

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Electri_City – Elektronische Musik Aus Düsseldorf

Grönland

A fine compilation of 70s and 80s electronic music gems from Germany's industrial heartland

A Düsseldorf-centric compilation of electronic music? At last!

As you'd expect, the Rother/Dinger axis makes a strong showing on 'Electri_City', with Klaus Dinger's post-Neu! band La Düsseldorf and their expansive 13-minute 'Düsseldorf' opening the collection. While his former Neu! bandmate Michael Rother pursued a gentle and glassy melodiousness with Harmonia – represented here by the delightful 'Luneburg Heath' from Harmonia & Eno's 'Tracks And Traces' album – La Düsseldorf gave Dinger the freedom to holler and improvise his way through some truly great moments of timeless music. And the epic 'Düsseldorf' is probably the best example.

It's interesting to listen to Neu!'s stirring 'Hero', from their 1975 swansong, 'Neu! '75', in the context of this album. You can almost hear the project splitting at the seams, barely containing its two talents as it drives on, relentlessly and fantastically not-rock. Rother's first solo outing, 1977's 'Flammende Herzen', a beautiful guitar instrumental which is also included

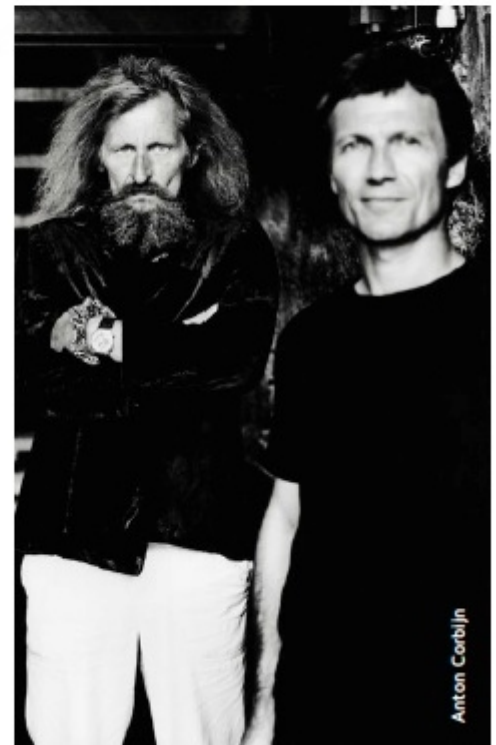
here, shows just how pretty his core aesthetic was becoming. It was a huge hit in Germany, but less well known in the UK.

Wolfgang Riechmann's 'Wunderbar', a mutant western movie soundtrack with a skanking back beat, is another delight. Riechmann, once a member of Spirits Of Sound with Wolfgang Flür and Michael Rother, was tipped to hit the spotlight when his debut album came out in 1978, but he was tragically murdered in a random street attack in Düsseldorf shortly before the record was released. The version of 'Wunderbar' included here ends abruptly, edited to 90 seconds from the original's five-plus minutes, cut down as it's getting going, just like its creator.

'Electri_City' ploughs on into the equally fertile 1980s with Teja's 'Säuren Ätzen Und Zersetzen', a Cabaret Voltaire-esque electronic noise experiment, followed by three tracks connected by Neue Deutsch Welle (New German Wave) legend Chrislo Haas – Der Plan's toytown synth jumble, 'Wir Werden Immer Mehr', DAF's classic 'Der Mussolini', and Liaisons Dangereuses' 'Los Niños Del Parque', which is a kind of sexy flipside of DAF's pounding intensity. All these tracks are brilliant, as is Die Krupps' 'Wahre Arbeit Wahrer Lohn' ('Real Work Real Pay'), its industrial metal-bashing beating out its solidarity with the workers of the world. Rheingold's pop meanwhile takes on Floyd-like textures with '3Klangdimensionen' to pleasing effect and is notable for the fact that two members of the band turned up on Wolfgang Flür and Karl Bartos solo albums in the 1990s.

Speaking of Wolfgang Flür, special mention must go to his autobiographical contribution, 'I Was A Robot', which threads lyrics that namecheck pretty much everything he was ever involved with in Kraftwerk into its smooth techno groove. It's slinky and seductive, much like the man himself, and you can't help but wonder if somewhere

in there is part of the reason he didn't last as a man machine. Too much warm blood in his veins for Kraftwerk's increasingly desiccated output.



'Electri_City' closes with a slow version of OMD's 'Electricity' by MakroSoft. It's a kind of humorous love note back to the UK's own co-opting of the Düsseldorf sound and it's recorded, you have to suspect, by people whose names we probably recognise, but who are staying anonymous. It's a fitting way to end an album that is an attractive gateway into the parallel narrative to Kraftwerk's overbearing presence and provides rabbit holes aplenty for the eager explorer to leap into.

MARK ROLAND