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Die Toten Hosen: „Laune der Natur“

Five years after the release of their last album “Ballast der Republik” (the ballast of the republic), in 2017 Die Toten Hosen released their new studio album “Laune der Natur” (quirk of nature).

“Ballast der Republik” was an immense success and quickly became the stuff of legend as the band’s eighth #1 album since 1990 was showered in precious metal awards. Their single “Tage wie diese” (days like these) broke all imaginable records and the respective tour, “Der Krach der Republik” (the noise of the republic) counted among the largest tours German audiences had ever witnessed.

The band remembers: “No-one had expected that ‘Ballast der Republik’ would be such a great success and the ensuing tour likewise exceeded all our expectations. We have experienced a lot of joy in the past few years, but there were also bitter and sad moments in store for us: the death of our longstanding friend and manager Jochen Hülner came as a shock, and merely one-and-a-half years later, we had to say farewell to our former drummer Wölfi when he finally lost his battle against cancer. Both of these events made us realise how lucky we are as a band to be united in such friendship, but also made us aware of the fact that our time is limited. It is a privilege to experience that the people out there are still interested in Die Toten Hosen, even after 35 years, and that they are keen to hear what our new songs have to offer. We also feel that as long as people are still debating our music, as is happening right now, we have a claim to continue as a band.”

It is their longstanding success that makes Die Toten Hosen an absolute exception. Not only have many of the early original fans continued to support their band throughout their lives, there are also continuously new young supporters adding up to the fan base, reinvigorating, reinventing and expanding it from one season to the next. This phenomenon, the fact that the band and their songs manage to appeal to people from a broad range of age groups and different social backgrounds, makes them unlike any other and it is the core, so to speak, of the “Toten Hosen formula”.

Campino comments: “We write our songs from the perspective of the here and now. At the beginning, when we were twenty to thirty years old, we thought it was our obvious task to drive apart young and old. We welcomed the fact that parents would fight with their kids and tell them, ‘You are NOT going to a Toten Hosen show!’ At times, this kind of life was rather dangerous, too. There were brawls and fights, as could be expected from a rock’n’roll lifestyle back then. But as the years passed, we recognised that every generation needs their own heroes. If we want to appeal to young people today, we have to use the inverted approach: by uniting, not by dividing. In fact, the kind of generational conflict that we experienced back then doesn’t actually exist anymore nowadays. Today, there are families that get on so well together that the kids take their parents along to one of our shows, and vice versa. I think this is fantastic: we are no longer just a band for youngsters who use their taste in music as a form of rebellion against their parents.”

Indeed, ever since they started out in 1982, the five musicians have created an exceptional oeuvre, an overall collection of songs that serves as a life-spanning soundscape for their fans. Life, after all, means diversity, and this multifariousness is reflected in the music and the lyrics of Die Toten Hosen. “Laune der Natur” is the perfect paragon of this: death and transience are major topics of this album, as sad events are part of our everyday experiences, but so are moments of bliss, too, and these are also reflected in the songs of the new album. Life, after all, isn’t simply black and white, and so in spite of all the serious or political topics there also needs to be some space for a light-hearted gag or a silly joke. In fact, all of these facets can sometimes be found combined even within one song. Joy and sorrow are very closely intertwined on “Laune der Natur” – as in real life, they are the two sides of the same coin.

It is already several album releases hence since Die Toten Hosen began to transgress the traditional musical boundaries. There is no doubt that their roots are firmly set in the punk rock movement of the 70s and 80s, and their

musical foundation consists of straightforward ferocious rock music. And yet, in the past few years they have opened up stylistically, to an extent that for "Laune der Natur" they are as free to strike up as never before. "We don't need to prove anything to anyone, yet we never forget where we came from. We could only become who we are now because we once were the Opel-Gang lads, but we live in the present and things fit nicely together for us right now. To us, punk has always meant doing exactly what you feel like doing, and doing so according to your own rules – that has always been the maxim of Die Toten Hosen", says lead vocalist Campino about the band's sense of self. According to his definition, the new album is purest punk and its mixtures are proof of what the five lads from Düsseldorf have never been afraid of: it features the band's stereotypical full-on party punk rock stunners alongside gaudy power pop, emotional ballads, uplifting hymns and a healthy helping of pathos. The final track of the album is sung by former drummer Wölili, who passed away recently – "Kein Grund zur Traurigkeit" (no reason for sadness) presents him singing for the last time, accompanied by his friends and band mates.

"Laune der Natur" was released as a simple album as well as in a double album special edition, for which Die Toten Hosen recorded a follow-up to their legendary classic "Learning English Lesson 1". Back in 1990, the boys rendered homage to their heroes of the first punk rock wave: they got together with numerous original artists and covered their favourite hits with them.

While playing their favourite punk rock classics to warm up during rehearsals, the band came up with the idea of recording a second volume so as to make their most favourite punk rock tunes available to a broader public. The result is "Learning English Lesson 2", an album consisting of 21 songs, most of which were recorded in London. Once more, every song stars very special guests, such as Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedys, Colin McFaull of Cock Sparrer, Mensi of the Angelic Upstarts, Steve Diggle of the Buzzcocks and Jake Burns of the Stiff Little Fingers. Bob Geldof of the Boomtown Rats is as much in on it as forgotten cult figures like "Mad" Phil Thompson of the obscure underground band Pasty Faces.

"Laune der Natur" was released in Germany on 5 May 2017 as CD album; double CD special edition including "Learning English Lesson 2"; triple vinyl album including double LP special edition "Learning English Lesson 2"; limited deluxe box as download including special edition "Learning English Lesson 2"; and as a stream.

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