

“Macht das Ohr auf”

Krautrock and the West German Counterculture

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH HONORS

DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

April 17, 2012

Advised by Professor Vanessa Agnew

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I. Introduction

Electric Junk: Krautrock's Identity Crisis

If there is any musical subculture to which this modern age of online music consumption has been particularly kind, it is certainly the obscure, groundbreaking, and oft misunderstood German pop music phenomenon known as “krautrock”. That krautrock’s appeal to new generations of musicians and fans both in Germany and abroad continues to grow with each passing year is a testament to the implicitly iconoclastic nature of the style; krautrock still sounds odd, eccentric, and even confrontational approximately twenty-five years after the movement is generally considered to have ended.¹ In fact, it is difficult nowadays to even page through a recent issue of major periodicals like *Rolling Stone* or *Spin* without chancing upon some kind of passing reference to the genre. The very term has become something of a fashionable accessory for new indie bands, while the heralds of the krautrock sound – Can, Kraftwerk, Neu!, and Faust, among others – are now considered by many music journalists and critics to belong to classic rock’s highly subjective and ill-defined canon. Henning Dedekind describes krautrock’s reception by the present day music press thus:

Seit den Neunzigern berufen sich in Großbritannien mehr und mehr klassisch besetzte Rockgruppen auf die Errungenschaften deutscher Soundtünftler. Auch Musikzeitschriften wie *The Face*, *Q Magazine*, oder *Mojo* widmen dem fast vergessenen deutschen Rockphänomen seitenweise Aufmerksamkeit.²

¹ “By the late 1970s, Krautrock was pretty much dead, but its potent afterlife was only just about to begin.” Stubbs, David. “Introduction.” in Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos. *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*. London: Black Dog, 2009. Print. 5.

² Dedekind, Henning. *Krautrock: Underground, Lsd Und Kosmische Kuriere*. Höfen: Hannibal, 2008. Print. 11.

None of this would seem so peculiar were it not for the fact that krautrock, by its very nature, distanced itself from the conventions of Anglo-American rock and roll, and thereby rejected associations with the Anglo-American brands of “classic” rock music that *Rolling Stone* and its ilk have always so tirelessly lauded and promoted – an approach to music criticism Jody Rosen refers to as “unrepentant rockist fogeyism.”³ If krautrock is genuinely to be considered a vital component in the development of pop/rock music as well as an underground phenomenon, a number of questions must first be considered. Firstly, what exactly is krautrock and what characterizes it?

As the moniker somewhat disparagingly suggests, krautrock’s sonic identity is inextricably bound to its origin. It is thus unavoidable that, whether appropriate or not, krautrock has always been viewed as something which typifies and reflects certain superficial characteristics of German culture. The term krautrock ostensibly refers to a particular style of psychedelic music originating in the Federal Republic of Germany, though the term can and has been applied to virtually every semi-avant-garde act to have come out of Germany (both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic) between the years 1966 and 1985.⁴ Interestingly, this music can be seen to embody a set of stereotypes that comprise German avant-garde culture in general: a peculiar brand of stoic mysticism, a predilection for mechanically and industrially-oriented art, and a sense of dark yet absurd humor deriving directly from Dada. However, although krautrock apparently exemplifies Teutonic art, only rarely has it been

³ Rosen, Jody. "The Perils of Poptimism." *Slate*. 09 May 2006: n. page. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/music_box/2006/05/the_perils_of_poptimism.html>.

⁴ See Steve and Alan Freeman’s *The Crack in the Cosmic Egg* or Rudolf Vogel’s website <http://www.krautrock-musikzirkus.de/> for examples of the disparities in defining krautrock. Both sources purport to be comprehensive encyclopedic works on the krautrock scene, and yet both sources include a great number of artists whose German nationality is the only factor linking them to krautrock as a distinct style of music. The Freemans’ book in particular is useful in that the authors denote artists sometimes classified as krautrock musicians, whose connections to krautrock are, in reality, tenuous at best.

described as the product of a few identifiable German socio-historic trends. Rather, the popular view of krautrock is that of a mutation; a bizarre yet ahead of its time perversion of American and British rock and roll music. It is certainly true that krautrock differs from many more popular forms of “experimental” music, such as the lyrically provocative artists of the American and English psychedelic scenes. Yet if this is a result of any one factor, it is the result of a collective and conscious decision to diverge on the part of the Federal Republic’s entire avant-garde musical culture. Ultimately, one must come to understand krautrock as the product of a specific societal and historical background, one that manifested itself in a variety of astonishing ways. Even more importantly, upon examining krautrock’s place in German culture of the 60’s and 70’s, it becomes clear that the genre was an artistic reaction to specific trends in West German society, effectively making krautrock the first uniquely German post-fascist musical movement, and one which would in many ways determine the course German music would take in the coming decades. Yet before this examination can take place, the question of what constitutes krautrock must first be addressed.

For many listeners and fans, the krautrock sound is characterized by a reliance on “electronic” instruments and recording techniques, as well as the use of monotony, minimalism, and atonality within the framework of rock music. Philip Blache of the website www.progarchives.com asserts that krautrock

was intended to go beyond the eccentricities developed by the wild psychedelic rock universe of the US, by giving a special emphasis to electronic treatments, sound manipulation and minimal hypnotic motifs (continuing the style of

‘musique concrete’[sic] and minimalist repetitive music but within a more accessible environment).⁵

The idea of “monotonous” rock music seems rather alien, as rock music has always been characterized by its dynamic nature – it’s called rock and roll for a reason. However, krautrock’s typical lack of what makes rock music “rock” is essential in explaining both the roots of the genre as well as its ultimate legacy. Yet these two criteria only begin to describe what is encompassed by the krautrock genre. In fact, it is rare for any two krautrock cognoscenti to agree on what makes German rock music “krautrock.” For instance, few krautrock heads would deign to consider German rock star Udo Lindenberg a krautrock musician, though his early solo work certainly bears similarities to krautrock music, and his pre-fame work as a drummer with groups such as Motherhood, Free Orbit, and Emergency⁶ is nearly always classified as krautrock. Thus one finds a major discrepancy in the definition of the genre; the soubriquet apparently describes a certain type of West German rock music, though for many bloggers and record collectors and vendors practically all German rock music recorded between 1966 and 1985 can be considered krautrock. Furthermore, there are dozens of artists commonly associated with the genre who recorded well outside of the rock idiom, including canonical greats such as Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream. For these reasons, among others, it is perhaps most useful to consider Krautrock to be a genre unto itself, one which exists somewhat separate of rock, pop, electronic, jazz, or folk music, although the genre draws on all of these musical idioms. Ultimately, the term krautrock is useful in describing any and all German music recorded between the years mentioned above (during which the counterculture to which krautrock was implicitly linked had

⁵ Blache, Philippe. "Krautrock, A Progressive Rock Sub-genre." *ProgArchives*. N.p., December 2007. Web. 29 Feb 2012. <<http://www.progarchives.com/subgenre.asp?style=17>>.

⁶ Freeman, Steven, and Alan Freeman. "Motherhood," "Free Orbit", "Emergency." *The Crack in the Cosmic Egg*. 1st ed. Leicester: Audion, 1996. Web. 29 Feb 2012. <<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/ultimathule/krautrockers.html>>

a major impact on West German society) that displays a prominent avant-garde or experimental influence, yet is firmly anchored in one (or more) of several non-classical idioms. Relying upon this definition leads one to recognize krautrock as an impressively multifaceted genre, while excluding German music from the same era that is merely rock played by “krauts.”

And yet the question remains: what does krautrock sound like? Essentially, it is “psychedelic” music; music which aims to alter one’s state of consciousness, and which often in turn derives from these altered states, particularly those brought on by the use of psychoactive drugs. The best known, and in many cases most highly regarded exponents of psychedelic music are the so-called legends of classic rock: The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, and scores of others.⁷ Yet the majority of krautrock musicians have little in common with these luminaries; in some ways, the krautrock generation went far beyond the scope of what is now considered “classic rock,” taking psychedelic music to its logical extremes by sacrificing blues-based song structures and pop sensibilities for more experimental rhythms and patterns that run the gamut from tribal to ambient. The most well-known krautrock bands and musicians also cultivated a sort of mystic musical philosophy, emphasizing experimental concepts not often found in popular recorded music. Much of krautrock is highly conceptual and even philosophical in nature. Perhaps most important in distinguishing krautrock and other forms of psychedelic-oriented rock music, however, are the discrepancies found in the genres’ foundations.

Psychedelic rock developed primarily in the American West Coast, particularly in the cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles, and the United Kingdom, particularly in London.⁸ The style essentially came into being through the efforts of already established artists: The Beatles

⁷ DeRogatis, Jim. *Turn on Your Mind: Four Decades of Great Psychedelic Rock*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2003. Print. XI-XVII.

⁸ Unterberger, Richie. "Psychedelic Rock." *AllMusic*. AMG, n. d. Web. 7 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.allmusic.com/explore/essay/psychedelic-rock-t576>>.

gradually transformed from the chief purveyors of the blues and skiffle-inspired “Merseybeat” sound to the foremost pioneers in psychedelic experimentation,⁹ leading Jim DeRogatis to label them the “Acid Apostles of the New Age,”¹⁰ while even The Beach Boys began to increasingly infuse their pop style with aspects of the nascent psychedelic movement.¹¹ It is important to note that, while these artists certainly drew on influences not previously accepted as part of pop music’s integral fabric (Indian ragas, beat poetry, and elaborate studio experimentation, for instance), the structure of their music remained firmly anchored in the traditions of American roots music. Seldom did important Anglo-American psychedelic artists completely break free of the rhythms of blues, country, and r&b, and even the most iconoclastic psychedelic artists to come out of the United States and the United Kingdom were heavily indebted to the influence of these styles.

In contrast, krautrock was relatively free of what could be seen as the tyrannical influence of Anglo-American popular music in the West German pop market. The krautrock generation, most of whom were born under National Socialism, could not relate to blues or country music, as there had never existed a German musical tradition which fully embraced these styles. Thus, while the American and English psychedelic bands established the basic guidelines for creating “trippy” rock music, the krautrockers developed their own variation on the style which remained true to the musicians’ own musical *Bildung*. Can’s Irmin Schmidt explains the krautrock

⁹ Michael Brocken describes skiffle as a permutation of black American blues which found a large audience in the UK during the 1950’s thanks to the efforts of artists such as Lonnie Donegan and Ken Colyer. Brocken, Michael. *The British Folk Revival, 1944-2002*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2003. Print. 69-73.

¹⁰ DeRogatis, 40.

¹¹ DeRogatis, 32-40

impulse thus: “Wir hatten das Bedürfnis, nicht so zu tun, als wären wir in Nashville, Memphis, Brooklyn oder Manchester geboren, sondern in Berlin, München oder Straubing.”¹²

This, above all other characteristics, is what places krautrock outside of the ordinary scope of popular music, even its most adventurous and groundbreaking varieties. And yet krautrock’s freedom from pop music’s ever-increasing Americanization was inextricably bound to an approach to making music that explicitly rejected the tenets of Anglo-American rock and roll culture. The English and American rock musicians of the late 60’s and 70’s were tasked with remaining “authentic” by the musical community at large, and an artist’s loss of authenticity usually led to an almost complete lack of critical respect.¹³ Authenticity, for all its assumed importance, was more or less arbitrarily assigned – The Rolling Stones, for example, were authentic, while The Monkees certainly were not, although both groups operated within the same basic musical parameters, parameters laid out decades earlier by black blues musicians. Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor describe popular music’s relationship with so-called authenticity as “an absolute, a goal that can never be attained, a quest. [...] Using traditional instruments and singing old songs are techniques one can use in the service of cultural authenticity.”¹⁴ According to these parameters, krautrock was anything but authentic. In fact, with their embracing of virtually any kind of instrumentation, from thoroughly modern electronic equipment to ancient

¹² Dähnhardt, Frieder. "The Return of Krautrock." *Blueprint-Fanzine*. n.d. n. page. Web. 29 Mar. 2012.

¹³ Roy Shuker elaborates on the question of what it is that makes an artist “authentic” and its significance in the context of music relevant to the 60’s counterculture: “The use of authenticity as a central evaluative criterion is best seen in the discussions of the relative nature and merits of particular performers and genres within popular music culture; e.g. the vernacular community-based styles of folk, the blues, and roots music are frequently perceived as more authentic than their commercialized forms. In a similar fashion, commerce and artistic integrity are frequently utilized to demarcate rock from pop music. This romantic view has its origins in the 1960s, when American critics – Landau, Marsh, and Christgau – elaborated a view of rock music as correlated with authenticity, creativity, and a particular political moment: the sixties protest movement and the counter-culture.”

Shuker, Roy. *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print. 17.

¹⁴ Barker, Hugh, and Yuval Taylor. *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007. Print. x.

traditional instruments, many krautrockers consciously strove to make music that did not adhere to any pre-established musical guidelines.

The idea of authenticity held little importance for krautrockers, who attempted instead to create a form of synthetic, conceptual, and sometimes utopian (or dystopian, depending on the artist) rock music. The reason for the krautrock's disregard for concepts of authenticity likely lies in the backgrounds and experiences of the musicians who comprised the German rock scene. Most krautrock musicians came into the style with little knowledge or experience of rock music. They came instead from jazz, classical, and avant-garde disciplines, eager to apply the principles of these idioms to the new sounds of rock and roll. Thus krautrock was, in a sense, a test for rock music to undergo: could studied academic and intellectual principles, such as those found in classical music, be applied to a style of music that was by its very nature impulsive, instinctive, and mercurial?

The driving impetus behind the krautrock scene as a whole thus places it in an interesting position in the hierarchy of German music culture. The artists most often connected with the genre were rarely motivated to make concessions to rock music's commercial idiom. Even those krautrockers who went on to achieve great commercial success, particularly Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream, produced work early in their careers that was as rampantly experimental and groundbreaking as anything being produced by the scions of "serious" music; indeed, a good deal of krautrock bears more than a passing resemblance to the music of composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis, György Ligeti, or any number of musicians whose perversions of accepted classical modes and experiments with unconventional harmonies, percussive rhythms, and electronic effects (all of which would soon come to characterize krautrock) established them as members of the vanguard of high art.

What is perhaps most interesting about what can only be described as a general misappraisal of the krautrock generation's aims is that the krautrock sound was seen by international music critics as something of a joke. David Stubbs remarks that

the Anglo-American rock establishment... found the very fact that these groups were German inherently amusing and could no more imagine that the citizens of this vanquished nation, with their unmusical, *umlaut*-ridden language and pidgin take on rock mores were capable of making any significant contribution to popular music.¹⁵

Krautrock musician Harald Grosskopf also mentions that for English journalists, "it wasn't English music, so it was somehow imperfect."¹⁶ The innovative approach to composition which characterized krautrock was, particularly in the genre's infancy, often misinterpreted as the collective result of a group of Germans wholly unversed in the conventions of rock music trying, and failing, to hop onboard the psychedelic bandwagon. That the krautrockers explicitly rejected the values of Anglo-American rock music in favor of a more experimental and often distinctly German aesthetic was apparently lost on journalists.

International music consumers' difficulty in comprehending krautrock is reflected in the term itself, which must certainly rank as one of rock music's more problematic musical descriptors. The identity of the first person to coin the phrase "krautrock" is unknown, although it apparently came into use in the British music press in the late 60's.¹⁷ The term originally

¹⁵ Stubbs, 4

¹⁶ Grosskopf, Harald. "Blondes & AZ Interview Harald Grosskopf." *Altered Zones*. Interview by Steinman, Zach and Sam Haar. Web. <<http://alteredzones.com/posts/1393/blondes-az-interview-harald-grosskopf/>>.

¹⁷ "The moniker 'Krautrock' was slapped on the experimental rock movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s by the British music press, and ironically retained by its practitioners." Stubbs, 4

carried a pejorative connotation, reflecting the cultural tension between the United Kingdom and Germany which had carried over following World War II, as well as associating the heavily electronic-oriented sound of the genre with the prevailing stereotype of Germany as a land of staid adherence to order, a people and culture inherently incapable of understanding or successfully imitating the rebellious nature of rock and roll. The fact that many krautrock artists were creating music that was considerably more tightly bound to various rebellious and revolutionary movements than British rock music was unimportant. Cultural stereotypes held sway, and a skeptical and disdainful attitude characterized many early writings on krautrock.

The British music press's ill will towards krautrock was not, however, the main reason that the term is so difficult to define. After all, the British public would soon become the foreign market most susceptible to krautrock's commercial influence, and from the mid-70's onward, the term acquired a much more positive connotation. However, British journalists' sour attitude towards German pop culture in general led to the branding of virtually all German rock music as krautrock. Guitar-driven heavy metal groups? Krautrock. Purely electronic synthesizer ensembles? Krautrock. Medieval-flavored folk orchestras? Krautrock. Whether the music was determinedly avant-garde and confrontational or staunchly commercially-oriented was unimportant. Even as British music magazines were patenting increasingly specific nomenclature to describe rock music's diversification, practically anything coming out of Germany that wasn't *Schlager* was slapped with the krautrock tag.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Schlager* was one of only a few forms of *Volksmusik* which made the transition from a traditional folk music form to a modern pop style.

“At the end of the 20th century folklike music was heavily mediated. German hit songs, or *Schlager*, utilized the electrified instrumentarium of rock music, but retained many of the sonic markers of folk music, thereby making the *Schlager* unmistakably modern and popular but nostalgically traditional and German. The producers of folklike music used the mass media to fabricate the authenticity of a German folk culture that had disappeared.”

This is perhaps one of several reasons that the krautrock movement has only very rarely received the intellectual attention it deserves. While many krautrock artists retain cult followings to this day (some boasting audiences much, much larger than those of the 70's), the genre itself is rarely afforded the same theoretical and academic attention as the krautrockers' contemporaries, many of whom operated within similar artistic idioms. The problem is thus: for every incendiary and truly groundbreaking band, there is a banal, amateurish, and forgettable act as well. Regardless of the artistic merits of the group, or whether or not the band truly even displayed any marked experimental leanings, the tendency for most foreign music journalists was simply to apply the krautrock tag and leave it at that. One need only examine a case like that of the Scorpions, the hard rock band who, nearing the end of the krautrock era, had a massive international hit with the unrepentantly dopey "Rock You like a Hurricane".¹⁹ The Scorpions spent the decade prior being labeled as a krautrock group, alongside artists whose radical and groundbreaking ideas changed the way music would be made in years to come.

In the interest of presenting a study of krautrock as a unique anomaly in pop music, I have chosen to limit my definition of what constitutes krautrock. For me, the term krautrock means any German music produced during the late 60's through the early 80's which displays a prominent experimental or avant-garde influence, yet remains anchored in rock and roll's aesthetic framework. Therefore, artists such as the Scorpions, whose music is virtually indistinguishable from legions of Anglo-American rock artists, do not figure into this discussion of krautrock as a social and cultural phenomenon. On the other hand, German artists of the time whose recordings are not rock per se, but still display the countercultural sensibilities and

Bohlman, Philip: 'Germany: Modern and Postmodern Contexts', Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 12. Apr. 2012) <http://www.grovemusic.com>

¹⁹ Weber, Barry. "Scorpions". Bogdanov, Vladimir, Chris Woodstra, and Stephen T. Erlewine. *All Music Guide: The Definitive Guide to Popular Music*. San Francisco: Backbeat Books/All Media Guide, 2001. Print. 354.

experimental tendencies typical of krautrock will be categorized as such. For example, Paul and Limpe Fuchs' Anima Sound ensemble was best known for its minimalist approach to avant-garde music, and for the inclusion of classical pianist Friedrich Gulda. The sonic identity represented by Anima Sound is a far cry from the psychedelic or progressive rock of the time, and yet the group occupied the same sphere in the West German public consciousness as did many krautrock artists, and the band's recordings were released on record labels which focused on krautrock, such as Pilz.²⁰ Thus, I have chosen to include Anima Sound and similar artists existing somewhat outside of rock music in my definition of krautrock.

But what exactly caused krautrock to develop the way it did, with such deep-seated avant-garde leanings and anarchic tendencies? After all, if krautrock shared anything with the psychedelic movements occurring in the United States and the United Kingdom, it was its propensity for rebelliousness. Indeed, krautrock was very much in step with international hippie culture, and though krautrock's revolutionary nature was always more implied than explicit – the genre generally favored sonic experimentalism over lyrical content as a form of protest – it could not have existed without the countercultural framework in which it developed. Furthermore, krautrock's avowedly experimental style owed much to specific developments in West German society which took place leading up to and during the genre's golden era. It is this area of krautrock's history most often glossed over in writings on the genre, as those who write most about krautrock (music journalists from the United States and the United Kingdom) have little knowledge of the complex and tumultuous cultural climate that characterized the Federal Republic during the 60's and 70's. Yet in order to write a valuable analysis of krautrock's

²⁰ Vogel, Rudolf. "Anima." *Krautrock-Musikzirkus*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Feb 2012. <http://www.krautrock-musikzirkus.de/de,Anima-Peterskirchen_Anima_529,N.html >.

significance within the framework of international music history, it is necessary to include a discussion of the socio-cultural factors that birthed it.

In contrast to the heady, pop culture-oriented vibes of the American counterculture of the 1960's, youthful unrest in Germany during this era manifested itself as a series of highly intellectualized movements which often drew on the tenets of Marxism and international socialism, though the implementation of new "alternative" lifestyle practices was also integral to the German countercultural landscape. Sabine Von Dirke describes the interconnectedness of politics and lifestyle for members of the counterculture thus:

[The counterculture] combined a revolution of lifestyles with new cultural and aesthetic paradigms as well as with political demands. The 1960s protesters refused to accept the political marginalization of the youth. Instead, they demanded a political mandate for themselves and challenged mainstream society on all grounds in the most radical manner. In other words, this generation did not just want to 'drop out of circulation' temporarily like the existentialist youth or the Halbstarken did, but demanded change, which it tried to implement by developing its own counterculture. As a result, mainstream culture viewed even explicitly nonpolitical aspects of this middle-class counterculture – for example, a hippie lifestyle – as political and potentially dangerous for the hegemony.²¹

Von Dirke's description of apolitical forms of rebellion as implicitly countercultural is apt in describing krautrock's role in Germany's social upheaval. Few krautrock artists made their political tendencies known lyrically, yet the radical nature of the music itself was enough to

²¹ Von Dirke, Sabine. *All Power to the Imagination!: The West German Counterculture from the Student Movement to the Greens*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. Print. 29.

align the genre with any number of countercultural trends. It is also interesting to note that, while a good many krautrock musicians declared their socialist leanings on a personal level, krautrock was almost exclusively a West German phenomenon. The GDR produced very few artists who can feasibly be included under the krautrock banner, and even those artists are only marginally relevant. It is thus somewhat ironic that while many krautrockers pushed for reforms in the name of socialism and associated with the strongly leftist APO (*Außerparlamentarische Opposition*), it is almost certain that Amiga, the only record label in the GDR to specialize in rock and pop music, would have had very little interest in marketing recordings by these musicians. GDR record promoters instead favored easily digestible recordings by artists such as Klaus Renft Combo, Puhdys, and Stern Combo Meißen, all of whom reduced popular progressive rock to a pale caricature of the much more experimental acts of the capitalist world.²²

Yet as far as the West German counterculture is concerned, it could be said that the krautrockers provided the soundtrack. In the midst of the social turmoil set into action in 1967 with the killing of twenty-six year old student Benno Ohnesorg at a Berlin demonstration protesting the visit of the Iranian shah Reza Pahlavi,²³ the voice of Germany's leftist-leaning counterculture manifested itself in a variety of ways. Rudi Dutschke helped to popularize the influential student movement and the SDS (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*),²⁴ while radical Marxist political groups such as the APO increasingly gained support from the upper echelons of society, making their voices heard in periodicals such as *konkret* and *Kursbuch*.²⁵ The late 60's counterculture also saw the rise of the RAF (*Rote Armee Fraktion*), a militant

²² Leitner, Olaf. *Rockszenen DDR: Aspekte Einer Massenkultur Im Sozialismus*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983. Print. 15, 69-70, 214.

²³ Glaser, Herman. *Kulturgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1968-1989*. München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1989. 31. Print.

²⁴ Glaser, 46-47

²⁵ Von Dirke, 110

leftist terrorist group, the leaders of which were, in a strange instance of cultural connectivity, well acquainted with a number of prominent krautrock musicians from the group's early days as commune-dwelling hippies. Renate Knaup of Amon Düül II relates how the leaders of the RAF wished to hide out in the band's commune following their conviction for arson in 1968: "We were on tour and came back home to Herrsching. I went into my room, and there was Ensslin and Baader, and upstairs was Meinhof, in Chris [Karrer]'s room. And I said, 'what the fuck are you doing here? Go out immediately, immediately.' It was heavy. I didn't like it at all."²⁶

The commune scene itself was also an important component of the German counterculture, and was exemplified by the highly publicized antics of Rainer Langhans and his muse, future supermodel Uschi Obermaier,²⁷ who often sang with Amon Düül during the band's early days.²⁸ Naturally, drugs were also quite readily available to those with countercultural connections, and LSD and other psychedelics became widely popular. "Frei sein, high sein, immer dabei sein," would even become one of the most popular slogans of the German counterculture.²⁹

Meanwhile, in the arts, West Germany's literary community became increasingly diversified as "Pop-Literatur" authors such as Rolf Dieter Brinkmann challenged the more conventional though decidedly liberal canon typified by post-war greats such as Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass.³⁰ The German visual art scene, led by the iconoclastic work of Joseph

²⁶ Knaup, Renate, perf. Dir. Benjamin Whalley. *Krautrock: the Rebirth of Germany*. BBC Four: Web. 8 Mar 2012.

²⁷ Kundnani, Hans. *Utopia or Auschwitz?: Germany's 1968 Generation and the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. Print. 86-87, 97.

²⁸ Obermaier, Uschi, and Olaf Kraemer. *High Times: Mein Wildes Leben*. München: Wilhelm Heyne, 2007. Print. 48.

²⁹ Geissler, Michael, and Miriam Spies. *Acid, Mao Und I Ging: Erinnerungen Eines Berliner Haschrebellen*. Mainz: Gonzo-Verl, 2008. Print. 10-14.

³⁰ Taberner, Stuart. *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*. Birmingham, U.K: University of Birmingham Press, 2004. Print. 171.

Beuys,³¹ became the center of international attention, while artists like H.R. Giger in Switzerland and the *Wiener Aktionismus Gruppe* in Austria developed unique yet equally confrontational styles.³² Finally, in the realm of cinema, German directors such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Volker Schlöndorff, and Wim Wenders spearheaded the highly experimental and widely celebrated *Neuer Deutscher Film* movement,³³ forging a new cinematic identity for Germany which in many ways broke free of the wartime traditions which had come to characterize German film for foreign audiences.

West Germany was, in short, a nexus of avant-garde activity in the 1960's and 70's, resembling in some ways the interwar Weimar culture of the 1920's and 30's. And while Germany's contributions to literature, visual arts, and film during this era have been the subject of no small number of academic studies, the more populist-oriented musical manifestation of the zeitgeist (namely, krautrock and other forms of non-classical radical music) has received comparatively little attention. Composers such as Stockhausen are usually regarded as the musical branch of the German avant-garde counterculture, though by the late 1960's, Stockhausen had already been absorbed into the musical establishment, and was as concerned with his role as a pedagogue as he was with writing new compositions. In reality, krautrock was the musical movement that most closely resembled simultaneous developments in the arts, a fact evidenced by the genre's connections with other artistic mediums. The interconnectivity of the German art scene certainly warrants further discussion later on, as many of these connections are essential in explaining krautrock's relation to the cutting edge of German art during the countercultur era. One of the most well-known examples of this relatedness is Popol Vuh, a

³¹ Mesch, Claudia, and Viola M. Michely. *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007. Print. 2.

³² Klocker, Hubert. *Wiener Aktionismus, Wien, 1960-1971: Der Zertrümmerte: Günter Brus, Otto Mühl, Hermann Nitsch, Rudolf Schwarzkogler*. Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1989. Print. 13.

³³ Fraser, Catherine C, and Dierk O. Hoffmann. *Pop Culture Germany!: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle*. Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2006. Print. 227.

mystical world music-inspired ensemble from Munich, who first attained international success through their collaborations with Werner Herzog. The group provided scores for his films *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972), *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner* (1974), *Heart of Glass* (1976), *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979), *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), *The Dark Glow of the Mountains* (1984), and *Cobra Verde* (1987).³⁴ Meanwhile, visual artists such as the notorious Otto Muehl were recording their own minimalist krautrock albums and Joseph Beuys was collaborating with the mysterious krautrock artist Albrecht D.³⁵ The highly successful Berlin band Ton Steine Scherben collaborated at various times with provocative political theatre groups such as Brühwarm and Kollektiv Rote Rübe.³⁶

What this cultural connectivity (among other factors) ultimately suggests about krautrock is something that has only rarely been touched upon in the international music media. Namely, that krautrock is not just a unique and interesting anomaly, but is rather a crucial component of German postwar cultural history, an important and entirely necessary step in the progression of German pop music, and a groundbreaking musical movement which helped to set the stage for electronica, punk, various forms of indie rock, and even, tangentially, hip-hop.³⁷ Krautrock developed out of a comprehensively studied series of social movements and events, and yet it has

³⁴ Herzog, Werner, and Paul Cronin. *Herzog on Herzog*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002. Print. 305-324.

³⁵ In addition to working together in the field of visual arts, Albrecht D. and Beuys performed and recorded a minimalistic live music album as part of the “Art into Society – Society into Art” exhibition in London, 1974. Albrecht D., Joseph Beuys, K P. Brehmer, Hans Haacke, Dieter Hacker, Christos M. Joachimides, Gustav Metzger, Norman Rosenthal, and Klaus Staeck. *Art into Society - Society into Art: Seven German Artists ; Albrecht D., Joseph Beuys, Kp Bremer, Hans Haacke, Dieter Hacker, Gustav Metzler, Klaus Staeck ; Institut of Contemporary Arts, Nash House, 30. October - 24. November 1974*. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1974. Print. Albrecht, Dietrich, and Joseph Beuys. *Albrecht D. & Joseph Beuys: Performance at the Ica London, 1. Nov. 1974*. Stuttgart: Reflection Pr, 1985. Sound recording.

³⁶ Sichtermann, Kai, Jens Johler, and Christian Stahl. *Keine Macht Für Niemand: Die Geschichte Der Ton Steine Scherben*. Berlin: Schwarzkopf und Schwarzkopf, 2003. Print. 175.

³⁷ Reynolds, Simon. “Krautrock”. Shapiro, Peter, and Iara Lee. *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music : Throbbing Words on Sound*. New York: Caipirinha Productions, 2000. Print. 32-34. Hip-hop DJ Afrika Bambaataa sampled Kraftwerk’s “Trans-Europe Express” for his song “Planet Rock”, one of the first and most influential hip-hop hits. Chang, Jeff. *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005. Print. 172.

never been afforded the attention it deserves as a distinctly German art form; that is to say, krautrock is German in ways that transcend superficial “dark” or “industrial” stereotypes. Krautrock is the *Urschrei* of a generation haunted and hounded by the wrongdoing of its parent generation, and thus, a bold and effusive effort to forge a new cultural identity for Germany, one free of the fascist taint which perverted so many varieties of German music, from Wagner to *Schlager*. Even today, when one listens to krautrock, one gets the sense that these musicians were meticulously shaping their own futures, and in so doing, opening up a path for the musical future of Germany.

II. Chapter 1

Future Days: Krautrock Roots and Synthesis

It is interesting to consider, now that popular music has long been considered legitimately worthy of scholarly attention, that it took quite a while for rock and roll to be taken seriously by classically trained musicians and musicologists. This was certainly the case in Germany, perhaps even more so than in other countries, in the 1960's. While the Federal Republic had offered up its share of Elvis imitators in the previous decade,³⁸ German rock music was, for the most part, little more than a pale replication of American trends. Meanwhile, West Germany enjoyed a global reputation for its pioneering advances in classical music, as composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Hans Werner Henze continued to build on the legacy of classical avant-gardism established in previous decades by composers such as Arnold Schoenberg, as well as music theorists such as Werner Meyer-Eppler and Herbert Eimert.³⁹ Composers like Stockhausen were moving in an increasingly theoretical direction, as the exploration of pure sonic potential gradually superseded apparently outdated melodic standards. Likewise, music schools and programs such as the *Darmstädter Ferienkurse* attracted no small number of established masters of contemporary avant-gardism, including foreign composers like Pierre Boulez and Luigi Nono, along with scores of young firebrands aiming to shatter outmoded

³⁸ Edward Larkey names Peter Kraus, Ted Herold, Conny Froboess, and Connie Francis as the forerunners of the "Teenager-Schlager" style, which largely consisted of German language covers of songs by Elvis and other American rock and rollers.

Larkey, Edward. "Postwar German Popular Music." Applegate, Celia, and Pamela M. Potter. *Music and German National Identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. Print. 237.

³⁹ Mirroring the attitude of a generation of krautrockers towards his own achievements, Stockhausen explains the importance of earlier German avant-gardists such as Schoenberg thus:

"Schoenberg's great achievement... was to claim freedom for composers: freedom *from* the prevailing taste of society and its media; freedom *for* music to evolve without interference."

Ross, Alex. *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007. Print. 392-396.

conceptions about the nature of composition.⁴⁰ Furthermore, West Germany in the 1960's saw the advent of experimental ensembles, a relatively new concept which informed krautrock's collaborative nature, and helped to democratize the process of composing experimental and electronic music.⁴¹

Essentially, West German music in the 1960's followed the same dichotomy as it always had: conceptual and theoretical music versus the supposedly vapid music of the masses. Rock and roll certainly belonged to the latter camp. This is partially due to the fact that rock music, American in origin, was seen by the West German intelligentsia as yet another form of commercialized cultural imperialism. Most musically-oriented Germans missed the radical nature of rock, receiving it as they did as part of a package of Americanizing factors, designed to set West Germany along an economic path based on the American model. For German leftists opposed to the United States' capitalist strong-arming, embracing rock would have seemed like a betrayal. For those German musicians with experimentalist tendencies, rock and roll was on par with *Schlager* in its banality.⁴² Dieter Moebius of Cluster once declared that Elvis Presley was, in essence, a *Schlager* singer.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ross, 391-392, 396.

⁴¹ Amy C. Beal lists the following ensembles as emblematic of the experimental group ethos: Radio Bremen's Pro Musica Nova, Neue Musik München Klang-Aktionen, Gruppe Neue Musik Berlin, Nuremberg's Ars Nova Ensemble, the Ensemble Musica Negativa, and Cologne's Feedback Studio.

Beal, Amy C. *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany from the Zero Hour to Reunification*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. Print. 135.

⁴² Edward Larkey also asserts that *Schlager's* status as the "quintessentially German" genre of pop music is problematic, given that "Schlager had thrived during official campaigns against African American and Jewish influences in jazz by conservatives forces," and that "Schlager came to symbolize the conservative cultural values in the post-World War II period."

Larkey, 235.

⁴³ Dieter Moebius of Cluster: "*Schlager* is stupid texts, stupid melody, and everybody loves it. In a way, American hits also are *Schlager*. Elvis Presley, he was a *Schlager* singer, in a way." *Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany*. Dir. Benjamin Whalley. Perf. Dieter Moebius. BBC, 2009. Television. *Vimeo*. Web. 1 Mar. 2012.

For those Germans who wished to make radical *Volksmusik* outside of the classicist idiom, the obvious outlet was not rock and roll, but jazz. Unlike rock, jazz had already had plenty of time to germinate in European soil and take on a uniquely German nature of its own. Somewhat outmoded forms of jazz such as Dixieland or bebop had even been co-opted by the West German music establishment. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter point out the usefulness of jazz in making ideologically conservative leaders seem in touch with modern trends.

West German music critics strove to highlight the ‘absolute music’ features of bebop and took note of Bix Beiderbecke’s German ancestry. Even the likes of conservative leader Franz-Josef Strauß invoked the old adage of music’s ‘community-building powers’ in linking jazz with the West German military, and Willy Brandt exploited jazz’s image by posing for photographs with Louis Armstrong.⁴⁴

In stark contrast to the commercial forms of jazz favored by Strauß and Brandt was the homegrown German free jazz movement. The free jazz scene which dominated Western Europe as a whole in the early and mid 1960’s was matched in its radical nature only by the most uncompromising black American free jazz musicians. And while the American avant-garde jazz movement emphasized matters of spirituality, civil rights, and pan-African consciousness,⁴⁵ the German free jazz scene was characterized by its violent nature. The pain of postwar recovery was vocalized by artists such as Peter Brötzmann, Albert Mangelsdorff, Alexander von Schlippenbach, and Wolfgang Dauner through excruciatingly rough timbres, dizzying atonal

⁴⁴ Applegate, Celia, and Pamela M. Potter. “Germans as the ‘People of Music’: Genealogy of an Identity.” in *Music and German National Identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. Print.

⁴⁵ Ekkehard Jost notes that “it is plain that the early forms of free jazz and innovations that marked its path came for the most part from black musicians. Furthermore, its most significant emotional components are not those of a diffuse ‘world music,’ but clearly derive from a music that is African-American in the broadest sense.” Jost, Ekkehard. *Free Jazz*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1981. Print. 12.

complexity, and a categorically dark sense of humor.⁴⁶ It is Brötzmann whose work is perhaps most characteristic of German free jazz, exemplified as it is by albums such as *For Adolphe Sax* (1967),⁴⁷ *Machine Gun* (1968),⁴⁸ and *Nipples* (1969),⁴⁹ in which Brötzmann tortures his saxophone, producing squealing and wailing tones that make Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman sound like Chuck Mangione.

The German jazz scene was fertile ground for experimentation and innovation, and in contrast to the intellectualized world of classical music, it was open to rock's influence. The driving beat of rock and roll was not as far removed from jazz, even at its most iconoclastic, as it was from the highly theoretical realm inhabited by Stockhausen and Boulez. Indeed, free jazz served for many musicians as a springboard to diversification. A great number of krautrock musicians came out of the free jazz scene, as krautrock's experimentalist ethos gradually supplanted jazz as the rebel music which was at the time en vogue. Three of the most notable cases of jazz-krautrock crossover were Jaki Liebezeit of Can⁵⁰ and Mani Neumeier of Guru Guru,⁵¹ both of whom spent the majority of the 60's gigging as jazz drummers, and Wolfgang Dauner, a jazz pianist who formed the group Et Cetera in 1970 with the aim of exploring the connections between experimental jazz and electronic-oriented krautrock.⁵²

It was these two stylistic disciplines – contemporary classical music and free jazz – which laid the groundwork for krautrock in the 1960's. In contrast to other varieties of psychedelic

⁴⁶ Dedekind, 40-41

⁴⁷ Peter Brötzmann Trio. *For Adolphe Sax*. BRÖ Records, 1967. CD.

⁴⁸ Peter Brötzmann Octet. *Machine Gun*. BRÖ Records, 1968. CD.

⁴⁹ Peter Brötzmann Sextet. *Nipples*. Calig, 1969. CD.

⁵⁰ Bussy, Pascal, Andy Hall, Steven Baker, and Mick Fish. *The Can Book*. Harrow: SAF, 1989. Print. 40-43.

⁵¹ Stubbs, David. "Guru Guru." Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos. *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*. London: Black Dog, 2009. Print. 96-98.

⁵² Morton, Brian. "Et Cetera/Wolfgang Dauner." Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos. *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*. London: Black Dog, 2009. Print. 85.

music around the world, most of which drew chiefly upon blues structures, krautrock developed out of the resolutely edgy worlds of modern composition and jazz, meaning that krautrock was, from the outset, intended as a conceptual style of music. In this regard, the first krautrock group that must be examined in order to explain the nature of the genre is Can.

Can is, for many krautrock aficionados, the archetypal krautrock group. Their singular and trailblazing style predicted no small number of genres, from indie rock to trip-hop, while their peculiar, measured sense of rhythm exemplifies the krautrock beat known as “motorik”. Their mystical, poetic, and occasionally confrontational demeanor made them cult legends in their own time.

Can (originally known as The Inner Space, and later, The Can) formed in Cologne in 1968. Bassist Holger Czukay had studied under Stockhausen for quite some time, and was working as a classical music teacher.⁵³ He, along with his friend and colleague Irmin Schmidt, paid little attention to the sonic revolutions taking place in rock music until one of his students, a guitarist named Michael Karoli, turned Czukay on to The Beatles.⁵⁴ Around the same time, Schmidt traveled to New York, where he witnessed an early performance by The Velvet Underground, which served as his rock and roll epiphany.⁵⁵ Upon returning to the Federal Republic, Czukay, Schmidt, and Karoli, along with drummer Jaki Liebezeit, vocalist Malcolm Mooney, and flautist David C. Johnson, founded Can as a sort of experiment in bridging the gap between avant-garde classicism and rock and roll.⁵⁶ Holger Czukay explains, “I learned a lot of

⁵³ Bussy, 12-14

⁵⁴ Bussy, 14-15

⁵⁵ Slaybaugh, Stephen. "Can - Tago Mago (40th Anniversary Edition)." *Agit Reader*. n.d. n. page. Web. 11 Mar. 2012. <http://www.agitreader.com/perfect/can-tago_mago.html>.

⁵⁶ Bussy, 65-66

things from my classical studies, and at first when Can began, I thought I was entering another world. Today, I see the bridge between the two worlds, I see the continuity.”⁵⁷

In some ways, Can was the quintessential krautrock group, in that they embodied the collection of origins and influences which led to the genre’s genesis. Czukay and Schmidt came from academic classical backgrounds, while Liebezeit had spent a number of years drumming with various free jazz ensembles, most notably Manfred Schoof’s.⁵⁸ Upon listening to Can’s recordings, it is immediately apparent that the group had no desire to perform rock music in the conventional sense, and it is important to consider what was at the time considered typical of rock music; Can is, after all, a far cry from Creedence Clearwater Revival or Jefferson Airplane. Can’s early recordings are riotous affairs, and emphasize repetition, unconventional rhythmic structures, and the delirious poetic lyricism of Malcolm Mooney. In fact, when listening to these frantic early recordings, one is led to wonder whether the band was not simply intended to be something ephemeral – an interesting experiment perhaps, but not one of the paragons of European rock music.

The most productive years of Can’s career began with the recording of *Tago Mago*⁵⁹ in late 1970. It is this album, perhaps more than any other single krautrock album, which displays each element of the genre’s development in beautiful and seemingly effortless synthesis. Holger Czukay, both as a bassist and as a de facto producer, applies the lessons learned during his time studying under Stockhausen to magnificent effect, resulting in a rock album that skirts simplistic classification with each track. The most Stockhausian track on the album is doubtlessly the

⁵⁷ Bussy, 13

⁵⁸ In 1978, FMP Records released a compilation of Schoof’s recordings titled *The Early Quintet*, featuring tracks recorded in 1966 and 1967. It features Liebezeit on drums, as well as the German jazz firebrand Alexander von Schlippenbach on piano.

Schoof, Manfred. *The Early Quintet*. FMP, 1978. LP.

⁵⁹ Can. *Tago Mago*. United Artists, 1971. CD.

colossal seventeen-minute “Aumgn,” a tone poem for the Vietnam generation, and a work of pure *musique concrete* innovation bearing more than a passing resemblance to any of Stockhausen’s “space” works such as *Kontakte* (1958-1960) or *Hymnen* (1966-1967).

The apocalyptic energy that waxes and wanes throughout *Tago Mago* is a result of the unique recording techniques with which Can had begun to experiment during this time. The band’s reputation as an ace improvisatory ensemble had already been established, but Czukay and Schmidt’s urge to tweak the rock formula through studio experimentation took the band’s sound in an increasingly mind-altering direction. Resembling in many ways the pioneering work of Teo Macero on Miles Davis’s *In a Silent Way*⁶⁰ and *Bitches Brew*^{61, 62}, Can’s new *modus operandi* consisted of recording marathon improvisatory sessions, some lasting up to seven hours, and then cutting and splicing bits of tape together in the studio to create a collage made up of snippets of the band’s own music.⁶³ Upon the release of Czukay’s solo album *Movies*⁶⁴ in 1979, the Can bassist described his unconventional style of “composition” thus: “The already mixed down music is cut down into ‘bits’ and spliced together again, as a computer does. The result is something which did not exist before. Computed, or better ‘composed’ music.”⁶⁵ In this manner, the band managed to free themselves of genre restraints, as on tracks such as “Halleluwah” (another seventeen-minute monster), in which the band pummels out a Teutonicized James Brown groove that sounds equally inspired by the electric whirrs of any

⁶⁰ Davis, Miles. *In a Silent Way*. Columbia, 1967. CD.

⁶¹ Davis, Miles. *Bitches Brew*. Columbia, 1970. CD.

⁶² Miles Davis biographer Phil Freeman states that during Davis’s “electric” years, Macero “mostly remained interested in constructing a performance by looping sections of a jam, or combining pieces of multiple performances to form a sort of ‘highlight reel,’” a description that would be equally apt in explaining Czukay’s role in the studio as part of Can.

Freeman, Phil. *Running the Voodoo Down: The Electric Music of Miles Davis*. San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2005. Print. 64.

⁶³ Reynolds, Simon. "The History of Krautrock." *Melody Maker*. Jul 1996: n. page. Web. 12 Apr. 2012.

⁶⁴ Czukay, Holger. *Movies*. Harvest, 1979. CD.

⁶⁵ Bussy, 20

Rhineland factory and the mantric repetition of West African drumming. And as if that weren't already diverse enough, after about five minutes, the song suddenly fades into a solemn, somewhat atonal piano piece, sounding like one of Erik Satie's *Gnossiennes* played on warped vinyl.

What I wish to emphasize with a description such as this is not the patent eccentricity of Can's music, but rather, the synthesis of two radically different methods of music production which characterizes it. It is this synthesis, in fact, which distinguishes krautrock from other contemporary genres: the crossing of two musical modes, one reliant on compositional structure (that of Stockhausen and the classical world), and the other based upon improvisation and individualism (the free jazz scene). It is debatable whether Can was the first krautrock group to adopt this genre-splicing style, but, in the opinion of this author, they were the first to perfect it, and subsequent albums would find the core group (Czukay, Karoli, Liebezeit, and Schmidt), along with maniacal Japanese vocalist Kenji "Damo" Suzuki, incorporating a number of other styles and influences that would become typical of krautrock's sonic melting pot. 1972's *Ege Bamyasi*⁶⁶ sounds like an even more action-packed sequel to *Tago Mago*, while 1973's *Future Days*⁶⁷ finds the band scaling back their approach and successfully experimenting with ambient textures, resulting in what is certainly Can's most gorgeous recording, and a definite precursor to the much-reviled "new age" music craze that arose in the early 1980's.

One aspect of Can's career which is often overlooked is the revolutionary mentality which fueled the band's output. Irmin Schmidt once declared that "wir sind definitiv eine 68er-Gruppe,"⁶⁸ establishing solidarity not only with the German counterculture which first found its

⁶⁶ Can. *Ege Bamyasi*. United Artists, 1972. CD.

⁶⁷ Can. *Future Days*. United Artists, 1973. CD.

⁶⁸ Büsser, Martin. "Es klang so schön am Rhein." *Arte*. 29 Aug 2008: n. page. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.

voice in 1968, but also with the global climate of unrest and frustration which resulted in riots in Berlin, Paris, Prague, Chicago, Rome, Mexico City, and London.⁶⁹ In addition to being sonic explorers, Can were also politically motivated, as evidenced by Irmin Schmidt's claim that the name was chosen to stand for "Communism, Anarchism, Nihilism."⁷⁰ The sounds contained within albums like *Tago Mago* are rather timeless, bridging as they do the gap between archaic devotional music and modern electronic instrumentation, yet the band's recording ethos developed out of a specific socio-political climate. Krautrock in general was, in essence, a function of the international revolution that took place in the late 1960's, and an examination of the climate of counterculture which flourished in the Federal Republic during this time is necessary to paint a complete picture of krautrock as a cultural phenomenon. The emotional energy that is latent in the best krautrock recordings developed out of years of repression, subjugation, and shame instilled by history. Just like the work of Joseph Beuys or Heinrich Böll, krautrock was the manifestation of a generation's rage against the sins of its parent generation. For the liberal youth of the 1960's, krautrock was a way to create a new, utopian Germany.

⁶⁹ O'Hagan, Sean. "Everyone to the barricades." *Guardian*. 19 Jan 2008: n. page. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.

⁷⁰ Bussy, 68

III. Chapter 2

The Collaborative Ethos and the Spirit of '68

It all started, so the historians say, with the death of Benno Ohnesorg in 1967.⁷¹ This murder, which kicked the German leftist movement into high gear, occurred during a demonstration in West Berlin against a visit by the Iranian Shah Reza Pahlavi, during which West German riot guards attacked a peaceful group of protestors.⁷² Ohnesorg was the only fatality, shot down by a plain-clothes police officer who was revealed in 2009 to have been working for the East German Stasi.⁷³ The bizarre web of circumstances which led to this murder is, in itself, ample proof of the socio-political tumult which shook Germany in the late 60's.

The root of the conflict was thus: the children of National Socialism were growing up and angrily rejecting the legacy imposed upon them by their parents' generation. And while the German government certainly wished to erase the international impression left by fascism, there were still enough similarities between the new West German government and National Socialism, in regard both to personnel and to ideology, to inspire revulsion in a great deal of the citizenry. Nick Thomas asserts that, "...the emphasis on the integration of former Nazis into the new Federal Republic, while pragmatic, entailed a readiness to seek reconciliation rather than

⁷¹ Nicholas Kulish notes that Ohnesorg's murder by Karl-Heinz Kurras was known as "the shot that changed the republic."

Kulish, Nicholas. "Spy Fired Shot That Changed West Germany." *New York Times*. [New York City] 26 May 2009: n. page. Web. 14 Mar. 2012.

⁷² On June 2, 1967, hundreds of protestors gathered in front of the Schöneberg City Hall to demonstrate against the Shah's perceived abuse of power in Iran. A crowd of Persian Shah supporters attacked the protestors with wooden cudgels. The West German police stood silently by for several minutes before joining the fray on the side of the Persians. The tumult eventually led to the shooting of Ohnesorg by the plainclothes police officer (and Stasi collaborator) Karl-Heinz Kurras.

Aust, Stefan, and Anthea Bell. *Baader-Meinhof: The Inside Story of the R.A.F.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print. 24-27.

⁷³ Kundnani, 321

redress that created particularly strong generational divisions in West Germany.”⁷⁴ Generational conflicts characterized countercultures around the world, yet the German generation conflict was arguably more complex and problematic than in any other nation. Thomas goes on to note that, “the protestors... encouraged critical public engagement with the moral issues raised by the Nazi past for the first time.”⁷⁵ The West German left realized and acknowledged that great steps would have to be taken to sufficiently distance a modernized Bundesrepublik from the taint of Nazism.

Krautrock was, first and foremost, a component of the German protest movement as a whole, a movement which manifested itself in a wide variety of ways. While revolutionaries such as Rudi Dutschke, Joschka Fischer, and future RAF figurehead Ulrike Meinhof strove to foster a new Marxist-oriented political climate for the Federal Republic,⁷⁶ the krautrockers were attempting to do similar things for the German musical culture.⁷⁷

The krautrock movement was, in terms of commercial impact, a reaction to both the cultural homogenization imposed by National Socialism as well as the superficial consumerist culture instilled by the economic success of the *Wirtschaftswunder*.⁷⁸ The movement thus constituted a significant part of the collective impulse of the German left to democratize German society in ways both political and cultural. The musical branch of what was considered to be

⁷⁴ Thomas, Nick. *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy*. Oxford: Berg, 2003. Print. 20.

⁷⁵ Thomas, 246

⁷⁶ Hockenos, Paul. *Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print. 108-123.

⁷⁷ “The Krautrock bands were united by the common ideology of wanting to create a uniquely German pop culture after those decades post-World War II when Anglo-American culture was pre-eminent. Much of this new music was underpinned by a violent catharsis, a sometimes unacknowledged sense of wanting to purge the past and to establish a new youth cultural formation through experimental music.”

Buckley, David: 'Krautrock', Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 12. Apr. 2012), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

⁷⁸ Dedekind, 21-35

cultural detritus from the days of Nazism was not as apparently fascistic as, say, the journalistic practices of Axel Springer's *Bild*, yet it carried similar unpleasant political connotations. This area of German musical culture, the *Schlager* genre in particular, was seen by liberals as a deliberate attempt by the supposedly fascistic right to obscure the value of music as a tool of social empowerment. *Schlager* was, in fact, historically connected to Nazism. Joseph Goebbels had used the music as a form of innocuous propaganda, attempting to replace the popular cosmopolitan (and primarily Jewish-produced)⁷⁹ vocal music of the 1920's with a variety of pop music more suited to conservative audiences.⁸⁰

That *Schlager* remained the most popular form of pop music in the Federal Republic at the time of krautrock's genesis was seen by revolutionaries as a disgrace to Germany's musical history. *Schlager* essentially occupied the same space in the minds of German leftists as corporations such as Krupp and IG Farben, institutions that prospered thanks to National Socialism, and continued to prosper despite their ethical missteps.⁸¹ The *Schlager* genre as a whole, despite its continuing popularity in Germany today, represented for the 68ers a deliberate attempt by the right-wing mass media to undermine the experimentalist tendencies that flourished in the Federal Republic.⁸² Naturally, Stockhausen was never going to find himself on the pop charts, and yet the omnipresence of *Schlager* on German radio stations, music-oriented TV shows, and lists of best-selling albums remained an affront to countercultural sensibilities.

⁷⁹ Kater, Michael H. "Jewish Musicians in the Third Reich: A Tale of Tragedy". DeCoste, F C, and Bernard Schwartz. *The Holocaust's Ghost: Writings on Art, Politics, Law, and Education*. Edmonton, Alta., Canada: University of Alberta Press, 2000. Print. 75-83.

⁸⁰ Joseph Goebbels once famously declared that the *Unterhaltungsmusik* of the Third Reich era was "genauso wichtig wie Kanonen und Gewehre."

Figge, Susan G, and Jenifer K. Ward. *Reworking the German Past: Adaptations in Film, the Arts, and Popular Culture*. Rochester, N.Y: Camden House, 2010. Print. 135.

⁸¹ May, Larry. *Aggression and Crimes against Peace*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Print. 192.

⁸² Wolfgang Seidel, drummer with Ton Steine Scherben and frequent Conrad Schnitzler collaborator, remarks: "On the surface, *Schlager* isn't political at all, but that's what makes it political." *Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany*. Dir. Benjamin Whalley. Perf. Wolfgang Seidel. BBC, 2009. Television. *Vimeo*. Web. 1 Mar. 2012.

For the activists of the 68 generation, any form of popular media that bore similarities to that of the Nazi era was implicitly fascistic. The collective impulse of the German counterculture was to strip the nation of any continued influence held over from National Socialism. This impulse would come to a head in 1977, during the so-called “German Autumn”, in which the prominent industrialist and former SS officer Hanns-Martin Schleyer was kidnapped and murdered by the RAF.⁸³ And though the activities of the RAF represented the German counterculture of the 60’s and 70’s at its most extreme and short-sighted, the literal murder of former Nazis mirrored the figurative death the 68er generation wished upon the legacy of National Socialism.

The term “counterculture” is somewhat clumsy in describing the variety of movements that fall under its definition. The German counterculture in particular was a complexly multifaceted movement, encompassing not just cultural reform, but also political, social, and even environmental changes. Sabine Von Dirke stresses that, “the post-1968 counterculture revisited the ideas of its predecessors in dissent, taking up those that proved to be still valid, such as antiauthoritarian concepts, but at the same time introduced new ideas to respond to the redefined terrain of discontent and social conflict.”⁸⁴ Due to the nature of the German generation conflict, it is ultimately necessary to separate West German society in the 60’s and 70’s into the counterculture and the culture of the establishment. And although Von Dirke points out that “the clear distinction between hegemonic culture and counterculture will always be in flux,”⁸⁵ this dichotomy is especially useful in describing krautrock as a component of the counterculture, as

⁸³ Aust, 304-306, 416-418

⁸⁴ Von Dirke, 217

⁸⁵ Von Dirke, 217

the genre's primarily instrumental sonic trademarks do not implicitly link it with any single aspect of the West German protest movement. Indeed, this is why krautrock has rarely been connected with the radical politics of the West German left, while it is quite difficult to view contemporaries of the krautrock genre working in film, literature, visual arts, or theater as anything but manifestations of the social restructuring that occurred in the Federal Republic during this time period.

The interconnectivity of the entire West German counterculture is notable. Few significant artists refrained completely from straying outside of a chosen idiom, and the continuous blurring of genre classifications was a recurring theme in German arts of this era. One of the most illustrative examples of the crossover between genres and mediums favored by krautrock (as well as the West German counterculture in general) is Popol Vuh.

The history of Florian Fricke and his musical vehicle Popol Vuh reads almost like a parody of the enlightened cultural cannibalism which was so en vogue during the 60's and 70's. Fricke, scion of a wealthy and aristocratic Bavarian family, formed Popol Vuh in 1970 with the multi-instrumentalists Holger Trülzsch and Frank Fiedler.⁸⁶ From the outside, the band's magpie-like approach to appropriating genres, moods, and methods of production set them apart from other quasi-mystical and Eastern philosophy-influenced psychedelic groups. Taking their name from the Mayan creation myth, Popol Vuh's early output is decidedly not rock in nature, bearing next to no influence from any kinds of popular music. Fricke was reportedly one of the first Germans to own a Moog synthesizer, along with his equally forward-thinking neighbor and

⁸⁶ Keenan, David. "Popol Vuh." Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos. *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*. London: Black Dog, 2009. Print. 122.

friend Eberhard Schoener, and he utilized it to create a utopia of sound entirely removed from the direction in which synthesizers were gradually taking rock music.⁸⁷

Popol Vuh's second album, 1971's *In den Gärten Pharaos*,⁸⁸ is the group's first masterpiece. A monumental and exotic combination of state of the art electronic instruments and so-called "world music" elements such as percussion instruments from Turkey and West Africa, *In den Gärten Pharaos* was one of the first albums of the "cosmic" school which would come to dominate the krautrock scene, as well as make its international reputation, by the mid 70's.⁸⁹ Comprising just two side-long tracks, the album was something of a manifesto for the band, suggesting as it did the direction they would take in years to come; crossing cutting edge production techniques and precepts with no small number of varieties of international traditional music to create a style of music more akin to Sufi devotional music or the overtone prayer chanting of Tibetan monks than any contemporary developments in rock music.

Popol Vuh's oeuvre would only diversify further throughout the 70's, as Fricke gradually lost interest in electronic instrumentation and pushed his compositions ever closer to a synthesis of styles he termed "sacred music".⁹⁰ He would, eventually, integrate aspects of rock into Popol Vuh's output, as new band members like Conny Veit and Daniel Fichelscher, formerly of Gila and Amon Düül II, respectively, brought their electrifying psychedelic stylings to the ensemble.⁹¹ But it would be a mistake to think that any amount of rock influence could have ever turned Popol Vuh into a bona fide *rock* group, and with Veit and Fichelscher on board,

⁸⁷ *Kraftwerk and the Electronic Revolution: A Documentary Film*. Perf. Ingeborg Schober. Surrey, U.K.: Sexy Intellectual, 2008.

⁸⁸ Popol Vuh. *In den Gärten Pharaos*. Pils, 1972. CD.

⁸⁹ Keenan, 122

⁹⁰ Woolford, Jenna. "Popol Vuh." Bogdanov, Vladimir. *All Music Guide to Electronica: The Definitive Guide to Electronic Music*. San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001. Print. 405.

⁹¹ Keenan, 122

Fricke led the group into new realms of diversity, incorporating aspects of gypsy music, Indian raga, opera, Catholic hymns, and Fricke's own superbly impressionistic piano work. With the addition of singer Djong Yun, a Berliner of Korean extraction, Popol Vuh added yet another layer of ethereal ambience to their sound, achieving Fricke's ultimate goal of spiritual synthesis.⁹²

While Popol Vuh had early on established themselves as one of the forerunners of the new "cosmic" music, widespread international exposure did not come until 1972, when the band scored Werner Herzog's film *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*.⁹³ The film, which starred Klaus Kinski as crazed Spanish conquistador Don Lope de Aguirre, was one of a number of films produced by Herzog during the 70's and 80's which sought to examine the human condition in situations of extreme alienation.⁹⁴ Popol Vuh's strikingly atmospheric score fits perfectly the quiet, disconcerting intensity of Kinski's performance as well as the breathtaking scenes of the Peruvian jungle in which the movie was filmed. The film as a whole is a definite high point of the entire German art scene of the 70's, a scene borne of the insurrectionary spirit of the West German counterculture.

Aguirre was only the beginning of Werner Herzog's relationship with Popol Vuh, a relationship which soon blossomed into one of film's greatest collaborative romances between director and musicians. Popol Vuh went on to compose original scores for Herzog's films *Heart of Glass*, *Nosferatu*, and *Cobra Verde*, as well as a number of lesser-known short films and documentaries, while some previous recordings by the band were used to great effect in

⁹² Fricke, Florian. "Florian Fricke Interview." Interview by Gerhard Augustin. *Eurock: European Rock and the Second Culture*. Ed. Archie Patterson. Portland, Or: Eurock Publications, 2002. Print. 672-674.

⁹³ *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes*. Dir. Werner Herzog. Perf. Klaus Kinski. Filmverlag der Autoren, 1972. Film.

⁹⁴ Brockmann, Stephen. *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester, N.Y: Camden House, 2010. Print. 329-341.

Fitzcarraldo.⁹⁵ It is difficult now to even imagine Herzog's larger-than-life "Neuer Deutscher Film"-era masterpieces without the otherworldly brilliance of Fricke's compositions.

It is certain that among all the collaborative efforts between krautrock and film, Herzog's films are the most internationally renowned. But for German moviegoers during the 70's (for whom the term "krautrock" would have elicited little more than a blank stare), the psychedelic sounds of the counterculture generation were an integral aspect of the so-called New German Film. Can, as a matter of fact, first gained widespread exposure in Germany thanks to their film and television scores, including such varied fare as the anarchic underground films *Cream*, *Mädchen... nur mit Gewalt*, and *Deep End*, the bizarre cult western *Deadlock*,⁹⁶ and the sensationally groovy made-for-TV movie *Das Millionenspiel*.⁹⁷ Additionally, one of the band's biggest German hits, "Spoon", was used as title music for the popular TV thriller *Das Messer*.⁹⁸ With the exception of the TV *krimi*, all of these films displayed the low budget, art house-inspired sensibilities that would soon come to characterize the NDF movement in years to come. Literal connections to the NDF were also myriad. One of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's early efforts, 1970's *Die Niklashauser Fart* [sic], depicts the director lying on the floor smoking a cigarette while Amon Düül II creates a psychedelic racket around him.⁹⁹ Wim Wenders' "road

⁹⁵ Miguel Mera and David Burnand, in discussing the significance of the relationship between Herzog and Popol Vuh, note that: "Krautrock might be seen as the pop/rock music equivalent of the developments in German film that are called the "New German Cinema".

Mera, Miguel, and David Burnand. *European Film Music*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006. Print. 116-129.

⁹⁶ Can. Liner notes. *Soundtracks*. Liberty, 1970. LP.

⁹⁷ Faßbender, Heribert, Dieter Hallervorden, Dieter T. Heck, Wolfgang Menge, Jörg Pleva, and Tom Toelle. *Das Millionenspiel*. Hamburg: Studio Hamburg Distribution & Marketing, 2009.

⁹⁸ Smith, Gary. "The History of Can". *Spoon Records*. 13 March 2012.

<http://www.spoonrecords.com/history/can.php>

⁹⁹ Fassbinder, Rainer W, Michael König, Hanna Schygulla, Dietrich Lohmann, and Peer Raben. *Niklashauser Fart*. Leipzig: Kinowelt Home Entertainment, 2005.

movie” trilogy featured original music by Improved Sound Limited, admittedly a second-tier krautrock act, but of historical interest nonetheless.¹⁰⁰

Krautrock’s disregard for established mediums was not limited to film either. Krautrockers found a great deal of common ground between their craft and the realm of the visual arts, which seems only natural given that krautrock emphasized the idea of painting with sound, rather than producing catchy melodies. And though artists more populist in spirit were sometimes affiliated with krautrock - H.R. Giger, for example, designed album covers for The Shiver and Floh de Cologne, among others¹⁰¹ - the greatest nexus for krautrock’s connection to the rather exclusive world of high art was undoubtedly Conrad Schnitzler. A dizzyingly prolific and deterministically avant-garde performer, Schnitzler was a founding member of Tangerine Dream and Cluster (at that time Kluster), as well as the legendary groups Eruption and Human Being, whose recordings are infamously rare.¹⁰² Perhaps most importantly, he owned and operated the Zodiak club in Berlin, which essentially became ground zero for electronic-oriented experimental krautrock. Schnitzler’s approach to music was largely informed by his time studying under Joseph Beuys, the multitalented German performance artist who sought to expand outmoded definitions of art.¹⁰³ Just as Stockhausen’s followers within krautrock were attempting to fuse their teacher’s ideals with the radical nature of rock and roll, Beuys’s acolytes

¹⁰⁰ In 2002, Improved Sound Limited released a compilation album titled *Road Trax*, consisting of the songs used in three Wenders films, as well as two films by Erwin Keusch.

Improved Sound Limited. *Road Trax*. Long Hair, 2002. CD.

¹⁰¹ “H.R. Giger: The Sound of Surreality.” *Giger-Art.com*. 13 March 2012. <http://www.giger-art.com/giger-music-art.html>

¹⁰² Stubbs, David. “Conrad Schnitzler.” Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos. *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*. London: Black Dog, 2009. Print. 128-130.

¹⁰³ Iliffe, Stephen. *Roedelius: Painting with Sound : the Life and Music of Hans-Joachim Roedelius*. London, Eng: Meridian Music Guides, 2003. Print. 21-25.

such as Schnitzler were reducing rock music to its most basic components, creating in the process what is perhaps the most avant-garde and challenging variety of krautrock.

Beuys's decisive influence is to be seen on a great number of krautrock's most "out there" artifacts, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a great deal of the artists creating this provocative music had roots in visual art as well. The mysterious krautrocker Albrecht D, another of Beuys's students, created tribally minimal music which barely resembled rock at all; the jungle rhythm of rock and roll is reduced to a groaning, clattering thud, sounding like Bo Diddley played at 10 or 15 RPM.¹⁰⁴ In a similar vein is the exceedingly strange album *Psycho Motorik*, recorded by the Austrian performance artist Otto Muehl in 1971. Muehl, one of the cofounders of the notorious *Wiener Aktionismus Gruppe* is primarily known nowadays for his conviction for "criminal acts against morality" in 1991, though his artistic output from the 60's and 70's was alternately heralded and defamed as something frighteningly profane.¹⁰⁵ The sexually violent nature of Muehl's work is reflected in *Psycho Motorik*. The album's name alone suggests a perversion of the krautrock motorik beat (which was itself a perversion of the beat inherited by rock and roll from the blues), and the sounds within are a relentlessly ghastly display of "pop" modes being skewed and twisted into an avant-garde mess.

Though Albrecht D and Otto Muehl's strange takes on krautrock are interesting as artifacts, they were, obviously, utter commercial failures and failed to make much of an impact on the German music scene. Krautrock artists working in similar idioms who could not boast of any reputations as visual artists were marginally more successful: groups such as Limbus 3 and

¹⁰⁴ Albrecht D. *Endless Music*. Samadhi, 1974. LP.

¹⁰⁵ Miles, Christopher. "Otto Muehl: MC." *Artforum*. (May 2006): n. page. Web. 15 Mar. 2012.

4, Anima Sound, and Code III, featuring the legendary electronic maverick Klaus Schulze,¹⁰⁶ carved out a niche within krautrock for pop rhythms and melodies pressed and flattened into something occult and primeval. In contrast to the harsh and uncompromising sounds of Beuys's followers, the greatest krautrock band to reflect the visual arts' favored principles was certainly Cluster, an electronic duo who pioneered the idea of ambient music in ways both sublimely beautiful and confrontationally dissonant.

Cluster never shied away from the abrasive edge of their electronic style, creating what were essentially sound paintings with their collection of shoddy electronic apparatuses. What is most remarkable about Cluster's work is that it anticipates styles of electronica that would not proliferate or become popular until the 1990's. Indeed, upon listening to Cluster's early 70's output, it is startling to note the points of comparison with more contemporary artists such as Boards of Canada, Aphex Twin, or Autechre, proponents of "intelligent dance music". Likewise, Cluster's earliest recordings (recorded as Kluster) are terrific slabs of noise utterly unfit for commercial consumption. The two original albums recorded under the name Kluster, 1970's *Klopfzeichen*¹⁰⁷ and 1971's *Zwei Osterei*,¹⁰⁸ sound like nothing else of the era, and prefigure the noise and industrial genres.¹⁰⁹

What is most fascinating about Cluster, however, is how two men pushing buttons and twisting knobs on a pile of slapdash electronic gizmos managed to create such groundbreaking and ultimately stupendous music. The answer lies within the duo's uniquely visual approach to composition, inspired by the aforementioned Conrad Schnitzler, who helped found the group

¹⁰⁶ Vogel, Rudolf. "Code III." *Krautrock-Musikzirkus*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Feb 2012. <http://www.krautrock-musikzirkus.de/de,Code-III_Planet-Of-Man_1333,N.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Kluster. *Klopfzeichen*. Schwann, 1970. CD.

¹⁰⁸ Kluster. *Zwei Osterei*. Schwann, 1971. CD.

¹⁰⁹ *Kraftwerk and the Electronic Revolution: A Documentary Film*. Surrey, U.K: Sexy Intellectual, 2008.

1969 and left with the name change in 1971, and perpetuated by Hans-Joachim Roedelius, a consummate artist in the classic German tradition. Roedelius's personal biography reads like an adventure novel about mid-20th century Germany. From his days as a child actor in the late 30's in UFA propaganda films, to his compulsory time in the Hitler Youth, to time spent as a smuggler, East German refugee, prison inmate, avant-garde performing artist, nudist, and eventually a widely recognized and lauded godfather of electronic music, Roedelius developed a singular perspective to composing music that was heavily informed by his knowledge of classical composition.¹¹⁰ His is the perspective of a visual artist, using sound to create atmospheres, landscapes, and moods instead of blithe melodies.

It would be a great injustice, however, to attribute all of Cluster's revolutionary dynamism solely to Roedelius. His longtime cohort, Dieter Moebius, was (and still is) even more concerned with sound textures than Roedelius, and it is his influence that dominates much of Cluster's most beloved work. A prime example of Moebius's handiwork can be found in 1974's *Zuckerzeit*,¹¹¹ a record delightfully befitting its name ("sugar time" in German), and perhaps the ultimate synthesis of Cluster's precisely measured blend of harmonic dissonance, gentle ambience, and the propulsive nature of rock music. *Zuckerzeit* is a landmark record for the krautrock movement due its characteristic use of the motorik beat, the quintessentially German invention which characterized electronic-based krautrock in the mid 70's.¹¹² Stephen Iliffe describes the album's significance in regard to electronic music history:

"For dance fans today, hearing *Zuckerzeit* for the first time is like chancing upon an early blueprint for Techno or the Rosetta Stone for House music. Ten peerless

¹¹⁰ Iliffe, 17-21

¹¹¹ Cluster. *Zuckerzeit*. Brain, 1974. CD.

¹¹² Albiez, Sean, and David Pattie. *Kraftwerk: Music Non-Stop*. New York: Continuum, 2011. Print. 145-146.

tracks that anticipate the foregrounding of persistent rhythm grooves, the side exit of the solo, the extended instrumental mix of the single.”¹¹³

And yet it was the motorik beat which would carry krautrock’s influence into future decades and genres. The beat itself, a simple, static, and mechanically precise rhythm carried implicit connotations of the stereotypically industrious nature of Germans and their culture. True, the motorik beat allows relatively little room for improvisation, although drummers such as Jaki Liebezeit of Can and Klaus Dinger of Kraftwerk, Neu!, and La Düsseldorf managed to apply some fantastically flashy touches to it. Nowadays, the motorik beat is widely considered to be krautrock’s distinguishing feature.¹¹⁴ This is perhaps unsurprising, as many of the contemporary artists who have cited krautrock as a key influence on their work operate in genres in which the motorik rhythm has had a decisive influence. Stereolab, for instance, have made an entire career out of repackaging the motorik beat for a 90’s indie rock audience.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, designating motorik as *the* sonic trademark of krautrock as a whole is almost too easy, in that it apparently reflects the factory-like precision which is all too often named as the defining feature of the German people.

But simply equating the motorik rhythms with krautrock’s significance as a genre is lazy. Only a small percentage of krautrock artists ever embraced the style, and the majority of those came out of the heavily interconnected Rhineland scene which gave birth to Kraftwerk. In fact, the first krautrock group to receive any kind of attention outside of its homeland had virtually no connection to the electronicized motorik beat, instead favoring a pummeling, tribally psychedelic rhythmic style that would define the sound of rock emanating out of those radical headquarters

¹¹³ Iliffe, 44

¹¹⁴ Doran, John. "From Neu! to Kraftwerk: Football, Motorik And The Pulse of Modernity." *Quietus*. 06 Jan 2010: n. page. Web. 15 Mar. 2012.

¹¹⁵ Taylor, Steve. *The A to X of Alternative Music*. New York: Continuum, 2004. Print. 244.

of hippiedom: the German communes. This band, Amon Düül and its more famous incarnation, Amon Düül II, embodied the anarchic spirit of commune life, and in so doing, became the first rock band in Germany whose very lifestyle served as a potent political statement.

IV: Chapter 3

Macht kaputt, was euch kaputt macht: Krautrock in Opposition

The communal mentality of the West German counterculture may have originally been borne of the movement's Marxist beliefs, but the concept of a commune as imagined by the West German left quickly took on a distinct character of its own. In yet another instance of cultural connectivity, the earliest German communes served as proving grounds for those who strove to make their mark in the fields of politics, literature, music, or simply celebrity culture. That the communes also provided the springboard needed for the RAF to consolidate and recruit members was not lost on the figureheads of the commune scene, and it is certain that communes were among the most important nexuses of radical activity in the Federal Republic.¹¹⁶

These communes thus differed to an extent from similar movements toward communal living which had begun to take place in many countries with significant countercultural presences. America, certainly, had its share of hippie communes, although the sheer number of them operating during the 60's and 70's, as well as the wide variety of views held by the various communes, makes it impossible to define the American commune culture as a codified movement.¹¹⁷ The West German communes, on the other hand, were inherently confrontational, shared (for the most part) similar political ideals, and were intended from the outset as a challenge to values that were seen by commune-dwellers as outdated and obsolete.

¹¹⁶ Roth, Roland, and Dieter Rucht. *Die Sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland Seit 1945: Ein Handbuch*. Frankfurt: Campus, 2008. Print. 533-535.

¹¹⁷ Miller, Timothy. *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999. Print. xiii-xxi.

This was certainly the case for the inhabitants of Kommune 1, which was widely described as the first political commune in West Germany. Kommune 1 developed largely as an extension of the activities of the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (SDS), a protest-oriented left wing political organization. Leaders of these organizations such as Rudi Dutschke and Bernd Rabehl were initially involved with the setup of Kommune 1, although neither wished to leave their wives and families to actually live in it.¹¹⁸ Dieter Kunzelmann, a proponent of the Situationist International movement, was also a founder of the commune,¹¹⁹ though he soon became less involved with the running of the commune as he joined the Tupamaros West-Berlin, a Marxist quasi-terrorist group whose members later became involved with the *Bewegung 2. Juni* (June 2nd Movement) and the RAF.¹²⁰

During Kommune 1's early days, the group set up in an apartment owned by the author Hans Magnus Enzensberger and later moved to another apartment owned by Uwe Johnson.¹²¹ Eventually the commune set itself up in a tenement house in Moabit, in Berlin, and started to make a public name for itself.¹²² Rainer Langhans and Fritz Teufel set themselves up as the de facto leaders of Kommune 1, and their bizarre and confrontational antics quickly made them countercultural heroes. Eventually Langhans would begin a highly publicized relationship with

¹¹⁸ Enzensberger, 105

¹¹⁹ Thomas, 98

¹²⁰ Hauser, Dorothea. "Terrorism." Klimke, Martin, and Joachim Scharloth. *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print. 271-272.

¹²¹ Both Enzensberger and Johnson had established themselves as the forerunners of left-leaning West German literature by the mid-50's, writings' by both authors became emblematic of the "German question" inherently connected to the counterculture of the later 60's. Enzensberger was particularly critical of the Federal Republic's apparent goal of becoming a world power once again, and scornfully addressed the issue in his essay "Versuch, von der deutschen Frage Abschied zu nehmen":

"Wir sind wieder wer in der Welt,' soll in Bonn jemand behauptet haben. Irgendein Bundeskanzler wird es gewesen sein. Wir sind wieder wer, wir gelten wieder was, ungefähr wie auf dem Jahrmarkt das Kalb mit zwei Köpfen."

Parkes, K S. *Writers and Politics in Germany, 1945-2008*. Rochester, N.Y: Camden House, 2009. Print. 43-62.

¹²² Enzensberger, 108

model Uschi Obermeier, who became the popular face of German hippiedom, similar in some ways to Jane Fonda's role as an American icon.¹²³

Though Kommune 1 received plenty of media attention for its members' lifestyles, the public reception of those somewhat superficial aspects of the commune mentality (primarily the practice of free love and drug use) tended to overshadow the more stridently political side of the commune phenomenon. As described above, a good deal of Kommune 1 members went eventually became involved in militaristic leftist groups such as the RAF. As mentioned earlier, RAF leaders Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin were well acquainted with the commune scene in Munich, even attempting to hide out in the commune occupied by Amon Düül while on the run from the law.¹²⁴ And if Amon Düül proved anything, it was that the very idea of commune life was as subversive in the eyes of the music industry as it was in the eyes of the conservative society the members of Kommune 1 sought to corrupt.

Amon Düül's early recordings are riotous and bacchanalian affairs, due primarily to the communal nature of the music. For the first few Amon Düül albums, the core group of musicians headed by Ulrich and Peter Leopold, Rainer Bauer, and Chris Karrer enlisted the help of everyone in their commune (including Uschi Obermeier) to take part in a conceptual musical happening. Unfortunately, few of the commune members had any musical skill, meaning that their contributions primarily took the form of hammering on a drum or some other kind of makeshift percussion instrument. It is thus the drumming on these early efforts which established Amon Düül as the prototypical krautrock group all the way back in 1967 (along with fellow Münchners and communards Xhol Caravan): the group's embryonic sound is

¹²³ Paterson, Tony. "Uschi: Groupie, addict, and heroine of the left." *Independent*. 02 Feb 2007: n. page. Web. 19 Mar. 2012.

¹²⁴ See chapter one for Amon Düül II singer Renate Knaup's account of her relationship with Baader and Ensslin.

characterized by spindly guitar and bass workouts that are essentially drowned in a maelstrom of percussive noise. Ingeborg Schober says of the early Amon Düül sound: “Da war eine Identität da: Wildheit, Nonchalance, Kinder trommelten, Frauen trommelten. Das war revolutionär.”¹²⁵ The classic Amon Düül beat is sometimes almost unbearably heavy, and though it sounds little like the precise rhythms of the motorik school of krautrock, the tribalistic monotony of the beat is quintessentially krautrock in style.

Eventually the real musicians of Amon Düül tired of having to walk an entire household of stoned hippies through elementary rhythms, and the core members of the band split off to form Amon Düül II, one of the most inventive groups in krautrock history, and one of the most successful bands worldwide in making the transition from the psychedelic rock of the late 60’s to the progressive rock stylings which gained prominence in the early 70’s. The rock critic Lester Bangs very much admired Amon Düül II, and once said of the band:

“Amon Düül are an organic expression of certain young Germans learning, as their peers all over the world are, to relate to themselves and their own freedom in totally new ways, to translate that freedom into a new music like nothing heard on the planet before, and to totally oppose anyone or anything that stands in the way of the attainment and ongoing sensation of that freedom.”¹²⁶

Amon Düül II carved out a reputation early on for their uniquely European approach to acid rock, and were the first krautrock group to achieve success outside of Germany. At various times, Amon Düül II embellished their intoxicating brand of psychedelia with elements of Indian

¹²⁵ Schober, Ingeborg. *Tanz Der Lemminge: Amon Düül - Eine Musikkommune in Der Protestbewegung Der 60er Jahre*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1979. Print. 43.

¹²⁶ Bangs, Lester. “Amon Düül: A Science Fiction Rock Spectacle.” Patterson, Archie. *Eurock: European Rock & the Second Culture*. Portland, Or: Eurock Publications, 2002. Print.

raga, Turkish music, Wagnerian opera, gypsy traditions from Hungary and Romania, electronic experimentation, and traditional Bavarian tastes such as oom-pah, Schlager, and polka. In terms of these latter categories, the group's "most German" album is certainly 1975's *Made in Germany*,¹²⁷ a bizarre and frequently hilarious send-up of Bavarian culture that is equal parts satire and homage.

Yet it is Amon Düül II's first three albums – 1969's *Phallus Dei* ("God's penis" in Latin),¹²⁸ 1970's *Yeti*,¹²⁹ and 1971's *Tanz der Lemminge*¹³⁰ – which are most noteworthy in terms of pure musical innovation. All three albums display compositional complexity far more advanced than that of the typical psychedelic rock band. In this sense, Amon Düül II were a progressive rock group before such a genre really even existed. The three aforementioned albums are comprised largely of suites, complete with recurring motifs and short intermission-like segments between them. There is a certain Bavarian grandiloquence in Amon Düül II's approach, likely inherited from the classically over-the-top operas of Richard Wagner and Carl Orff. But the band's radical lifestyle was enough to put them at odds with the conservative, heavily Catholic culture of Bavaria, a culture which was still grappling with the presence of Nazism in its midst.¹³¹

Amon Düül were not members of the more notorious political communes such as Kommune 1, though there existed a shared collaborative ethos and a spirit of friendship that

¹²⁷ Amon Düül II. *Made in Germany*. Nova Records, 1975. CD.

¹²⁸ Amon Düül II. *Phallus Dei*. Liberty, 1969. CD

¹²⁹ Amon Düül II. *Yeti*. Liberty, 1970. CD.

¹³⁰ Amon Düül II. *Tanz der Lemminge*. Liberty, 1971. CD.

¹³¹ Amon Düül II guitarist John Weinzierl: "In those days, there were bloody Nazis around all over the place. There was rebellion against them... We didn't have guns or the tools to chase them away, but we could make music, and we could draw audiences, we could draw people, with the same understanding, with the same desires." Weinzierl, John, perf. Dir. Benjamin Whalley. *Krautrock: the Rebirth of Germany*. BBC Four: Web. 8 Mar 2012.

spanned communes across West Germany.¹³² Amon Düül were formed in and operated out of Munich, which, along with Berlin, soon became one of the most favored destinations for would-be commune dwellers. Munich's commune rock scene consisted of Amon Düül, its various offshoots (including its much more famous successor Amon Düül II), the freewheeling experimental jazz-rock group Xhol Caravan, and the "Schneeball" family of artists, a loose and highly interconnected group of artists originally comprising the bands Embryo, Ton Steine Scherben, Missus Beastly, Sparifankal, and various other lesser known artists. The Schneeball record label was established as a sort of experiment in applying the principles of communal living to the music business – the artists received equal pay and promotion benefits, regardless of which group sold the most records. This was quite a lucrative deal for Missus Beastly, Sparifankal, and the other obscure artists on the Schneeball roster, as Embryo and the Berliner rock band Ton Steine Scherben brought in the majority of profits.¹³³ As the "Schneeball-Info Nr. 5" pamphlet set forth, "die persönliche Beziehung ist wichtiger als ein großer Apparat, der einem vielleicht selbst gehört, aber irgendwann sein Eigenleben entwickelt."¹³⁴

Ton Steine Scherben were particularly supportive of the commune spirit, and were an active part of Berlin's commune scene, along with other commune-based artists such as Lava and Os Mundi. Ton Steine Scherben were also responsible for penning one of the anthems of the German counterculture, the raucous and irresistibly catchy "Rauch-Haus-Song", a tune notable both for being one of the first German-language rock anthems as well as perfectly encapsulating the struggle between the commune-dwellers and the reactionary society which sought to undermine them. With the barroom chant-like refrain of "und wir schreien's laut, ihr kriegt uns

¹³² Schober, 41

¹³³ Dedekind, 169-172

¹³⁴ Dedekind, 169

hier nicht raus! Das ist unser Haus, schmeißt doch endlich Schmidt und Press und Mosch aus Kreuzberg raus!“ („And we scream it loud, you won’t get us out! This is our house, kick Schmidt and Press and Mosch out of Kreuzberg at last!”)¹³⁵, Ton Steine Scherben drew a virtual line in the sand before the capitalist-minded establishment; Schmidt, Press, and Mosch were urban speculators aiming to clear rundown areas of Berlin of squatters so that new developments could be built.¹³⁶

Ton Steine Scherben’s program of radical reform encompassed a wide variety of styles. While “Rauch-Haus-Song” was a poetic, piano-driven ditty with lyrics worthy of Liedermacher legends such as Wolf Biermann or Franz Josef Degenhardt, Ton Steine Scherben were initially renowned for their aggressive proto-punk style. In this regard the group is somewhat unique among krautrock greats, in that their brand of psychedelia was more akin to the blistering sonic terrorism of The Stooges, MC5, or Blue Cheer than the complex quasi-electronica of their Berliner peers. By the mid-70’s, Ton Steine Scherben had begun to incorporate elements of political theatre into their sound, aligning them with the anarchic agitprop style of groups like Floh de Cologne and Checkpoint Charlie. Ton Steine Scherben even collaborated with radical theatre troupes such as Brühwarm, a group from Munich emphasizing gay rights, and Kollektiv Rote Rübe, a performance art collective who, with the Scherben as their backing band, produced one of the most frightening slabs of Germanica ever set to wax, 1976’s *Paranoia*.¹³⁷

While Ton Steine Scherben’s garage rock-inspired sonic trademark was radical in its own right, it was the band’s relationship to the music business which first singled them out as a

¹³⁵ Reiser, Rio. "Rauch-Haus-Song." *Keine Macht für Niemand*. David Volksmund Produktion, Berlin, 1972. Web. 19 Mar. 2012.

¹³⁶ Sichtermann, Kai, Jens Johler, and Christian Stahl. *Keine Macht Für Niemand: Die Geschichte Der Ton Steine Scherben*. Berlin: Schwarzkopf und Schwarzkopf, 2003. Print. 69-72, 87.

¹³⁷ Sichtermann, 175-179

revolutionary ensemble par excellence. The three albums released by the band during the 70's were spartan affairs. 1971's *Warum geht es mir so dreckig?* and 1972's *Keine Macht für Niemand* were published privately by the group and packaged in simple brown and white cardboard covers. All of the music was recorded and produced by the band members themselves, presaging the "do-it-yourself" aesthetic that would come to characterize punk and alternative rock by a number of years.¹³⁸ The first side of *Warum geht es mir so dreckig?* was recorded at an "informational event" held by the leftist organizations Rote Hilfe and Agit 883.¹³⁹

Though Ton Steine Scherben's desire to distance themselves from the music industry is not in itself remarkable, the success the group attained in spite of it is noteworthy. Ton Steine Scherben became one of the most commercially successful krautrock groups, and were ultimately embraced as the lyrical voice of the German counterculture. It is interesting, though unsurprising given that the Scherbens' lyrics were sung entirely in German and in many cases handled German cultural references, that the band maintains a significant following in Germany even today, though are rarely paid much attention by international krautrock fans. And while Ton Steine Scherben were not the first psychedelic krautrock band to favor the German language over English (that distinction most likely belongs to Ihre Kinder from Munich),¹⁴⁰ they were the first band of the krautrock generation to be linked both by fans and the media to the spirit of the 68er generation.

Ton Steine Scherben's unlikely success instigated the German recording industry to pay more attention to homegrown rock music. English and American bands were already bringing in impressive sales figures on the German market by 1970, though the populist record labels of

¹³⁸ Sichtermann, 56-61, 80-94.

¹³⁹ Sichtermann, 52-56.

¹⁴⁰ Sichtermann, 69.

Germany surmised (perhaps correctly) that audiences had little desire to hear experimental sounds from their own backyards. That the German rock scene had, by this point, already assumed a distinct identity of its own was not apparent to most major West German labels, and record label executives tended to favor pale imitations of Anglo-American trends over the more stridently experimental krautrock scene. Yet the sort of rock records promoted in Germany during this era reflects a global trend of the counterculture era: record label heads groomed to sell LP's by Pat Boone (or, in Germany, Heino) had no idea what young rock and rollers wanted to hear. Just as American pop radio spawned a thousand "psychedelic" novelty acts, the Germany recording industry attempted to cash in on the more popular aspects of the counterculture as well.

This total lack of communication between producers and consumers occasionally led to some bizarre and hilarious products. Original copies of inane psychedelic exploitation albums such as Science Fiction Corporation's *Dance with Action: Science Fiction Dance Party*¹⁴¹ and The Vampires of Dartmoore's *Dracula's Music Cabinet*¹⁴² are sought by krautrock collectors the world over. These albums, which apparently represent an attempt on the part of Populär Schallplatten and Metronome Records, respectively, to capitalize on young people's obsession with all things "swinging", are peculiar collections of trippy psychedelic grooves bolstered by sci-fi and horror-inspired sound effects which are the absolute height of kitsch. For fans of albums such as these, however, the holy grail of "krautsploitation" must certainly be Staff Carpenborg and the Electric Corona's 1970 release, *Fantastic Party*.¹⁴³ Appearing at first to be

¹⁴¹ Science Fiction Corporation. *Dance with Action: Science Fiction Dance Party*. Populär Schallplatten, 1970. CD.

¹⁴² The Vampires of Dartmoore. *Dracula's Music Cabinet*. Metronome, 1969. CD.

¹⁴³ Staff Carpenborg and the Electric Corona. *Fantastic Party*. Maritim Records, 1970. CD.

nothing more than yet another generic James Last-ian party record¹⁴⁴ (the cover depicts a crowd of wealthy swingers making a toast), the sounds within are pure krautrock, and certainly do not resemble the kind of commercial jazz and lounge music the packaging evokes.

Staff Carpenborg and his band are rather mysterious, and *Fantastic Party* is their only known release. The sounds contained within are a delirious mélange of overdriven organ, guitar grooves wracked by distortion, and heavily rhythmic drumming not far removed from the monotonous style of Can's *Jaki Liebezeit*. In general, the album never strays far enough from R&B and lounge influences to place it in the same category as, say, Can, but it is nonetheless a fascinating artifact, and one product of the Federal Republic's generation conflict of the 60's and 70's that is more amusing than disturbing.

Fantastic Party languished in almost complete obscurity for years until it was reissued in 2007 by the Wah-Wah Records label. Thus, it would be a mistake to afford it too much significance as evidence of the rapid changes taking place in the music industry during the era in which it was produced. One case, however, which could be seen as emblematic of the confused nature of the entire recording industry of the late 60's and early 70's, is the group whose reputation as mavericks and pranksters made them into underground legends in their own time. This group is Faust, and in terms of musical innovation, provocative antics, and sheer unabashed weirdness, no krautrock group ever went as far as they did.

Faust formed initially in the small town of Wümme as the union of two Hamburg-based groups, Campylognatus Citelli and Nukleus.¹⁴⁵ From the beginning, Faust were intended for

¹⁴⁴ James Last was one of the most successful German pop musicians of the 60's and 70's, having reportedly sold upwards of seventy million albums throughout his career. His rather kitschy adaptations of pop, rock, soul, and jazz styles have not aged particularly well, however.
"James Last." *Discogs*. Zink Media, Inc., n.d. Web. 21 Mar 2012.

greatness – the band was brought together by journalist and music industry insider Uwe Nettelback, who had been tasked by Polydor to find the “electronic Beatles”.¹⁴⁶ That a label as large and successful as Polydor could ever have thought that Faust could fill the void left by The Beatles upon breaking up is frankly laughable. And Faust wasted little time in declaring their eccentricity to the world at large. The Polydor executives must have blanched upon hearing Faust’s first recording; 1971’s “Lieber Herr Deutschland” is an anarchic collage of revolutionary chants, acid guitar, strange metallic sound effects, and a spoken word piece describing how to operate a fully automated washing machine.¹⁴⁷

Later that year, Faust released their debut album. Printed on transparent vinyl and packaged in a transparent sleeve bearing an x-ray image of a clenched fist, *Faust*¹⁴⁸ was obviously never going to be the commercial sensation the band’s financial backers intended it to be. The album is essentially the sound of Dada gone rock, as over the course of three tracks, the band gleefully demolishes existing precepts of what constitutes rock music. Piero Scaruffi asserts that the album,

pushed to the extreme an aesthetics of darkness, ugliness, fear, chaos, irrational that stemmed from expressionism, surrealism, theater of the absurd, Brecht/Weill's cabaret, myth of the supermensch, Wagner-ain melodrama, musique concrete and abstract painting, all fused in a formal system that was as much metaphysical as grotesque.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Wilson, A J. *Faust: Stretch Out Time 1970-1975*. London: www faust-pages.com, 2006. Print. 21-22.

¹⁴⁶ Wilson, 19-21.

¹⁴⁷ Faust. “Lieber Herr Deutschland.” *71 Minutes*. ReR Megacorp, 1988. CD.

¹⁴⁸ Faust. *Faust*. Polydor, 1971. CD.

¹⁴⁹ Scaruffi, Piero. "Faust." *Piero Scaruffi's Knowledge Base*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Mar 2012.

It is difficult to think of *Faust* as anything other than a deconstruction. Yet what distinguishes it from other contemporary deconstructionist efforts, such as those of Frank Zappa or The Fugs, is the breadth and variety of the genres it topples. The first track on *Faust*, “Why Don’t You Eat Carrots?” opens with some squalling radio feedback, while samples of The Beatles’ “All You Need is Love” and The Rolling Stones’ “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction”. From there, the song careens through a number of styles, sounding like a cut-and-paste pastiche of classical minimalism, bizarre atonal march music, Zappa-esque jazz fusion. The next two tracks, “Meadow Meal” and “Miss Fortune” are even more diverse, spanning styles both populist and academic in spirit, though all are infused with Faust’s anarchic sense of humor. For me, the quintessential Faust passage occurs around the six minute mark of “Miss Fortune”,¹⁵⁰ during which some fractured impressionistic piano work and wordless groaning come to the fore, sounding simultaneously like a parody of German opera as well as the kind of drunken beer hall sing-alongs one might hear in a Reeperbahn beer hall. From there, the band launches into a driving piano-led psychedelic rock riff, seemingly suggesting that all of the styles encompassed by “Miss Fortune” are equally silly and equally striking. Only The Residents ever followed this approach with so much success.

Faust’s first album was a landmark in underground rock music, and the band made good on the album’s promise over its next few recordings. 1973’s *The Faust Tapes* in particular serves as a fantastic showcase of the band’s unusual talents.¹⁵¹ Strongly influenced by Dada artist Kurt Schwitter’s sound poem “Ursonate”, *The Faust Tapes* is a disorienting combination of delightful progressive rock tunes and frenzied improvisatory jams. Andy Wilson links the

¹⁵⁰ Faust. “Miss Fortune.” *Faust*. Polydor, 1971. CD.

¹⁵¹ Faust. *The Faust Tapes*. Virgin, 1973. LP.

chaotic nature of the album to Dada as a whole in order to explain the album's significance as an artifact of the times during which it was recorded:

“Faust now turned to Dada, and Kurt Schwitters in particular, as a response to the absurdities of a consumer culture floundering in the midst of the collapsing politics of the cold war settlement. Where Dada had been inspired by the absurdity of war, Faust responded not only to the violence of the Vietnam war but also, in tune with their times, to the absurdity and vacuousness of the consumer culture which had grown up and perfected itself in the intervening years.”¹⁵²

The Faust Tapes contains some of the band's most iconoclastic, experimental, and ultimately thrilling tunes. The pummeling “J'ai mal aux Dents” echoes the monotonous groove of contemporaries such as Can, while fifteen short untitled tracks display the band working their fractured rock and roll sound into *musique concrète*-esque collages.¹⁵³ Amazingly, this stridently experimental album became the band's biggest commercial success, selling 50,000 copies in the UK and establishing Faust as one of the most internationally renowned krautrock groups.¹⁵⁴

Faust's approach to composition owed much to the principles (or lack thereof) of Dada. And while the band have always been inextricably bound to the krautrock tag, there was also something of Dada's internationalism in the Faust sound; the band sang in German, English, and

¹⁵² Wilson, 16

¹⁵³ Faust's hijacking of various genres and varieties of sounds owed much to Pierre Schaeffer and the *musique concrète* movement he spearheaded.

“In *musique concrète* sound materials could be taken from pre-existing recordings (including instrumental and vocal music) and recordings made specially, whether of the environment or with instruments and objects in front of a studio microphone. These source sounds might then be subjected to treatments before being combined in a structure; the compositional process proceeded by experiment. Schaeffer intended that sounds should be perceived and appreciated for their abstract properties rather than being attached to meanings or narratives associated with their sources and causes.”

Emmerson, Simon and Dennis Smalley: 'Electro-acoustic music', Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 12. Apr. 2012), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

¹⁵⁴ Wilson, 81-98.

French, and crafted music that seemed to have come out of nowhere, in contrast to the stereotypically German “mechanical” music of the group’s contemporaries. And while Faust were one of the few krautrock groups to embrace the genre classification itself (the band’s 1974 song “Krautrock” sounds like a twelve-minute distillation of the typical sound of the genre)¹⁵⁵, the band’s style was far more varied than that of most artists working within krautrock. As krautrock proliferated and developed throughout the 70’s, many artists began expressing their national identity in ways that ran the gamut from references to German classical literature, to adherence to the German ethnographic tradition. It seemed as though West German experimental rock musicians were determined to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of their culture, and krautrock’s wide-ranging diversification would become the perfect vehicle for expressing this notion.

¹⁵⁵ Faust. “Krautrock.” *Faust IV*. Virgin, 1973. CD.

V. Chapter 4

Ethnological Forgeries and Agit-Rock

In recent years, many krautrock artists have enjoyed a surge in popularity thanks to their ever-expanding influence in the indie rock and electronica communities. Artists such as Can, Faust, and Neu! now reach audiences much larger than those they were able to draw in their heyday. One aspect of the krautrock movement whose reputation has actually diminished in the eyes of the music press in recent years, however, is the cast of German musicians who predicted the so-called “new age” music trend which came to prominence in the 1980’s. New age music is characterized by a blend of ambient electronics, minimal song structures, and elements of international traditional music.¹⁵⁶ Despite the genre’s present day status as easily digestible “elevator music”, new age music came into existence due to the efforts of many artists attempting to marry the highly avant-garde sound of contemporary electronic music with styles of world music that had, at that point, received very little exposure outside of their own countries of origin.

New age music, in its earliest, most experimental incarnation, was often classified as “cosmic music”, referencing the work of progressive West German acts such as Ash Ra Tempel, its offshoot Ashra, the Cosmic Jokers, Wallenstein, Walter Wegmüller, and even Popol Vuh, all of whom recorded for the notorious journalist and record promoter Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser.¹⁵⁷ Kaiser, who established the prominent krautrock record labels Ohr, Pilz, and Cosmic Couriers, envisioned the Federal Republic’s rock scene as a sort of utopian society in which the musicians recording for his various labels would eventually lead West German society as a whole to

¹⁵⁶ Russ, Martin. *Sound Synthesis and Sampling*. Boston: Elsevier/Focal Press, 2004. Internet resource. 18-19.

¹⁵⁷ Davis, Erik. “Kosmische.” Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos. *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*. London: Black Dog, 2009. Print. 32-39.

become more peaceful and humane.¹⁵⁸ Kaiser's business model was "new age" in the extreme, so much so that he had little regard for standard business practices within the music industry. Upon publishing unauthorized recordings for the backing group on Walter Wegmüller's Tarot album (marketed under the name Cosmic Jokers), Kaiser was sued by drummer and keyboardist Klaus Schulze, marking the beginning of his long descent into LSD-fueled madness. Since the late 1970's, Kaiser's whereabouts have been a mystery, with many of his former friends and associates believing him to be either homeless or deceased.¹⁵⁹

What is most interesting about Kaiser's story, however, is his impetus to create a utopia of sound, in ways both sonic and communal. The brand of cosmic krautrock peddled by Kaiser had become by the mid 70's krautrock's most emblematic strain, especially as similar-minded efforts by artists such as Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze became notable commercial successes in America, the UK, and throughout Europe. The cosmic school of psychedelia had much in common with the popular space rock of groups such as Pink Floyd and Hawkwind, and helped bring wider exposure to the West German rock scene as a whole. It was due to this increasing popularity that, by the mid 70's, a terrifically complex and multifaceted scene of cerebral rock artists had sprung up in the Federal Republic.

Many of the artists working under the *kosmisch* banner looked to the East as a source of inspiration, seemingly inspired by the global revival of interest in the works of Hermann Hesse, who incorporated aspects of Eastern mysticism into Western literary aesthetic traditions.¹⁶⁰ For artists such as Embryo, Peter Michael Hamel and his band Between, Agitation Free, Deuter, Yatha Sidhra, and Dzyan, Indian raga was, due to its cyclical yet highly improvisatory nature,

¹⁵⁸ Kotsopoulos, 172.

¹⁵⁹ Mueller, Klaus D.. "The KS Story." *Klaus Schulze: The Official Website*. N.p., 1997. Web. 31 Mar 2012.

¹⁶⁰ Mileck, Joseph. *Hermann Hesse: Life and Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. Print.

the apex of the type of cosmic music German artists were striving to create. Likewise, the devotional music of Sufism had a distinct influence on many in the cosmic rock scene, particularly on Hamel, whose book of music philosophy, 1976's *Durch Musik zum Selbst* (*Through Music to the Self*) serves as both homage to and a continuation of the ideas contained in Hazrat Inayat Khan's classic work *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*.¹⁶¹ It is worth noting that in addition to expressing his love for Sufi and Hindustani music, Hamel also worked closely with composers such as Stockhausen, John Cage, Morton Feldman, and Terry Riley at the same time he was producing krautrock records with Between.¹⁶²

Between's style of cosmic music bears certain similarities to contemporary new age music, in that the "ethnic" motifs the band utilizes are often rather superficial, especially when compared to the similar works of Popol Vuh or even Hamel's own recordings as a solo artist. The 1973 album *And the Waters Opened*¹⁶³ is the band's greatest accomplishment, and incorporates innovative use of electronic instruments as well as harp, oboe, cello, flute, and tabla. Popol Vuh collaborator Robert Eliscu is particularly impressive on this album, turning his work on the oboe to a wide variety of styles and idioms. Yet even on Between's finest effort, it is hard to ignore the occasional triteness of the band's handling of various ethnic genres. The song "Devotion" features marvelous instrumental work (especially Hamel's piano playing), yet the song's mantric vocal refrain of "satchidananda" makes it sound all too similar to any number of psychedelic-era faux-raga pastiches.

¹⁶¹ Hamel, Peter M. *Durch Musik Zum Selbst: Wie Man Musik Neu Erleben U. Erfahren Kann*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1981. Print.

¹⁶² "Peter Michael Hamel." *Celestial Harmonies*. Aug 2007: n. page. Web. 26 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.blacksun.com/biographies/hamel.htm>>.

¹⁶³ Between. *And the Waters Opened*. Vertigo, 1973. CD.

For Hamel, Between, and most of krautrock's new age precursors, this aspect of superficiality was basically implicit, as evidenced by Between's 1975 album, *Hesse Between Music*.¹⁶⁴ The album is exactly what it sounds like: recitations of Hesse by actor and stage director Gert Westphal layered over the music of Between. The music itself is quite impressive, and the band manage to expand the diversity of their sound even further than on *And the Waters Opened*, adding congas, lotus flute, tamboura, clarinet, saxophone, harpsichord, and the Rajasthani sarangi to the mix. Yet it is obvious that Hamel and Between approach Eastern music the same way Hesse approached Eastern philosophy and literature: as a white German in awe of the mysterious traditions of another culture, and wishing to bring aspects of that culture to his own without ever completely breaking free of European artistic conventions.

Hamel's handling of ethnographic traditions is similar in its superficiality to that of the kind of new age or "world" music one might find on radio programs such as Musical Starstreams or NPR's long-running Hearts of Space, albeit more highly-developed.¹⁶⁵ A glance at the cover of Hamel's 1973 solo album *The Voice of Silence* supports this notion. The album sleeve depicts a mandala-like design ringed by an ankh, Star of David, yin-yang, Christian cross, Dharmachakra, Om, menorah, and various other spiritual symbols.¹⁶⁶ This album cover is emblematic of both Hamel's work as a composer as well as the new age genre as a whole: by seeking to synthesize such a wide selection of international genres, the music comes dangerously close to robbing each respective style of its power and significance, and instead reduces them to a rather stagnant common denominator.

¹⁶⁴ Between. *Hesse Between Music*. His Master's Voice, 1974. CD.

¹⁶⁵ Watson, Mike. "FM Radio." *AmbientMusicGuide.com*. n.d. n. page. Web. 26 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.ambientmusicguide.com/pages/radio/radioFm.php>>.

¹⁶⁶ Hamel, Peter Michael. *The Voice of Silence*. Vertigo, 1973. LP.

The work of Georg Deuter, a Munich-based multi-instrumentalist, affirms this notion. Deuter's early works in the krautrock genre, 1971's *D*¹⁶⁷ and 1972's *Aum*¹⁶⁸ bear a somewhat unified sound, coming across as a more dynamic version of Popol Vuh's spiritual music. The influence of Indian and East Asian music in Deuter's early recordings is apparent, but not overpowering. By the early 1980's, however, Deuter had become one of the foremost proponents of the nascent new age trend, and has spent the last three decades creating prosaic ambient tributes to the music of the East.¹⁶⁹

Contrasting Deuter's routine musical offerings is the work of fellow Munich resident Eberhard Schoener. Schoener's career as a composer has been dazzlingly diverse, and only a fraction of his output can be considered krautrock. Since his first album release in 1969, Schoener has recorded an album featuring synthesizer-based interpretations of Bach, collaborated with Deep Purple organist Jon Lord, conducted the Hungarian Philharmonic Orchestra, released a number of electronic works which prefigure techno and house, and collaborated with Sting and Andy Summers of The Police.¹⁷⁰ Schoener's most vital and impressive effort, however, is 1976's *Bali Agung*,¹⁷¹ a truly groundbreaking work which combines krautrock and experimental electronics with field recordings of Indonesian gamelan orchestras and kecak singers. Unlike the recordings of Between or Deuter, *Bali-Agung* turns the concept of cultural appropriation on its head. Instead of tritely adopting various aspects of world music into a Western framework, Schoener uses his experience as a classically-trained, avant-garde-leaning composer to provide a modern European context for the traditional music of

¹⁶⁷ Deuter. *D*. Kuckuck, 1971. CD.

¹⁶⁸ Deuter. *Aum*. Kuckuck, 1972. CD.

¹⁶⁹ Scaruffi, Piero. *A History of Rock Music 1951-2000*. New York: IUniverse, 2003. Print. 98.

¹⁷⁰ Schoener, Stefanie. *Eberhard Schoener: Grenzen Gibt Es Nicht*. München: LangenMüller, 2009. Print.

¹⁷¹ Schoener, Eberhard. *Bali Agung*. Harvest, 1976. CD.

Indonesia. Throughout *Bali-Agung*, Schoener's strange electronic rock sounds and the appealing dissonance of the Balinese musicians remain on an even keel and complement one another – one style never completely supersedes the other. Schoener's work is thus one of the most impressive examples of cultural adaptation to be found within the krautrock genre.

While artists such as Hamel, Deuter, and Schoener tapped into the German tradition of ethnographic research as a source of inspiration, many krautrockers did not feel the need to seek out international music genres in order to foster a new German musical tradition. However, for these artists, the only way to escape the legacy of fascism which had tainted so many forms of *Volksmusik* was to reach further into the past. Many of the krautrock artists who were most commercially successful in their homeland touted a brand of psychedelic rock combined with folk music traditions. However, the folk style practiced by these artists had little to do with contemporary developments in German folk music, such as the *Liedermacher* music of socialist artists such as Wolf Biermann or Hannes Wader. Instead, the folk-inspired branch of the krautrock movement looked to medieval and Romanticist literature, poetry, and culture as a stimulus.¹⁷²

Two major krautrock trends that reflected the influence of bygone aspects of German culture were the classical music-inspired “romantic” progressive rock groups and the more folk rock-oriented psychedelic groups, some of whom adopted a style hearkening back to both the appearance and sound of medieval German culture. Interestingly, bands from both camps displayed a predilection for names referencing German legends and literature. Some of the most prominent symphonic krautrock groups included Novalis, Wallenstein, Eulenspygel, and Erlkoenig, while the most highly-regarded folk rock groups in the Federal Republic included

¹⁷² *Kraut und Rüben: über die Anfänge deutscher Rockmusik*. Web. 26. Mar. 2012. WDR, 2006.

Hölderlin and Parzival. All of these artists represented a decisive move into the past, and attempted to incorporate aspects of German history not corrupted by National Socialism into the spirit of the counterculture. The overall approach was akin to that of many British progressive bands (most notably Jethro Tull) whose use of traditional instruments as well as modern electronic ones distinguished them as more than simple curators of centuries-old genres.

Some of these artists, most notably Eulenspygel and Hölderlin, incorporated political themes into their music,¹⁷³ though the majority of romanticist or folk-oriented krautrock artists opted for an approach perhaps best described as deliberate naïveté.¹⁷⁴ For these artists, the embracing of themes long vanished from popular music was implicitly rebellious, if for no other reason than the sheer lack of commercial potential offered by artists whose primary lyrical influences had been dead for at least two centuries. One could even fault these artists for their handling of themes brought about by the Nazis' perversion of *Schlager* and classical composers such as Wagner and Strauss;¹⁷⁵ while krautrockers more modernist in scope crafted music designed to shatter the German pop music mindset put in place by Nazism, these artists simply glossed over the musical history of the 30's and 40's (and indeed the 20th century as a whole) in the pursuit of a musical idiom yet untainted by political affectations. And yet artists such as Hölderlin and Novalis were important and relatively successful components of the krautrock movement, suggesting as they did yet another potential avenue for German pop music to follow – the use of pan flutes and fiddles certainly was certainly nothing new, but the use of these instruments in tandem with synthesizers and electric guitars was still far removed from most anything on the West German pop charts.

¹⁷³ WDR, *Kraut und Rüben*

¹⁷⁴ Freeman and Freeman

¹⁷⁵ Wistrich, Robert S. *Who's Who in Nazi Germany*. New York: Macmillan, 1982. Print. 249, 270.

However, certain elements of the krautrock scene were not content to simply provide listeners with untried musical tricks in their pursuit of a more liberal musical culture. For a great many krautrock musicians, the anarchic sounds of rock and roll and the pioneering sounds of electronic music were simply vehicles for a political message. Artists with this mindset drew on their experiences as journalists, playwrights, and political agitators to create one of the most uniquely German varieties of underground rock music in the 1970's. Groups like Floh de Cologne, Ton Steine Scherben, Checkpoint Charlie, Lokomotive Kreuzberg, Oktober, Prof. Wolfff, and Hotzenplotz perceived the incisive political potential rock and roll and used it to deliver a shared message equally inspired by Bertolt Brecht and the APO.

Floh de Cologne, the most politically outspoken and significant of the "agitpop" krautrock bands, formed around the nucleus of Gerd Wollschon, Hansi Frank, Dieter Klemm, and Markus Schmidt, a group of anarchist students at the University of Cologne, in 1966.¹⁷⁶ The band's most immediately discernible influence was The Fugs, the psychedelic pranksters from the Lower East Side of New York whose combination of garage rock, folk, beat poetry, and surreal humor would make them into one of the most well-received acts of 1968's *Essener Internationale Songtage*,¹⁷⁷ the countercultural music festival which served as a rallying point for potential revolutionaries and socialists in the Federal Republic. And though Floh de Cologne's raw and raucous style owed much to The Fugs as well as Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention, the Cologne ensemble applied their own Teutonic touches to their style as well.

Floh de Cologne's most accomplished and dynamic album is *Fließbandbabys Beat-Show*, released in 1970 on Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser's Ohr label. Floh de Cologne embodied in many ways

¹⁷⁶ Morton, Brian. "Floh de Cologne." Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos. *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*. London: Black Dog, 2009. Print. 90-93.

¹⁷⁷ Kutschke, Beate. *Musikkulturen in Der Revolte: Studien Zu Rock, Avantgarde Und Klassik Im Umfeld Von "1968"*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2008. Print. 163-169.

the utopian ideal set forth by Kaiser in his influential *Buch der neuen Pop-Musik*, which encouraged potential rock and rollers to engage their audience politically and socially, as well as musically.¹⁷⁸ Floh de Cologne were first and foremost a performance art collective, and if their zany satirical lyrics often overshadowed the wit of the music itself, it was only because the band intended it to be so; the band were active members of the APO and never tried to obscure the fact that their music was essentially propaganda for the student movement. *Fließbandbabys Beat-Show* in particular seems tailor-made to address the concerns of German students, as it viciously satirizes not only conservative figureheads such as Franz Josef Strauss, but also iconic manifestations of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (Afri-Cola, the Ford Capri), and the vapidly apolitical side of the hippie counterculture. The album's focus on the inequalities between "die oberen Zehntausend" and "die unteren sechzig Millionen" is perhaps the most stridently politicized lyrical work to be found in all of krautrock.¹⁷⁹

Musically, Floh de Cologne, along with most of the political krautrock groups, has relatively little in common with more famous contemporaries such as Can, Faust, Neu!, or Amon Düül II. When listening to Floh de Cologne, it is clear that the music is always intended to frame the lyrical content. In this way, Floh de Cologne's songwriting style more strongly resembles the collaborative work of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, or the satirical songwriting of Kurt Tucholsky, than it does most psychedelic or electronic rock music. Furthermore, a significant part of Floh de Cologne's sardonic approach was the incorporation of various forms of German traditional music into their sound, including oom-pah, polka, and of course, *Schlager*.

¹⁷⁸ Kaiser, Rolf-Ulrich. *Das Buch Der Neuen Pop-Musik*. Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1970. Print.

¹⁷⁹ Floh de Cologne. *Fließbandbabys Beat-Show*. Ohr, 1970. LP.

If Floh de Cologne, with their intelligent and often hilarious lyrics, ideologically represented the intellectual student and protest movements, Karlsruhe's Checkpoint Charlie represented the most violent and anarchic end of the West German revolutionary spectrum. Describing their music as "terror rock", the band's aim seemed to be pure provocation.¹⁸⁰ Like Floh de Cologne, they incorporated theatrical aspects into their rock sound, though the dramatic moments in the band's first album, 1970's *Grüß Gott mit hellem Klang*, owe more to the most extreme performance artists of the time than to Brecht and Weill. Checkpoint Charlie's style was certainly as intense and aggressive as any recording from the punk era (the band would in fact turn their hand to a more *neue deutsche Welle*-influence style in later years)¹⁸¹, and vocalist Uwe von Trotha's profanity-filled delivery is startlingly out of step with the type of lyrics favored by rock fans of the era. And yet Checkpoint Charlie, like Floh de Cologne, was significant not only because of their provocative style, but also because of the unique German perspective the band offered. What set groups like Floh de Cologne and Checkpoint Charlie apart from American or English contemporaries like The Fugs was their addressing of real issues in West German politics and society. The German political groups were quite upfront about their radical ideas. The plight of the worker, the inanity of right wing politics, and the dire need for social liberalization were all considered critical by the German polit-rock groups, whose combination of confrontational lyrics, electrifying psychedelic music, and distinctly German themes made them important components of the protest movement during their own time, but also made it difficult for such bands to get any attention outside of their homeland, even when described and packaged and krautrock. Indeed, many German-language writings about

¹⁸⁰ Freeman and Freeman

¹⁸¹ Checkpoint Charlie's 1978 album *Frühling der Kruppel* provided one of the earliest points of comparison between krautrock and the nascent punk and NDW scenes in the Federal Republic. Checkpoint Charlie. *Frühling der Kruppel*. Schneeball, 1978. LP.

krautrock describe Floh de Cologne as one of the most significant bands of the entire movement, while the band is conspicuously absent from most Anglo-American accounts of the scene.

While at first glance there seems to be little common ground between the cosmic rock pioneers (the predecessors of new age), the Romanticist and medieval culture-influenced progressive groups, and the uncompromising peddlers of agitpop, all of these groups occupied a very important place within krautrock. What these groups have in common is their emphasizing of themes relevant to the culture of German record buyers but utterly insignificant to the rest of the record-buying world. Ultimately one need only examine the kind of reception krautrock receives nowadays to realize that in certain ways, these bands reflected their own German culture more strongly than those few krautrock bands which are today considered canonical. Can, Faust, Neu!, Amon Düül II, Kraftwerk, and Tangerine Dream can all boast significant worldwide followings in this age of the internet, but in many cases, it was artists like Peter Michael Hamel, Hölderlin, or Floh de Cologne who appealed more strongly to West German audiences. Certainly, the more well-known artists mentioned above reflected certain aspects of West German culture very strongly, but the artists whose greatest successes occurred during their own time, and not following the advent of the internet, are perhaps more indicative of what West German audiences wanted to hear during the 60's and 70's.¹⁸² These artists have largely been forgotten at this point, both by the German music-buying public as well as international fans. Simply put, the styles peddled by these types of artists reflected the zeitgeist brilliantly, yet became obsolete almost overnight once it was over.

¹⁸² WDR, *Kraut und Rüben*

One variety of krautrock, however, managed to both mirror the tumultuous spirit of the 60's and 70's as well as proliferate and develop in later years, quickly forming an identity so strong that it would eventually change the face of popular music around the world. Of course, it did not begin with krautrock, but the krautrock movement gave it the momentum it needed to develop into a fully realized genre, in which artists could operate both as purveyors of the most blithe pop music imaginable, as well as create intimidatingly experimental works the likes of which had never before been heard. All in all, it is one of Germany's greatest contributions to global pop culture: electronic music.

VI. Chapter 5

The Man-Machines: Krautrock and Electronic Music

The roots of electronic music in Germany stretch back to the genre's infancy. Even before anyone recognized electronic music as a legitimate genre, the German electronics firm AEG was developing tape recording equipment that dramatically improved musical recording fidelity.¹⁸³ Ultimately the advancements pioneered by AEG led to wider recording availability, and the relatively low price of magnetic tape enabled new generations of musicians in utilizing the recording studio to edit, manipulate, and transform musical compositions.¹⁸⁴

From 1935 to 1953, artists all over Europe began to recognize the potential of electronic recording techniques, not just as tools for improving the fidelity of recordings of acoustic instruments, but also as instruments unto themselves. In France, the groundbreaking experimental works of Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry, and Edgard Varèse signified the birth of *musique concrète*, which may be considered the first wholly electronic genre of music.¹⁸⁵ Schaeffer, Henry, and Varèse used “found” sounds the way Dada collagists such as Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann used postcard images, bits of advertisements, letters, and other bits of cultural debris in their photomontages. The *musique concrète* practitioners offered a sort of hyper-reality, in which snippets of voices, musical instruments, and sounds from life outside the studio were all juxtaposed to create a style of composition utterly different from anything heard

¹⁸³ “...in the 1920s, German inventor Kurt Stille came up with the concept of recording in steel ribbon—an improvement—but the medium was expensive and still couldn't match the fidelity of a 78 rpm disc.” The AEG Magnetophon K1 followed in 1935, helping to bring magnetic tape recording to a wider audience. “1935 AEG Magnetophon Tape Recorder.” *Mix: Professional Audio and Music Production*. 01 Sep 2006: n. page. Web. 27 Mar. 2012. <<http://mixonline.com/TECnology-Hall-of-Fame/aeg-magnetophone-recorder-090106/>>.

¹⁸⁴ Morton, David. *Sound Recording: The Life Story of a Technology*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004. Print. 127-132.

¹⁸⁵ Holmes, Thom. *Electronic and Experimental Music*. New York: Scribner's, 1985. Print. 72-76.

before.¹⁸⁶ Even earlier, in the 1910's and 20's, Dadaists such as Kurt Schwitters and Hugo Ball had challenged traditional precepts of composition with their "sound poetry", consisting of series of syllables pronounced in a structured form to create a collage using nothing but the human voice. Anna Katharina Schaffner explains that "sound as evocative aesthetic material and means of coherence is the self-sufficient subject matter of the poem, just as lines, colours and forms have become autonomous in painting. The attention is drawn to texture, formation, and plasticity of language."¹⁸⁷ Both *musique concrète* and Dadaist sound poetry would prove to have a strong influence on krautrockers decades later. Faust offered their own homage to Schwitters's "Ursonate" with two short tracks ("Dr. Schwitters – Intro" and "Dr. Schwitters (Snippet)") from their 1973 album *The Faust Tapes*, an album which fused the anarchic sound of psychedelic rock with the patchwork style of *musique concrète*.¹⁸⁸

Beginning in 1953, Karlheinz Stockhausen took up residency in Cologne to work at the Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk (NWDR) station, after having worked with Schaeffer in his studio in Paris.¹⁸⁹ Over the next few years, Stockhausen's work in electronic music would transform the genre, influencing composers both in Germany and around the world. His two *Elektronische Studien*, released in 1953 and 1954, were the first scores to be published as pieces of electronic music.¹⁹⁰ Throughout the rest of the 50's, Stockhausen reputation grew continually, until he had established a reputation as the foremost proponent of electronic music in Europe. From 1958 to 1960, Stockhausen labored over his work *Kontakte*, which signaled the direction German

¹⁸⁶ Apel, Willi. "Musique Concrète." *Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969. Print. 560 – 561.

¹⁸⁷ Schaffner, Anna Katharina. "Assaulting the Order of Signs." Jones, Dafydd. *Dada Culture: Critical Texts on the Avant-Garde*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006. Internet resource.

¹⁸⁸ Faust. *The Faust Tapes*. Virgin, 1973. CD.

¹⁸⁹ Kurtz, Michael. *Stockhausen: A Biography*. London: Faber and Faber, 1991. Print. 52-57.

¹⁹⁰ Maconie, Robin. *Other Planets: The Music of Karlheinz Stockhausen*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2005. Print. 129-137.

electronic music would take over the course of the next two decades.¹⁹¹ *Kontakte* would come to be widely recognized as a major breakthrough in electronic music,¹⁹² and the expansiveness of the sounds contained therein directly foreshadowed the work of more populist-minded krautrockers such as Klaus Schulze and Tangerine Dream.

It was these very musicians who would eventually take up the torch passed by Stockhausen, as electronic music of the 1960's began to divide into two very different camps. On one hand, the work of composers such as Morton Subotnick and Terry Riley¹⁹³ opened up new avenues for electronic recordings in the context of classical music, while in contrast, former synthesizer pioneers Jean-Jacques Perrey and Gershon Kingsley turned their hand to pop tunes for lounge lizards,¹⁹⁴ and Walter Carlos released the highly successful *Switched-On Bach* album in 1968.¹⁹⁵ While Perrey, Kingsley, and Carlos all helped to garner electronic music the commercial attention it had so long lacked, their efforts often amounted to little more than kitsch, inadvertently suggesting to record buyers that electronic music was nothing but a prosaic pop craze.

Meanwhile, Stockhausen had begun to expand his repertoire, composing choral pieces such as *Momente*, which he began writing in 1962 and did not completely finish until 1969,¹⁹⁶ and 1968's *Stimmung*, as well as blending improvisation, electronic techniques, and traditional

¹⁹¹ Kurtz, 100-105

¹⁹² Maconie, 193

¹⁹³ Holmes, 226

¹⁹⁴ "On their 1966 space-pad classic *The In Sound from Way Out!*, composers Jean-Jacques Perrey and Gershon Kingsley pitched electronic music as the future of pop, and their own works of "Electronic Sono-Syntheses" as the first such music "designed for fun and relaxation."

Moed, Andrea. "TIPSY/Trip Tease/Asphodel." *CMJ New Music Monthly*. May 1997. Print. 44.

¹⁹⁵ Braun, Hans-Joachim. *Music and Technology in the Twentieth Century*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. Print. 74-75.

¹⁹⁶ Maconie, 239-245

orchestration on works like *Mikrophonie I* (1964), *Solo* (1966), and *Telemusik* (1966).¹⁹⁷ He became well known as a pedagogue at the *Darmstädter Ferienkurse*¹⁹⁸ and the *Hochschule für Musik Köln*,¹⁹⁹ where future Can founders Holger Czuckay and Irmin Schmidt would, under his tutelage, begin to develop their own ideas about electronic composition.²⁰⁰ Stockhausen had long enjoyed a reputation as the rebellious firebrand of classical music, but once he became a respected authority at two of the most highly centers for regarded music instruction in Europe, his works in the field of electronic music gradually came to set the genre's standards.

Interestingly, krautrock musicians interested in electronic composition would begin to use Stockhausen's lessons to dramatically alter the genre he had personally been instrumental in developing. By the time Stockhausen was chosen to represent German ingenuity at the 1970 World Fair in Osaka,²⁰¹ his influence was beginning to diminish as scores of his disciples took electronic music in an increasingly popular direction. 1970 also marked the commercial release of the Mini-Moog, the first affordable synthesizer intended for home use.²⁰² The increasing availability of electronic instruments was crucial to the popularization of electronic music.

By the early 70's, synthesizers had already become an important part of the typical krautrock sound. Even more rock-oriented groups began featuring complex electronic arrangements in their songs, which were steadily becoming longer and more ambitious with each passing year. Many of the most noteworthy krautrock artists occupied a space somewhere between psychedelic rock and pure electronic music. Can, Faust, and Neu! all utilized a wide

¹⁹⁷ Maconie, 262-267

¹⁹⁸ Kurtz, 146-147

¹⁹⁹ Kurtz, 194

²⁰⁰ Unterberger, Richie. *Unknown Legends of Rock 'n' Roll*. London: Omnibus, 1998. Print. 168.

²⁰¹ Kurtz, 178-180

²⁰² Pinch, T J, and Frank Trocco. *Analog Days: The Invention and Impact of the Moog Synthesizer*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. Print. 214-250.

array of electronic instruments and gadgets, though electric guitars and rock drumming still formed the backbone of their styles. Artists belong to the Berlin school of krautrock, which had essentially been born in Conrad Schnitzler's Zodiak Club, all experimented with electronics to some extent. The diverse prog rock ensemble Agitation Free featured the talents of Michael Hoenig, a highly innovative keyboardist and synthesizer manipulator who would later pursue a successful solo career and score a number of films,²⁰³ including assisting Philip Glass with the *Koyanisqaatsi* soundtrack in 1983.²⁰⁴ From the larger-than-life acid rock trio Ash Ra Tempel, both drummer Klaus Schulze and guitarist Manuel Göttsching ditched their earlier rock style in favor of highly experimental and groundbreaking electronic compositions.²⁰⁵ Schulze became one of the best-selling and internationally well-known electronic musicians of the 70's with his expansive soundscapes,²⁰⁶ while Göttsching's 1984 album *E2-E4* is regarded as a foundation of modern-day techno.²⁰⁷ Yet overshadowing the influence laid out by both Schulze and Conrad Schnitzler was the revolutionary ensemble to which they had both once belonged. For most of the 70's and into the 80's, Tangerine Dream, led by its only constant member Edgar Froese, was one of the premier electronic bands in the world.²⁰⁸

Tangerine Dream came into existence as a radically unhinged psychedelic rock trio, featuring Froese on guitar and keyboards, Schulze on drums, and avowed "untameable

²⁰³ Scaruffi, 101

²⁰⁴ MacDonald, Scott. *A Critical Cinema: 2*. Berkeley [u.a.: Univ. of California Press, 1992. Print. 398.

²⁰⁵ Bogdanov, 25

²⁰⁶ Stubbs, David. "Klaus Schulze." Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos. *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*. London: Black Dog, 2009. Print. 133-134.

²⁰⁷ "*E2-E4*, one of the few records Göttsching released under his own name, has earned its place as one of the most important, influential electronic records ever released. It's also the earliest album to set the tone for electronic dance music; simply put, it just sounds like the mainstream house produced during the next two decades."

Bush, John. "E2-E4." *Allmusic*. n.d. n. page. Web. 27 Mar. 2012.

²⁰⁸ Vladimir Bogdanov celebrates Tangerine Dream's influence on electronic music: "Without doubt, the recordings of Tangerine Dream have made the greatest impact on the widest variety of instrumental music during the '80s and '90s, ranging from the most atmospheric new age and space music to the harshest abrasions of electronic dance." Bogdanov, 504.

experimentalist” Schnitzler²⁰⁹ using a wide variety of sounds, both acoustic and otherwise, to establish atmosphere. The only album released by this configuration, 1970’s *Electronic Meditation*²¹⁰, is essentially a psychedelic rock album with little in the way of true electronic instrumentation. And yet in many ways the album more strongly resembles electronic music than anything happening at the time in rock. All of the instruments seem to swirl together in a disorienting mélange of sound, confounding the idea of instrumental turn-taking so common to rock music of the era. Interestingly, the album strongly resembles another krautrock oddity released the same year. The Düsseldorf quintet Organisation’s *Tone Float*²¹¹ is another album grounded in psychedelic rock which nonetheless sounds more strongly indebted to electronic music. Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider of Organisation would form Kraftwerk the same year the album was released.²¹²

Klaus Schulze and Conrad Schnitzler both left Tangerine Dream after *Electronic Meditation* to pursue solo careers. Edgar Froese recruited new sidemen, including multi-instrumentalist Christopher Franke, and began to expand the scope of his compositions with each successive album.²¹³ The next three albums released by the band, *Alpha Centauri* (1971)²¹⁴, *Zeit* (1972)²¹⁵, and *Atem* (1972)²¹⁶, all released on Rolf Ulrich Kaiser’s Ohr label, saw the band moving in an increasingly electronic direction. With the release of 1974’s *Phaedra* on Virgin

²⁰⁹ Stubbs, David. “Conrad Schnitzler.” Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos. *Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy*. London: Black Dog, 2009. Print. 128-130.

²¹⁰ Tangerine Dream. *Electronic Meditation*. Ohr, 1970. LP.

²¹¹ Organisation. *Tone Float*. RCA Victor, 1970. CD.

²¹² Albiez, Sean, and David Pattie. *Kraftwerk: Music Non-Stop*. New York: Continuum, 2011. Print. 98-102.

²¹³ Bogdanov, 504

²¹⁴ Tangerine Dream. *Alpha Centauri*. Ohr, 1971. LP.

²¹⁵ Tangerine Dream. *Zeit*. Ohr, 1972. LP

²¹⁶ Tangerine Dream. *Atem*. Ohr, 1972. LP

Records, the band all but abandoned the rock roots of their earlier recordings and become craftsmen of sublime electronic epics.²¹⁷

The mid-70's Tangerine Dream sound consists of layers of synthesized melodies which gradually overlap and supersede one another, resembling in some ways more accessible versions of Stockhausen's works from the late 50's and early 60's. The feted Tangerine Dream sound was accessible enough, in fact, to turn them into international superstars who transcended the cult status afforded to even the most popular krautrock groups. By the end of the 70's, Tangerine Dream had become ambassadors of Germany's new musical culture, a culture which seemed to represent and reflect Germany's gradual transition from the land of the post-war economic miracle to a land grown adept at utilizing technology to open up avenues for the future. More and more, German electronic music with roots in krautrock became associated with anything that apparently characterized German nature. And if Tangerine Dream served as the messengers bringing these revelations to the world, the definers, spokespeople, and true innovators of the German electronic message were Kraftwerk.

It is nearly impossible to overstate Kraftwerk's importance in the field of popular electronic music. Indeed, there was essentially no such thing as popular electronic music before Kraftwerk, excepting novelties like Perrey and Kingsley or *Switched-On Bach*. Kraftwerk's career mirrors the development of "electro-pop", and more than any other artist, makes clear the crucial link between krautrock and later varieties of electronica. Kraftwerk's most critical and distinctive trait was the consciously created image of "technicians who worked with music," rather than musicians in the conventional sense.²¹⁸ The aforementioned *Tone Float* album,

²¹⁷ Strong, M C. *The Essential Rock Discography*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006. Print. 1081.

²¹⁸ Larkey, Edward. "Transcultural Influences in Popular Music between Germany and the United States."

recorded in 1970 under the name Organisation, was pure krautrock, and even a step further towards the avant-garde than most krautrock musicians. By the time the group released its last single of the krautrock era, 1983's "Tour de France",²¹⁹ the band had become a fully electronic hit-making powerhouse, retaining virtually none of their original psychedelic traits. Over the course of those thirteen years, key musicians Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider, along with significant sidemen such as Michael Rother, Klaus Dinger, Karl Bartos, and Wolfgang Flür, guided German underground music away from guitar feedback and spastic drumming (à la Amon Düül II or Faust) towards precise keyboard-driven electronic pop. The sound Kraftwerk was key in creating would be instrumental in defining Germany's pop music identity in years to come.

Following the release of *Tone Float*, Hütter and Schneider disbanded Organisation and brought in a fluid cast of supporting musicians. Most spent only brief periods of time with the band, appearing in a handful of live performances and then leaving the group. However, two of Kraftwerk's earliest collaborators would go later form the group that perhaps exemplifies the krautrock motorik beat more than any other band.²²⁰ It is uncertain to what extent guitarist Michael Rother and drummer Klaus Dinger shaped the early Kraftwerk sound (or vice versa), but the similarities between the first four Kraftwerk albums and Rother and Dinger's project Neu! are self-apparent. Neu! was instrumental in bridging the gap between psychedelic music and electronica, and in giving psychedelic music a distinctly German flavor. Neu!'s self-titled first album, released on Brain Records in 1972,²²¹ hardly sounded like anything happening in the

Martinson, Steven D, and Renate A. Schulz. *Transcultural German Studies: Building Bridges*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2008. Print. 225.

²¹⁹ Kraftwerk. "Tour de France." Kling Klang, 1983. 12" single.

²²⁰ Bussy, Pascal, and Mick Fish. *Kraftwerk: Man, Machine and Music*. Wembley: SAF, 1993. Print. 34-36.

²²¹ Neu!. *Neu!*. Brain, 1972. CD.

progressive rock trend which by that time had almost totally superseded psychedelic rock. The driving force behind Neu!'s unique sound was Dinger, whose metronomic percussive style predicted the rhythms that would dominate house and techno in the 80's and 90's. David Bowie, one of krautrock's most high profile enthusiasts, even declared Dinger's later musical project, La Düsseldorf, to have supplied "the soundtrack of the 80's."²²²

Klaus Dinger is a central figure in krautrock, if for no other reason than his promotion and development of the motorik beat. Upon comparing Kraftwerk and Neu!'s debut album, Dinger's role in pushing krautrock towards a more electronic sound becomes apparent. Dinger made his recorded debut on Kraftwerk's debut album in 1970, laying down the drum track's on the album's closing song, "Vom Himmel hoch" ("From the high heavens").²²³ Clocking in at ten minutes, "Vom Himmel hoch"²²⁴ is an unsettling panorama of proto-ambient noise, featuring Ralf Hütter's heavily distorted organ, which strongly resembles the sound of bombs being dropped from the sky. The song is perhaps Kraftwerk's most overtly politicized musical statement, as, over ten excruciating minutes, the band calls to mind everything Germany was trying to forget.²²⁵ Dinger's percussion work on the track was highly unconventional in 1970; the lack of a well-defined beat and use of percussion in establishing a particular atmosphere aligns the song more closely with Iannis Xenakis's radical percussion experiment *Persephassa*,²²⁶ released only one year earlier, than anything else happening in rock at the time.

²²² Valvona, Dominic. "Viva by La Düsseldorf." *Vessel Music*. 14 Sep 2010: n. page. Web. 27 Mar. 2012.

²²³ Albiez and Pattie, 100-102

²²⁴ Kraftwerk. "Vom Himmel hoch." *Kraftwerk*. Philips, 1970. CD.

²²⁵ Prendergast, Mark and Edwin Pouncey, perf. *Kraftwerk and the Electronic Revolution: A Documentary Film*. Surrey, U.K: Sexy Intellectual, 2008.

²²⁶ Xenakis, Iannis. *Persephassa*. 1969.

If “Vom Himmel hoch” was the sound of Dinger finding his feet as a new kind of rock drummer, “Hallogallo”²²⁷, the first track of Neu!’s debut is the sound of him perfecting the style which would soon become synonymous with krautrock and stereotypes about the German love of precision. “Hallogallo”, along with the rest of Neu!’s debut, broke free of the stranglehold the electric guitar had exerted on rock music. Certainly, the track is made sublime by Michael Rother’s magnificent guitar playing, which fades in and out, blending melodies and drones to beautiful effect. But the track’s emphasis lies squarely on Dinger’s drumming. Dinger’s repetitive percussive patterns drive the song, and yet the song barely changes over the course of its ten minute duration. Rother lays down some nifty, vaguely jazzy guitar riffs, and Dinger adds some impressive drum fills to his constant beat, but for the most part, “Hallogallo” consists of two men playing the exact same thing for ten minutes. The track is thus one of the first examples in rock music of a song in which the focus is not on the lyrics or melody, but rather, on a simple, static, and hypnotic drum beat. Electronic musicians would absorb Dinger’s ideas in pursuing their vision of a style of music free of excessive individualism and ego. The motorik beat could belong to anyone.

By the time Neu! had carved out their own niche in the krautrock underground, Kraftwerk had taken a direction quite different from that of their early days with Dinger and Rother. By 1973, the band had been reduced to the core creative unit of Hütter and Schneider. That same year saw the release of *Ralf und Florian*,²²⁸ which, with its rollicking drum machine beats, washes of synthesized sound, and diverse and creative guitar work, turned out to be a much gentler beast than either of the band’s first two albums. *Ralf und Florian* marked Kraftwerk’s crossover from a psychedelic group with electronic tendencies, to an electronic

²²⁷ Neu!. “Hallogallo.” *Neu!*. Brain, 1972. CD.

²²⁸ Kraftwerk. *Ralf und Florian*. Philips, 1973. LP.

group whose sound happened to be implicitly psychedelic. Hütter and Schneider's knack for crafting songs which were both ethereal and catchy would come to fruition on the band's next album, 1974's *Autobahn*,²²⁹ the record which produced the first and greatest international krautrock hit.

The album version of "Autobahn" runs for nearly twenty-three minutes. Beginning with the sound of a sputtering engine and a honking car horn, the track runs through a variety of melodies, including the now famous refrain, "wir fahr'n, fahr'n, fahr'n auf der Autobahn," which English-speaking audiences often misinterpreted as "fun, fun, fun on the Autobahn."²³⁰ Whether American and English audiences' comical mistake contributed to the song's success is difficult to say. But the song reached the top thirty on the American Billboard charts and the top twenty in the UK, making it by far the most internationally popular tune of the krautrock generation.²³¹ Indeed, it took "Autobahn" to make casual American record buyers to take realize that there was any fresh music coming out of Germany at all. The UK had become acquainted with the scene earlier, thanks to Can, Faust, and Amon Düül II and their significant cult followings.

The fact that Kraftwerk, of all the krautrock bands in existence, was the first band to crossover to international record buying publics not otherwise interested in German experimental music is critical in terms of krautrock's reception in other countries. For better or for worse, the krautrockers' penchant for all things electronic was instrumental in characterizing audiences' perception of German popular culture abroad. Likewise, the poker-faced seriousness of the musicians in Kraftwerk, both in interviews and onstage, became emblematic of the stoic nature

²²⁹ Kraftwerk. *Autobahn*. Philips, 1974. LP.

²³⁰ Thompson, Dave. *Alternative Rock*. San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 2000. Print. 55.

²³¹ Thompson, Dave. "Autobahn." *AllMusic*. AMG, n. d. Web. 29 Mar. 2012.

of the German avant-garde. Pascal Bussy explains the impact Kraftwerk's well thought-out style and image had on the international music press:

“Here was a totally new way of presenting a rock band. Not the overtly fun-loving, drug-taking, girl chasing, long-haired stereotypes that journalists had become accustomed to, but serious theoreticians with short hair and suits who espoused and praised all things German.”²³²

Years later, a snippet from Kraftwerk's 1986 song “Electric Café” would be used as the theme music for the recurring Saturday Night Live sketch “Sprockets”, in which Mike Myers and Dana Anderson parodied aspects of German avant-garde culture.²³³ One 1989 episode, which featured Myers and Anderson portraying the effete and pretentious musicians Dieter and Kurt, found Dieter naming Kraftwerk as his foremost musical influence.²³⁴

In addition to the band's status as icons of German pop culture, Kraftwerk's success represented the apex of krautrock's significant influence on musicians outside of Germany. The electronic sound that was beginning to characterize much of German pop music (and almost all German pop music to become successful outside of the Federal Republic) had essentially developed directly out of the efforts of krautrock artists seeking to connect experimental electronic sounds to more populist genres. And while Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream managed to secure significant followings outside of their homeland, krautrock's real importance would not become clear until approximately fifteen years after the krautrock scene finally faded away.

²³² Bussy and Fish, 67

²³³ “Sprockets.” *Saturday Night Live*. NBC. 17 Mar. 1990. Television.

²³⁴ “Sprockets.” *Saturday Night Live*. NBC. 5 Mar. 1989. Television.

VII. Conclusion

Ultima Thule: Krautrock and the Modern World

Sometime around 2000, Radiohead began performing a cover of Can's "Thief" during concerts.²³⁵ Radiohead's album *Kid A* was released around the same time, in October of 2000, and it reached the number one chart spot in the UK, USA, Canada, France, Ireland, and New Zealand.²³⁶ In some ways, *Kid A*, with its hallucinatory mixture of old-fashioned electronics and jazzy influences, sounded like a modernized update of the krautrock sound. *Kid A*'s commercial success was somewhat surprising, as the experimentalist tendencies that had always been a latent part of Radiohead's sound were brought to the fore. Even more surprising, however, was the idea that a chart-topping band could garner a fantastic reception from fans of pop radio around the world when covering a thirty-two year old tune by a band notorious for its anarchic experimentalism.

It seems that during the 1970's, the time was simply not yet ripe for krautrock's significance to make itself apparent. During that decade, krautrock remained the province of small cultic groups of fans, while much less groundbreaking progressive rock artists from other countries (Genesis, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and Yes, just to name a few) were almost assured of commercial success with each album they released. It took a new generation of musicians obsessed with rediscovering music of the past, as well as the advent of the internet, for the importance of krautrock's influence on modern popular music to become apparent.

And yet, even with the renewed attention given to the genre thanks to the efforts of successful musicians in electronica, indie rock, and the so-called "post-rock" trend of the 90's

²³⁵ Lapatine, Scott. "Radiohead's 20 Best Cover Songs." *Stereogum*. 26 May 2011: n. page. Web. 31 Mar. 2012.

²³⁶ Lin, Marvin. *Kid A*. New York: Continuum, 2011. Print.

and 2000's, the role of krautrock as a component of German social history has rarely been discussed. Krautrock's visibility as a part of the revolutionary counterculture of the 68ers was, during its zenith, overshadowed by the acclaim received by NDF filmmakers and authors such as Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass, as well as by the game-changing actions of groups like the SDS, the APO, and of course, the RAF. Interestingly, krautrock is arguably more present in modern day popular culture than most other aspects of the German counterculture of the 60's and 70's. Werner Herzog continues to make successful and well received films, and Böll and Grass (who both received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1972, and 1999, respectively)²³⁷ still rank among the foremost names in German literature, but little else about the 68ers continues to snare the interest of new generations, year after year.

Much of this interest is due to the attention of the international electronic music community. Since electronic music became a major commercial force in the early 90's, the study of this futuristic style of music, which, to the uninitiated, seemed to have materialized out of nowhere, has been central to understanding of modern pop music. The vast majority of pop hits released in recent years have been primarily electronic in nature. While rock continues remains a major cultural force, it has ceased to be *the* dominant cultural force in popular music, having been replaced almost wholesale by hip-hop and music that can be said to belong to the nebulous "pop" genre. This contemporary variety of pop utilizes, in most cases, production techniques identical to those used by producers of more serious-minded electronic music. And for those who wish to understand the history of how the synthesizer supplanted the electric guitar as pop culture's musical weapons of choice, krautrock has become essential listening.

²³⁷ "All Nobel Prizes in Literature". Nobelprize.org. 1 Apr 2012. Web, 26. Mar. 2012.
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/

That is not to say that krautrock has been embraced by most fans of popular music. Outside of Kraftwerk, no krautrock artist has been absorbed into the “classic rock” canon as have been certain artists whose sales figures were nearly as paltry as those brought in by most krautrockers. The Velvet and Underground and The Stooges have both been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (in 1996²³⁸ and 2010²³⁹, respectively), but the possibility of Can, Faust, or Neu! following in their footsteps seems rather remote.

And yet, the influence wrought by krautrock on modern music is great. Furthermore, the krautrock movement comprised an important part of the West German counterculture, and essentially served as its soundtrack. It is also important to note that the krautrock scene was as complex and multifaceted a musical movement as any rock scene around the world. Just as the American counterculture found its voice in Bob Dylan’s iconic poetry, Jimi Hendrix’s fluid guitar wizardry, and Janis Joplin’s expressive cry, it could be said that those citizens of the Federal Republic with rebellious tendencies were represented variously by Can’s ultra-experimental groove, Tangerine Dream’s shadowy tone poetry, and Floh de Cologne’s satirical cabaret style. Krautrock’s stylistic inconsistencies are exactly what make the very term such a controversial moniker; the nature of krautrock seems to flow through the spirit of the music rather than through observed similarities among the artists belonging to the genre. This “spiritual” connection among disparate artists in fact aligns the genre even more closely with the German counterculture as a whole. Can, Tangerine Dream, and Floh de Cologne had about as much in common stylistically as the authors, filmmakers, or even political organizations associated with the 68er generation. For example, the works of writers like Uwe Timm, Heinrich Böll, and Rolf-Dieter Brinkmann were all emblematic of the new German literary scene, though

²³⁸ “Inductees by Year: 1996.” *Rock & Roll Hall of Fame*. Web, 26. Mar. 2012.

²³⁹ “Inductees by Year: 2010.” *Rock & Roll Hall of Fame*. Web, 26. Mar. 2012.

the authors pioneered widely varying styles. Similarly, interconnected leftist political groups such as the SDS, the “Munich Subversive Action” group, and the RAF sometimes shared members and espoused related political ideologies, and yet the methods they chose to pursue these ideologies were very different indeed. Upon examining such examples, one might be led to believe that diversity, whether in art or action, was one of the defining features of the German counterculture.

It is also worth noting that the musical revolution set in motion by krautrock impacted not only the worlds of the avant-garde and the counterculture, but the Federal Republic’s heavily Americanized pop culture as well. Krautrock was instrumental in giving internationally-oriented pop music (that is, pop music that appealed to audiences worldwide and not just Germans – the essential difference between “pop rock” and *Schlager*) a German identity that appealed to German listeners. By most accounts, the first rock groups to sing in the German language were the krautrock bands Ihre Kinder and Checkpoint Charlie,²⁴⁰ the former an interesting although uninspired group from Munich, and the latter the aforementioned “terror rock” pioneers from Karlsruhe. Both of these bands began carving out a niche audience for German-language rock music in 1969. Four years and two revolutionary *Ton Steine Scherben* albums later, Udo Lindenberg became the bona fide rock star to sing in German.²⁴¹

Lindenberg’s first album to hit the pop charts, 1973’s *Alles klar auf der Andrea Doria*, combined krautrock with the type of glam rock popular in the UK at the time, as well as *Schlager* and cabaret styles.²⁴² Labeling any of Lindenberg’s successful albums from the 70’s as krautrock would be a stretch, but the efforts of Ihre Kinder, Checkpoint Charlie, *Ton Steine*

²⁴⁰ Dedekind, 92-95.

²⁴¹ Larkey, 242-243.

²⁴² Lindenberg, Udo und das Panikorchester. *Alles Klar auf der Andrea Doria*. Telefunken, 1973. LP.

Scherben, Floh de Cologne, Grobschnitt, and lesser known bands like Drosselbart, Eulenspygel, and Hölderlin made the use of German in rock music palatable to German audiences who had previously held the belief that only Anglo-American groups were truly capable of rock and rolling. Additionally, a few cursory listens to Lindenberg's early recordings definitively places him within the krautrock community.

As a drummer, Lindenberg played with two of saxophonist Klaus Doldinger's projects, the internationally successful Passport, who bridged jazz fusion and krautrock, and the more progressive rock-oriented Motherhood, as well as the bands Free Orbit and Emergency.²⁴³ Lindenberg's first two solo albums, 1971's *Lindenberg*²⁴⁴ and 1972's *Daumen im Wind*,²⁴⁵ on which he sang primarily in English, were also typical of the more commercial side of krautrock.

Clearly, Lindenberg's greatest asset was his knack for penning catchy pop songs. His recordings never reached the fringes of experimentalism explored by the krautrock artists most revered today. And yet his success within the German market is emblematic of the impact krautrock's influence had on Germany's acceptance of rock and pop music of Anglo-American origin as a part of its own popular culture. Krautrock's importance as the source material for other forms of German popular music only continued to grow during the 80's, as NDW artists applied the electronic experimentalism of krautrock to punk-flavored pop songs with catchy refrains and melodies.²⁴⁶ Likewise, the early industrial groups drew heavily on the motorik beat and dark humor of many krautrock artists. Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft, the flagship group of the early days of the German industrial scene, has been described as the "einflußreichste

²⁴³ Freeman and Freeman

²⁴⁴ Lindenberg, Udo. *Lindenberg*. Telefunken, 1971. LP.

²⁴⁵ Lindenberg, Udo. *Daumen im Wind*. Telefunken, 1972. LP.

²⁴⁶ Teipel, Jürgen. *Verschwende Deine Jugend: Ein Doku-Roman Über Den Deutschen Punk Und New Wave*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001. Print. 168.

deutsche Band neben Kraftwerk und Can,"²⁴⁷ and it is clear that DAF absorbed the lessons of their forebears in crafting their sound.

By the mid 1990's, Germany's reputation as the land of the Loveparade²⁴⁸ was firmly ingrained in the minds of electronic music enthusiasts around the world. It must be said that the types of electronic music favored by Loveparaders bears little resemblance to the avant-garde-inspired electronica of the krautrock scene, it was krautrock's popularization of electronic music which led to its proliferation and massive international audience. Until groups like Tangerine Dream and Kraftwerk brought synthesizer-based pop and rock music to the masses, electronic music was largely the province of avant-garde composers like Stockhausen. That electronic music is now a genre as multifaceted as rock, jazz, or any other contemporary form of popular music is due in large part to the krautrockers' democratization of the electronic approach to music production. And though "pop" electronica continues to be extremely popular in Germany even after the demise of the Loveparade, a wide array of producers recording for labels such as Cologne's Kompakt and Berlin's BPitch Control continue to promote the experimental and often ambient style of electronic music pioneered during the krautrock era.

At long last, it seems that krautrock's cult of devotees had expanded beyond a tiny clique of followers clamoring for reissues of hopelessly obscure out of print relics. Krautrock's value within the artistic community is even now gaining more widespread attention: in April of 2012, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City will host an event spanning eight consecutive

²⁴⁷ Ding, Oliver. "Tanz den Berlusconi." *Plattentests.de*. n.d. n. page. Web. 20 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.plattentests.de/rezi.php?show=1388>>.

²⁴⁸ The Loveparade began as a relatively small electronic music festival in Berlin in 1989, but by the time of the last festival in 2010 had grown to become what was arguably the largest the best-known electronic music event in the world.

Connolly, Kate. "Festivalgoers killed in stampede at Love Parade in Germany." *Guardian*. 24 Jul 2010: n. page. Web. 1 Apr. 2012.

nights honoring the work and influence of Kraftwerk. MoMA's website describes the event as "a chronological exploration of the sonic and visual experiments of Kraftwerk with a live presentation of their complete repertoire," and states that "this reinterpretation showcases Kraftwerk's historical contributions to and contemporary influence on global sound and image culture."²⁴⁹ True, Kraftwerk were the krautrock group whose importance ultimately transcended that of the genre that birthed them, but the path leading from the confrontational sonic commentary of 1970's "Vom Himmel hoch" to accolades from one of the most renowned modern art institutions in the world mirrors krautrock's ascendance from a fringe art form caught between the worlds of pop culture and avant-garde art to a crucial influence on electronic music and the type of commercially palatable indie rock exemplified by bands like Radiohead.

And yet what most music journalists and critics writing about krautrock often fail to point out is the significance of the genre as a part of German socio-cultural history. A comparison of two recent documentaries on krautrock highlights this fact: Benjamin Whalley's hour-long documentary for BBC Four, *Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany*, is largely brilliant, though it dwells heavily on the fact that British audiences were predisposed towards viewing krautrock as inferior to Anglo-American rock styles. It also makes much of krautrock's connection to British English artists like David Bowie and Brian Eno,²⁵⁰ and ends rather gratuitously with Bowie performing a German-language of his hit "Heroes", while the narrator declares that in terms of experimental music of the 70's, "the real heroes were the krautrockers."²⁵¹ Although Whalley's film does an admirable job of establishing krautrock as a phenomenon derived from German

²⁴⁹ "Kraftwerk – Retrospective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8." Museum of Modern Art. Web, 26. Mar. 2012. <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1257>

²⁵⁰ David Bowie famously moved to Berlin in 1976 to record three albums which would become known as his "Berlin trilogy", while Brian Eno traveled to the town of Forst to work with the members of Cluster and Harmonia, influencing his later ambient work. (Whalley)

²⁵¹ Whalley

societal trends as opposed to a mutation of Anglo-American ones, it never breaks entirely free of the conceit which has characterized the English music press's attitude toward krautrock since the genre's inception. Ultimately, Whalley's film seems to suggest that krautrock's greatest success was providing inspiration for later generations of British musicians.

Contrasting *Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany* is the nearly six-hour documentary *Kraut und Rüben: über die Anfänge deutscher Rockmusik*,²⁵² which aired on Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) in six segments in 2006. This WDR documentary is remarkably thorough, covering not just krautrock, but also more commercial forms of rock music from the 60's and 70's. It also features in depth discussions of the ideological aspects of German rock music as a significant part of the Federal Republic's new Cold War-era identity. *Kraut und Rüben* especially emphasizes the independence of the krautrock scene from other similar movements occurring at the same time in other countries. The krautrock generation may have taken its cues from the psychedelic rock pioneered in San Francisco and London, but once scenes began to develop in Berlin, Munich, and the Rhineland, the genre took on a character all its own. Comparing the BBC's and the WDR's handling of the krautrock story is reflective of the differences in the ways in which krautrock has always been received at home and abroad. The titles of the films themselves are telling: *Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany* suggests a single-mindedness of purpose among krautrock artists that was frankly lacking. Certainly, most krautrock artists adhered to certain ideologies parallel to those favored by the West German counterculture, but there was never truly any ideological conformity manifest in the genre, as in

²⁵² WDR, *Kraut und Rüben*

the related Rock in Opposition movement.²⁵³ *Kraut und Rüben* is a much more fitting title; it means something like “a confusing mess.”

The krautrock genre can often be a confusing mess indeed, albeit an inspiring one. Much has been made in recent years of the genre’s groundbreaking nature and significant influence on later musical trends. And yet such incendiary artists as Can, Faust, Amon Düül II, Kraftwerk, Neu!, Tangerine Dream, Popol Vuh, and Cluster have only very rarely been afforded the kind of academic attention given to the political instigators, protest leaders, terrorists, filmmakers, visual artists, authors, and rabble-rousers who comprised the Federal Republic’s burgeoning counterculture during the 60’s and 70’s. Just as krautrock proved to have a major impact on the development of Germany’s (and the world’s) musical culture in the decades following it, so too did it serve as the soundtrack for a critical moment in Germany’s social and political history. Krautrock’s revolutionary inertia was rarely as explicit as that of the other artistic and political movements which accompanied it, and yet, today more than ever, it is symbolic of the spirit of 1968, and the era in which the Federal Republic firmly refused to allow its legacy of fascism to further develop, and opted instead for a program of progressive reform, setting modern Germany on a path entirely different from that of its recent past.

²⁵³ The Rock in Opposition movement consisted of a number of like-minded avant-garde rock bands (mostly European) whose do-it-yourself approach to music composition, production, and promotion was intended as a form of defiance against the commercial music establishment. Cutler, Chris. *File Under Popular: Theoretical and Critical Writings on Music*. Brooklyn, N.Y: Autonomedia, 1993. Print. 130-135.

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