder of the pick-up band are horrendous, identikit Euro-stodge musicians - Dominik Von Seinger on guitars and Matthias Keul on keyboards; this was recorded live in Austria in 1990. There are threats of a seven-CD box set of live recordings by the Damo Suzuki band (1986-1990) on its way soon. For die-hard Can fans only, I'd suggest.

ED PINSENT from TSP 4





S.Y.P.H

PST! and S.Y.P.H

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-093 CD (1998)

Two LP records by this band from 1980 and 1981 (their second and fourth releases) respectively on one handy CD reissue package. S.Y.P.H. were effectively a 'New Wave' German combo, at least active in the post-punk period, but amongst their Talking-Heads stridency there are traces of retrograde steps which become clearer as the CD progresses. Yes, it's a boon for all listeners who have played their Can records to death but find themselves screaming 'I Want More'. Here to comfort you all is very nearly a replica Can - even more so than Metabolist (reputed to be the English Can), with circular drumming, marching bass lines, Karoli-like guitar stabs, mumbled vocals. The clincher being that this was produced by Holger Czukay in Can's Inner Space studios. Czukay also plays on the record, contributing that distinctive rubbery bass-playing, equally fluid echoey horn blasts, some mickey-taking harmonica passages; and most tellingly his familiar post-production techniques of editing, sampling and tape-slowng interjections.

You could easily ignore all of this as a retrograde assembly-line product, but you'd be making a grave error. The performances are excellent - particularly successful are the two long tracks from the second LP, 'Nachbar' and 'Little Nemo' where they excel in the good improviser's ultimate aim - that is, leaving enough space for all the other musicians. That this may sometimes consist of nearly stopping dead while the drummer contributes his insistent pulsebeat is just as acceptable (if not more so) than desiring to fill every space in the ether.

In a way Czukay (or his studio) is the star here. He makes each track an exciting sonic episode, packed with atmosphere, tension and dynamics. But he's working with raw material of a very high quality. Sometimes I

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feel S.Y.P.H. lack the eccentricity of our heroes Can, although you might find some of this desirable commodity in Harry Rag's bizarro-styled lyrics, the delicacy of delivery we associate with Damo Suzuki and indeed Malcolm Mooney seems to evade Rag - his belt-em-out approach is more akin to Eddie Tudorpole. Still, the band perform as a watertight and efficient unit, derivative as their overall sound may be. S.Y.P.H. appeared on one track on *On The Way to the Peak of Normal*, again under the auspices of Czukay; perchance a cautious listener will wish to remind himself of their contribution to that glorious LP before splashing out for this nifty item. The more adventurous of you will, I trust, have already bought one.

ED PINSENT from TSP 4




S.Y.P.H. "PST!"		S.Y.P.H. "S.Y.P.H."	
1. EUROTUN / ユーロトン	0:52	11. DIE DEEP / ディープ	1:18
2. EINSAM IN WIEN (LUSTLOS) / ウィーンでの孤独	5:32	12. HAENSCHEN HORROR / 与太郎ホラー	1:11
3. MODERNE ROMANTIK / モダン・ロマンティック	3:01*	13. LAEMMERSCHWANZ / 羊のしっぽ	1:57
4. LAMETTA / ラメッタ	3:50	14. NACHBAR (LONG VERSION)	
5. MODELL / モデル	1:47*	15. SATARASCH / フライド・ビーフ	13:38*
6. ALPHA & VITA / アルファとヴィエータ	1:35	16. LITTLE NEMO / かわいいネモ	2:52
7. NACHBAR / 隣人	3:19*		18:03*
8. REGENTANZ / 鹿の踊り	8:43*		
9. STRESS / ストレス	6:45		
10. DO THE FLEISCHWURST / ソーセージでいこう	4:26*		

HARRY RAG - GUITAR, VOCALS JOJO WOLTER - BASS ULLI PUTSCH - DRUMS
 UWE JAHNKE - GUITAR, VOCALS
 HOLGER CZUKAY - HORN, PRHC., BASS, HARMONICA, on*

All songs composed and written by S.Y.P.H.
 Lyrics by Harry Rag except "LITTLE NEMO" composed and written by Holger Czukay
 "PST!" & "S.Y.P.H." produced by Carmen Knoebel, Holger Czukay, and S.Y.P.H.
 Recorded at Inner Space Studio Mixed and edited by Holger Czukay
 Cover "PST!" made by Imi Knoebel Cover photo made by Nic Tenwiggenhorn Logo photo made by Carmen Knoebel
 Cover photo "S.Y.P.H." made by F. M. Tesch Logo photo made by Carmen Knoebel
 Many thanks to Damo Suzuki, Kaoru Koyanagi and Ken Matsutani of CAPTAIN TRIP RECORDS.
 We would like to dedicate this CD to Carmen Knoebel and Holger Czukay.

CTCD-093

TANGERINE DREAM



Fire Upon the Earth

The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium



Tangerine Dream

Electronic Meditation

UK CASTLE MUSIC ESM CD 345 CD (1996)

Original issue GERMANY OHR OMM 56004 LP (1970)

Tangerine Dream

Alpha Centauri

UK CASTLE MUSIC ESM CD 346 CD (1996)

Original issue GERMANY OHR OMM 56012 LP (1971)

Tangerine Dream

Zeit

UK CASTLE MUSIC ESM CD 347 CD (1996)

Original issue GERMANY OHR OMM 2/56021 2 x LP (1972)

Tangerine Dream

Atem

UK CASTLE MUSIC ESM CD 348 CD (1996)

Original issue GERMANY OHR OMM 556031 LP (1973)

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Edgar Froese and his crew of teutonic knights, armed with Mellotron and Moog, return to lay waste the hinterlands! The essential, early work of T Dream has just surfaced on mid-price CD, complete with original artwork and 'remastered'. I have *Electronic Meditation* on vinyl, and would recommend it to absolutely anyone. Froese is joined by Klaus Schulze and Conrad Schnitzler; they create a terrifying noise, very frightening, very powerful. This record sends you on a personal Space Odyssey, completely living up to the epithet 'cosmic' rock - exploring the surfaces of new planets, not always from the safety of your starship's cabin as you're sent out on frequent EVA jaunts. All realised with keyboards and guitars, electronic experimentation and tape treatments, enriched with much Churchy organ, a highly apt sound for entering the 'Cathedral' of the mind that T Dream have erected here. The sleeve notes say that this record guarantees a 'burning brain' - and it delivers! Perhaps improvised, perhaps composed - it's a work that could only exist in the studio, where hours of experimental playing can be edited down to their most crucial moments and juxtaposed into new life through the splicing process. You learn from this why everyone thinks 'analogue' sound is hot. Tangerine Dream were as important as Kraftwerk in the discovery and use of these then-unknown instruments; astounding how well they have succeeded, and how different their approach to Ralf and Florian's project.

No less an achievement is the double-LP *Zeit*. By time of recording, the great Conrad Schnitzler had left, and it's not quite as urgent a piece; perhaps he brought a certain dark edginess to the work. Here, Froese performs with Chris Franke and Peter Baumann, both playing VCS 3 synths (and other keyboards), with a quartet of cellos to add extra gravitas to this 'Largo in Four Movements'. *Zeit* remains a minimalist masterpiece, almost crystalline in its perfection. Some 'conceptual' unity to this epic, and highly cosmic once again, backed up by EF's collages of planets on the gatefold sleeve, but even if you're suspicious of proggy Roger-Dean styled nonsense, take heart and persevere. The great Florian Fricke contributes to side one, playing his big Moog - the same one he used on Popol Vuh's debut album *Affenstunde*. Fricke was among the first people to buy one of these, and you just know it has to be a twelve-foot monster in a mahogany case, equipped with 200 zillion jackplug sockets of white bakelite. To listen to *Zeit* is to dip your very soul

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into ice cold waters. You are sucked into a whirlpool, washed through the underground caverns of the Moon and left stranded on Planet Jupiter. 'Atmospheric' doesn't even come close to describing the majestic power. I think other listeners have pointed out how time slows down with playing this record, but to my mind it enlarges time - it carves out a chunk from our own miserable continuum and replaces it with a little slice of eternity.

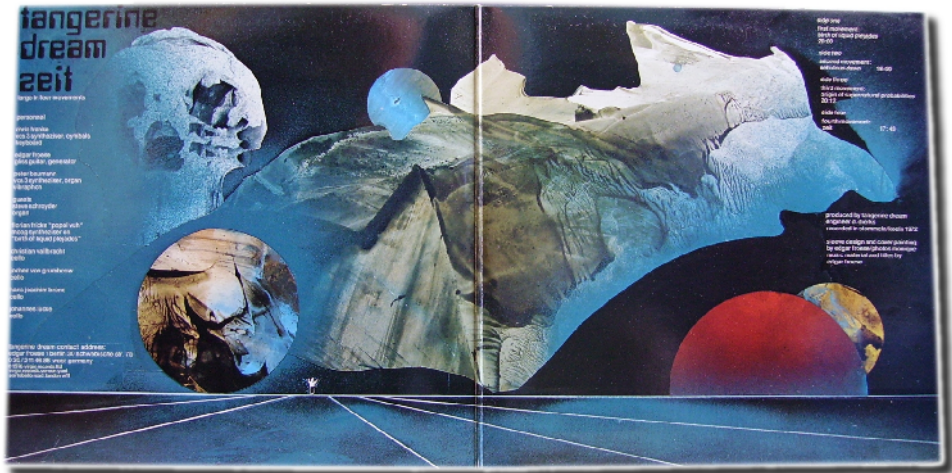
Sleeve iconography. Plug into the rebirth and robot heartbeat motifs of the first album. Early copies were issued with a balloon that replaced the baby's head. A visual link to the robot in *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang. Bill Nelson had dreams about that too, but they seem pale and fluffy next to this steely vision of the future. The inner sleeve is a cutaway picture of a brain overlaid with diagrammatic symbols, a map to the subconscious. The *Zeit* and *Alpha Centauri* sleeves rearrange the orbits and surfaces of the planets themselves, collaging them into impossible configurations. A flattened, pasty-faced baby leers from the cover of *Atem*, perhaps an alien growing in the ground watered by cavernous springs, or a human organism flattened by the gravity of his new environment.

Elsewhere, I indicate the relaxing properties of Popol Vuh: in contrast, these records are profoundly disquieting. Whatever Froese's early *Electronic Meditations* were focussed on, it doesn't reassure you that all is well in the universe.

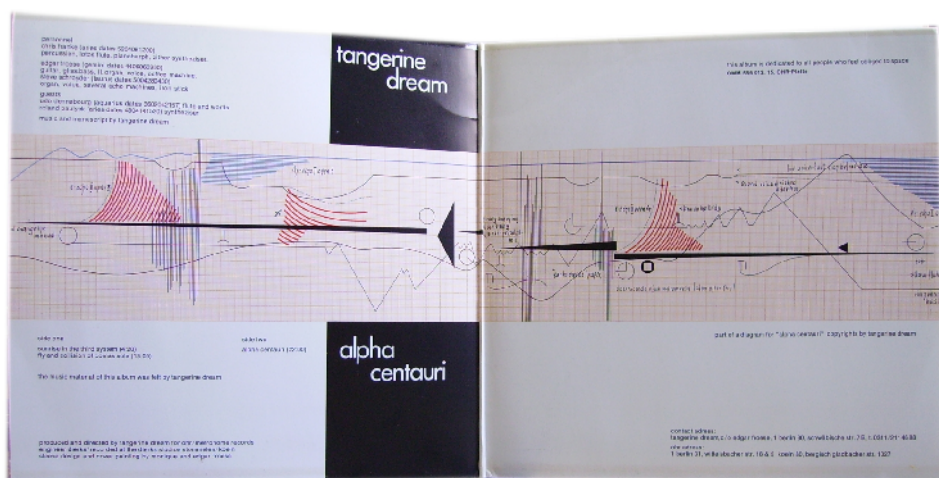
ED PINSENT from TSP 1



Der Klang-Projektor Krautrock Kompendium



The Sound Projector Krautrock Kompendium



Digital Gothic: A critical discography of Tangerine Dream

by Paul Stump

SAF Publishing 1997, 160pp, ISBN 0 946719 18 7

Rather like the career of Tangerine Dream, this book gets off to an interesting start and then begins to sag dreadfully. The early records have much to recommend them: *Electronic Meditation*, which in 1969 somehow managed to unite drummer Klaus Schulze and severe experimentalist Conrad Schnitzler on one record, is astounding, but quite unrepresentative of what would appear later. After *Atem*, I haven't even bothered to investigate. Paul Stump has combed the debris thoroughly enough; you want to like the later Tangerine Dream as much as he does, yet even he feels compelled to apologise for his tastes. As if to compensate, he demonstrates his hipness with frequent references to the modern UK Techno and Ambient scene, and attempts to draw lines that make Tangerine Dream one of its prime influences.

This argument is decidedly ill thought out, and is but one of many blunders in this confused tome. Firstly a potted history of electronic music is attempted, starting with Luigi Rossolo and passing through all the usual suspects - attempting to site TD within this context. Secondly, a stab at configuring the music within a specific German literary tradition - hence some scholarly references to poetry and fantasy tales. Sadly, despite valiant efforts to drag himself back to the path, Stump is unable to follow either concept through completely. I find it hard to buy into any of these glib continuum arguments. After these essays, it's a straight chronological resume of their increasingly dull career; we watch them sinking into the morass of European musical blandness.

The electronic equipment fetish is one thing everyone associates with this band. Anyone who tells a story of seeing them live in the 1970s comes back to the same images - players dwarfed by banks of unfamiliar looking technology, and blinking red lights everywhere. The fact is with monophonic synths you need a lot of them to make any sound at all. I feel almost sorry for Froese and his cohorts Peter Baumann and Christoph Franke, as they were locked into a treadmill of spending their profits on the latest developments in electronic hardware just to keep up, like updating to the latest version of Word for Windows. At least they were able to modify their Mellotrons (a keyboard instrument that plays pre-recorded tapes of flutes or strings), replacing the manufacturers' supplied tapes with an elaborate set drawn from their own recordings and soundbanks. Modern composer Paul Schutze seems to have experienced a near-sexual thrill seeing photographs of Tangerine Dream in the midst of their expensive technology.

Stump's research reaches a plateau fast. Julian Cope's *Krautrock sampler* is drawn upon as a lazy crib, most often to voice an opinion about a particular record; and *The Time Out* film guide is turned to whenever we broach the subject of a duff 1980s sci-fi or action movie which TD scored to bring in the rent (and pay the synthesizer bill). The first instance is understandable, though there's something worrying about finding an eccentric fan's burlings mutating into a standard reference work. The second case smacks of lazy journalism; a film review gives little insight into how a film came into being, or why TD were approached to do the soundtrack.

The pictures are one of the weakest features here. The reproduction quality is poor and the process does the sleeve art no justice at all; this is one thing *Krautrock sampler* got right, insisting on colour plates and strong layouts. Two photos by David Elliott stand out as useful contributions to the process of learning from images, as does the frontispiece photo taken at time of the signing to Virgin records and somehow conveying the

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sense of our heroes as the mad Teutonic hippy knights their early music promised. This however is virtually cancelled out by the next image in the book, showing Froese's son Jerome looking like a reject member of Toto Coelo with his Billy Idol on a bad hair day appearance; and the bodacious babe Linda Spa, saxophonist in more recent TD incarnations, whose stage presence apparently fulfils the unreconstructed Heavy Metal wet-dreams of the male component of the audience.

This book was apparently compiled in some haste under pressure from the publishers, and intended as not much more than a discography with added commentary. This discography appears at the back and is another weak point: probably hard to fault its completeness or accuracy, but there are no catalogue numbers!

ED PINSENT from TSP 3

Tiere Der Nacht

Evergreens

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-069 CD (1997)

Tiere Der Nacht

Hot Stuff

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-073 CD (1997)

Tiere Der Nacht

Wolpertinger

JAPAN CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD-074 CD (1997)

Three CDs worth of eccentric instrumental modern music, certainly not without its charm and powerful capability. Musically more in the improvisation vein than Kosmische capering, *Tiere Der Nacht* are Mani Neumeier who was founding father / drummer in the great Guru Guru, jamming it up with the Italian guitarist and electronic mangle-merchant Luigi Archetti. On *Evergreens*, the mix is bit stodgy and slow-moving. Each droney jam is filled with promise, but sometimes overlong - most of them overstay their welcome despite their moments of clarity. There's humour at least in the choice of instruments, including toy ray-guns and bizarre tinkly electronic doodling. Recorded in 1996.

Hot Stuff is bouncier and quirkier, the immediate frame of reference being Fred Frith / Chris Cutler duos, or related combos - in fact almost any cut here could be by Skeleton Crew. You could just connect this with a undercurrent of playfulness sometimes evinced by underground / experimental musicians - ie don't take us too seriously folks, and throwaway titles like 'Pink Panther for President' might just clinch the matter. There are lively renditions of non-existent folk dances, and rondellos of delicious scat-sung gibberish. Meaty and masculine, fixated on more 4/4 beats than the above but displaying imagination and versatility in the instrumentation, including tapes, sampled radio, trombone - and some fine steel drum / Gamelan work from Mani. Plus guest contributions from visiting vocalists Rupert Volz and Daniel Volkart, trombonist Shirley Hofman and sampler Hubl Greiner. Recorded in Germany in 1991. The best sleeve (crocodiles eating coloured balloons collage) of the three.

Wolpertinger was recorded same studios in 1993 is most immediately accessible of the three, the pair engaging with each other with the same Skeleton Crew choppy rhythms but a far 'rockier' sound from the guitar (like a souped-up David Gilmour) and Mani Neumeier whooping and hollering from behind his drum kit in a truly demented mode. At least one foray into a calmer and more sober ambient drone is undercut with wacky echoed duck-calls (no doubt provided by Mani the Loon). Another track overwrites The Residents' 'Sinister Exaggerator' with Archetti's spacey choppy guitar riffs and an ominous deep-voiced Germanic rap by Mani; this one weirdly prefigures last year's Space Explosion in terms of its architectural space. This LP and *Hot Stuff* originally issued by RecRec in Switzerland.

ED PINSENT from TSP 4



Xhol Caravan

Electrip

OSA/ACD 941066 (ND)

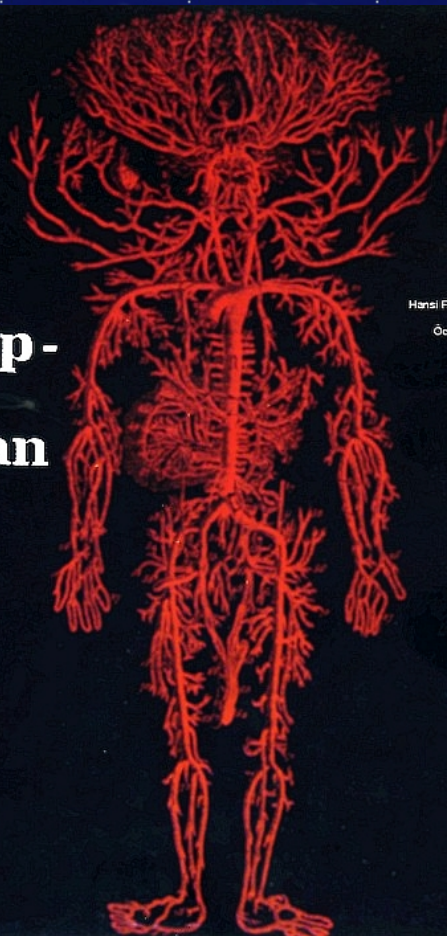
Original issue GERMANY HANSA / ARIOLA 80099 IU LP (1969)

Amplified wind instruments played by the main men Hansi Fischer and Tim Belber spice up the Jazz-Rock fusion atmosphere here, but this fine musical extravagance soon takes off into a world of its own. Hansi you recall also played flute on the very wonderful Embryo's *Rasche* LP. 'Electric Fun Fair' bodes the kind of wacky European Circus Jazz that the Willem Breuker Kollektief does so well to this day, a hybrid that borrows from Frank Zappa as much as Peter Brotzmann; Xhol Caravan have a psychedelic spin on the deal, helped in no small measure by the great electric organ playing of Ocki. The sleeve art leads you to expect something quite different, perhaps some form of dark underground bad-trip space rock, whereas this particular *Electrip* has lots of sunshine and blue skies. A band with, I believe, a fascinating history which I'm not capable of telling you about. No dates on this particular issue, so not even sure if it's 100% legit...

ED PINSENT from TSP 3

Electrip- Xhol Caravan

Electric Fun Fair
Pop Games
All Green
Raise Up High
Walla Mashalla
(Alle Titel Xhol Caravan)



Tim Balbe: Elektro-Tenorsaxophon
Hansl Fischer: Elektro-Flöte, Elektro-Tenorsaxophon,
Elektro-Altaxophon, Wienerndolke
Öckl: Orgel, Elektro-Piano, Plastikgesäße, Tuba
Klaus Briesch: Elektro-Bass
Peter Meisler: Klavazug
Sieg: Drums



Zweistein

Trip-Flip Out-Meditation

GERMANY PHILIPS 6630 002 3 x LP (1970)

This remarkable artefact from the underbelly of the Krautrock movement was released by the famous Philips label in 1970 as a triple album in an exotic metallic gold and silver sleeve with a small circular mirror mounted on the front cover. The music contained on these records was a mad mix of primitive electronic experimentation, fractured folk song and playground chanson, all of which was meant to illustrate the *Trip-Flip Out-Meditation* theme of the album's title. How Philips (who were also responsible for such ground breaking releases as the first two Kraftwerk albums and Cluster's important and influential debut) decided to front the considerable production costs such an extravagant release would demand is mysterious, but according to one source who was present at the time Zweistein were the product of a romantic obsession.

The resident producer at Philips was apparently infatuated with a young fraulein who had an uncontrollable urge to make a record and get it released. Under the cover of darkness when the studio was empty Zweistein were allowed to experiment using whatever equipment they could lay their hands on. Presumably as the project became more adventurous the tape recorders were left rolling, hence three records instead of one. On top of this a single ('I'm a Melody Maker' b/w 'A Very Simple Song') that didn't make it on to the triple was issued in a picture sleeve, but this too failed to attract any attention despite its more Eurovision approach. The producer was fired shortly after *Trip - Flip Out - Meditation* blundered its way onto the record racks. In a matter of weeks Zweistein's epic was deleted and sent to the vinyl junkyard never

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to be heard or seen again. 'Not recommended!' warns Dag Erik Ashjornsen in his German progressive and electronic rock guide *Cosmic Dreams at Play*. A warped masterpiece! say I. You choose who to believe.

EDWIN POUNCEY from TSP 1



STEREO - auch Mono abspielbar



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