



EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN



Formed in 1980, Einstürzende Neubauten (hereinafter known as 'Neubauten' for brevity's sake) first started experimenting with found and stolen pieces of scrap metal and plastic when Andrew Chudy (also known as N U Unruh) was forced to sell his drum kit after their second live performance. The name Neubauten (which means literally 'collapsing new buildings') was in reference to buildings built after the war that foundered due to flimsy construction. Since that time the band have continued to experiment with found items, tools and machinery as a way of seeking out the resonance and rhythm inherent in everyday items and as a way of breaking away from conventional methods and structures for creating music.



Constantly challenging expectations, Neubauten have come a long way from their early days, where they would use the tools and instruments they were playing to destroy the stage they were playing on. Nowadays instead they construct sophisticated motorised and mechanical instruments which create various parts

of the overall sound and rhythm and tend to focus on how better to structure the incidental and accidental sounds of machinery.

Over the years there have been various line-up changes, with only Blixa Bargeld and Andrew Chudy remaining as original members of the band. The initial line-up of Bargeld, Chudy, Gudrun Gut and Beate Bartel did not last long, as Gudrun and Beate quit soon after, going on to join the band Mania D, a month later the two remaining members recorded their debut single "Für Den Untergang" ("For the Decline") using transistor radio amplifiers, film canisters, an old washing machine, Unruh's steel drum kit and the walls of a hollow overpass support as instruments.

Later joined by former Abwärts member FM Einheit (aka Mufti) they went on to record their debut album Kollaps, which is undeniably their most primal and atonal, featuring appropriately named tracks such as "Hören Mit Schmerzen" ("Listen with pain"), "Abstieg & Zerfall" ("Descent & Decay") and the short and surreal "Draußen Ist Feindlich" ("Outside is hostile") the bands intention in making this album was to make the ugliest, most unlistenable record ever; to which end - considering the cult status it was to later obtain - it did not succeed.

Blixa met Nick Cave while on tour supporting the Birthday Party, and would later end up playing guitar for him in Nick

Cave and the Bad Seeds (one of the longest standing members of the Bad Seeds, Blixa has recently left to focus on Neubauten and other creative projects).

The band line up grew further in 1982 with the addition of Mark Chung and Alexander Hacke, and recorded Durstiges Tier/Thirsty Animal in collaboration with Rowland S. Howard and Lydia Lunch. Nick Cave, although he did not take part, was present for the recording and described the process for the benefit of Berlin city Tip: "The studio was cold and fusty and full of amps, trash and steel. And in the middle of the room a microphone pointed to a small, mangy dog rooting around in a steaming pile of pig guts. Blixa Bargeld had a contact mic taped to his chest, while the musclebound Mufti beat on this natural sounding board with his fists."

Their next album Zeichnungen des Patienten O. T. (Drawings of patient O.T.), released in 1983, introduces an element of control into the chaotic soundscapes the rhythms are more defined and the songs more structured - there are still excursions into chaos but they are tempered. Named after a psychiatric patient, who appears in the schizophrenic report of one Dr. Leo Navratil. Oswald Tschirtner specialised in drawing figures, such as cops and orchestral conductors, so that they looked exactly alike. But, as Bargeld told Spex magazine in 1983: "The best thing is, this has got nothing to do with the album."

Zeichnungen des Patienten O. T. was the first of their albums released on Some Bizarre, and like many of the artists on this label (which also featured Coil, who have subsequently re-released a couple of their albums with the words "Stevø pay us what you owe us" emblazoned on the cover) they did not receive any money from the sale of their albums.



The release of Zeichnungen des Patienten O. T. was followed by some extensive touring where they obtained some notoriety for their performances using jackhammers, drills, chainsaws and whatever scrap metals they could find. Their performances during this period were still largely improvised around loose versions of recorded pieces. They even toured Japan, where a carefully managed TV campaign preceding their arrival made them the most unlikely teen idols.



Three years after Zeichnungen des Patienten O. T., Halber

Mensch (Half Man) was released (also on Some Bizarre) - combining more traditional instrumentation with their harsh and frenetic percussive techniques, this album reins in the chaos of the previous albums a little more, all the while retaining the primal energy for which they are reknowned.

The following year Fünf Auf Der Nach Oben Offenen Richterscala (Five On The Open Richter Scale) was released, like a tightly wound spring the tracks grind and creak with tension and menace, broken up by frantic drumming. This album also features a surprisingly refreshing rendition of Tim Rose's "Morning Dew", which seems to act as an interlude of sorts amongst the snarling menace that the rest of the album exudes.



The last of the Some Bizarre releases, their next album Haus der Lüge is on the whole a lot more composed than previous efforts, and heralds the beginning of a quieter, more introspective phase of Einstürzende Neubauten's musical career, although at the outset (in the first track 'Prolog') Blixa explains how it would have been so easy for them to have sold out to fame and fortune if they had wanted to, punctuated by harsh and confrontational blasts of noise in order to make his point. The album is still as experimental as ever, demonstrating further the band's progression toward taming and controlling the very beast they had created.

The destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989 enabled Neubauten to perform in East Berlin, and also gave them the opportunity to collaborate with East German playwright Heiner Müller on Die Hamletmaschine, where Blixa played Hamlet opposite former bandmate Gudrun Gut's Ophelia. The play is a contemporary re-interpretation based on the themes of the original Hamlet, the soundtrack is a moody and atmospheric backing to the spoken parts.

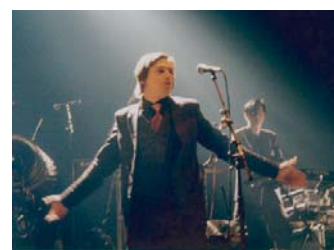
In 1993 Neubauten produced the album Tabula Rasa (derived from Latin, meaning 'Clean Slate'), an album strongly influenced by the social and political upheaval that resulted from the Berlin Wall's destruction and also in response to the Gulf War. The 15 minute track 'Headcleaner' that closes the album is a medley of pieces taken from the street performance Das Auge des Taifun ("The Eye of the Typhoon") which was performed on a moving stage (designed by Erich Wonda) around the imperial Ringstrasse in Vienna. Furthering their fascination with mechanised music and motorised instruments, Blixa has said of Tabula Rasa "... we were very

interested in machines, especially mechanical motors. For me, this was something that we had tried earlier and there was always something there that was interesting. What I learned from this is that motors are very unpredictable drummers usually."

After Tabula Rasa was released Marc Chung and FM Einheit left the band, the former to concentrate on the business aspect of his music publishing company 'Freibank' and the latter to pursue his own creative projects and theatrical compositions. The remaining trio went on to produce Ende Neu ("Ending New"), further reinventing themselves the band sought to entice music from machines, mechanical contraptions and everyday items (such as the sound of pencil on paper, as used in "Die Explosion im Festspeilhaus" ("The Explosion in the Festival Hall")), juxtaposed against the use of traditional string arrangements, as on "Ende Neu", "The Garden" and "Stella Maris" which also features a duet with singer and actress Meret Becker. The track Die Explosion im Festspeilhaus also features former Bad Seed Roland Wolf on keyboards, who was all set to join Neubauten as a full time member, however unfortunately he was killed in a car accident before this came about.

Joined now by Jochen Arbeit and Rudi Moser, the next album "Silence is Sexy" (released 20 years after the band's inception) demonstrates the restraint they were applying to the sounds they were creating, and their obvious counterpoint; the silence in between. Certainly a departure from their earlier work, Silence is Sexy demonstrates a maturing, even playful approach to composition.

After the release of Silence is Sexy, the band elected to follow a different path for the release of their next album, creating a website (www.neubauten.org) whereby they would interact with fans of the band and share (via live streaming video) the process of each songs development with those willing to pay a supporters fee. They have since released one supporters album via this method, however due to unanticipated distribution problems had to enlist the help of their former



label (Mute) in exchange for which they will be releasing a new album for general release (due for release on the 9th Feb 2004 on and titled "Perpetuum Mobile"), featuring some material common with the supporters album as well as some new material. Teething troubles aside, the band so enjoyed the collaborative process that they have chosen to do it again, and have commenced phase II of the supporters' project (which is now accepting contributions), which will culminate in the release of a supporters-only audio CD and also a DVD.

Also released throughout the course of their career, the "Strategies Against Architecture" series of compilations document the development of the band through their various stages, from their raucous beginnings to their current, more circumspect incarnation. The compilations offer a fine introduction to the band for anyone curious but not sure where to start.

Official website: <http://www.neubauten.org/>