

Einstürzende Neubauten: *Alles in Allem* (2020)

Einstürzende Neubauten is releasing a new album for the band's 40th anniversary: *Alles in Allem* is a compilation of 10 songs largely concerned with the exploration of "Berlin" as a thematic topos. The criteria first emerged as part of the process. One song that evolved into an extremely cynical reflection on the state of the German capital didn't make it onto the album, but it left a void, around which far more differentiated commentaries about Berlin came to the surface. So Blixa Bargeld wandered through memories, dreams, montaged fragments – and yet, in this elusive city, it is always about the present. The texts sometimes leave traces in the past, lead back to previous work, tie in with old texts or transpose them on their way into the future.

The unique sound and textual landscapes of the band, founded in 1980 in Berlin, reveal the timelessness that Blixa Bargeld, N. U. Unruh, Alexander Hacke, Jochen Arbeit and Rudolph Moser have continuously maintained. And yet, through experimental approaches to songwriting, instruments developed over four decades and collective input, the band sounds remarkably cutting edge within its own time. In fact, through its individual brand of music the Einstürzende Neubauten seem to always command each and every manifestation of the *here and now* – whether industrial in its early years, the driving beats of the 1990s or its more considered later work.

The very first song, "Ten Grand Goldie," exemplifies the innovativeness inherent in the Neubauten's work. Blixa Bargeld called out to the band's worldwide individual supporters, the fan cult community which has supported the group's independence through alternative financing since 2002, long before such crowdfunding models became popular. The supporters were also encouraged to participate in the creative process, contributing fragments to the later song text lyrics through spontaneous answers to Bargeld's questions. The supporters, organized through the Neubauten forum at neubauten.org, which is also an archive of the band's extensive body of work, were involved again and again, had regular access to work on the album, were engaged via live webcasts, interpreted and discussed the songs among one another and with the band. They were rewarded not only by being able to take part in the creative process of their favorite band, but also with singles produced exclusively for them. Influenced by this collaboration, a limited edition deluxe boxset is being released in parallel to the album. In addition to an extensive book and a DVD with AV material, this version also contains a CD or LP with seven tracks that do not appear on the album. It's worth becoming a supporter of the band, and not just because it enables this extraordinary group to carry out its groundbreaking work.

Conditions have changed again due to these new approaches and are transformed into audible features in the songs. But the band doesn't like all changing conditions. The group's traditional visits to the scrapyards, for example, to search for found objects that could become new equipment for sound development has proved more difficult than ever. Bargeld: "They won't let you into the junkyards anymore – for safety and insurance reasons." So the five sound researchers looked elsewhere for materials. For "Taschen," for instance, simple travel bags that they filled with rags make direct reference to the song inspired by Ghayath Almadhoun's book of poetry *Ein Raubtier namens Mittelmeer* (a German translation of the original Arabic), which is about drowning on the doorstep of Europe. Nevertheless, seldom is there a clear intention, and interpretation is left up to the listeners either way. But how can there be a clear message if the writing is frequently based on dreams or left to chance? One of the webcasts documents is the initial source for *Alles in Allem*, which gave the album its title. After walking along a corridor outside the studio Bargeld described associations that the patterns in the chipped flooring awoke in him. And that's how a "verkürztes Krokodil" (a truncated crocodile) and "Plasmazellen ohne Kern" (plasma cells without a nucleus) found their way into the song.

Free association plays a role in most of the songs. The card game "Dave" (named after the voice of Bargeld's navigation system), developed decades ago, was used repeatedly during the album's creative process. Members of the band drew individual written cards from a set of 600 and then worked with these chance-provided concepts to inspire new music. And even though Rosa Luxemburg is the focus of "Am Landwehrkanal" – which has an unusually swaying sound for the Neubauten – the verse "Wir hatten tausend Ideen / Und alle waren gut" (We had a thousand ideas / And all of them were good) could easily be perceived as the band's description of itself. The sum total is a special compilation: *Alles in Allem*, Einstürzende Neubauten's first regular studio album in 12 years, presents an incomparable band that defies categorization to create a genre all its own.

Einstürzende Neubauten will be on tour in Germany and internationally with its new songs and the band's extensive back catalogue. Detailed information can be found on the website:

www.neubauten.org.