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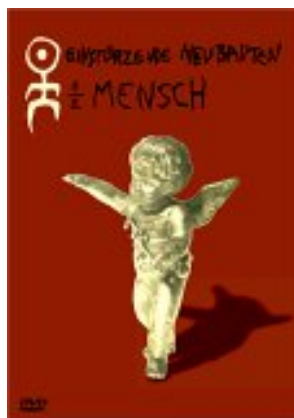
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## Review

### DVD Review - Einstürzende Neubauten's *Halber Mensch*

Posted by [Joe Battista](#) on June 25, 2005 10:09 PM (See [all posts by Joe Battista](#))

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[Einstürzende Neubauten: Halber Mensch](#)

DVD from *Music Video Distribu*  
Release date: 10 May, 2005

If you're reading this, and you obviously are, you probably already have a clue about who Einstürzende Neubauten is. But for those who don't and decided to keep reading anyway, Einstürzende Neubauten (German for "collapsing new buildings") is a unique and influential German industrial band formed in Berlin in 1980, and is

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most commonly identified by my friends as "punk rockers gone art house experimental" or "that band that plays the pots and pans."

And, while Neubauten doesn't actually play pots and pans, it does make outstanding ear-shattering post-punk industrial sounds by way of various power tools, scrap metal, and guitars. Neubauten's unique and innovative sound has had an important and lasting impact on modern rock music (notice I didn't say "music industry"), which is evidenced by more commercially successful acts like Ministry, Nine Inch Nails and Filter.

Originally released on VHS, this Music Video Distributors and Cherry Red region-free DVD of the promotional film for Einstürzende Neubauten's classic 1986 album *Halber Mensch* contains ten tracks and has a 58 minute run time. Audio options include a 2-channel stereo mix and a simulated 5.1 channel track (inferior to the 2-channel mix). Sadly, there are no extras or Easter eggs on this disc. DVD menu options include "Play Programme," "Track Selection" and "Other DVD Releases," which contains six promotional clips from other Cherry Red Films releases. The film was directed by Japanese filmmaker Sogo Ishii, who, on a totally unrelated topic, receives special thanks from Quentin Tarantino in the closing credits of *Kill Bill: Vol 2*.

While studying the track listing, I noticed a notable difference between the DVD and the album. The *Halber Mensch* album contains songs that do not appear in the film

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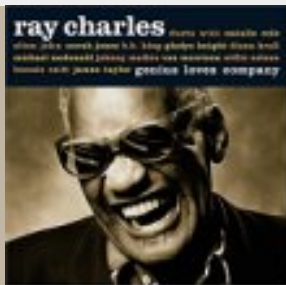
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and vice-versa. For example, my all-time favorite Neubauten song "Yu-Gung (Fütter Mein Ego)" is not one of the ten featured tracks included in the film. However, if you pay close attention to the scene where the band is warming up for the concert, you'll notice the song being rehearsed for a few seconds.

The visual quality of the film really fits the band. The film is grainy in spots, lighting is used sparingly, colors are faded and the sets are dark. This film also is full of interesting and sometimes frightening images, quiet interludes and raw energy that combine to produce a powerful mixture of sound and vision. Memorable scenes include band members enjoying private moments mending hi-top sneakers and walking along the beach with a decomposing cat on a stick. There are some equally interesting shots featuring many of Neubauten's instruments with accompanying on-screen specifications (printed in Japanese). Some of the more disturbing scenes are found in the disc's "traditional" music videos ("Halber Mensch" and "Z.N.S."), which feature centipedes feeding on flesh and a creepy kabuki-style dance troupe.

All the visual elements aside, what really makes this film work for me, are the live performances. Seven of the ten songs in the film are performed live. This aspect alone makes this film a must-have for Neubauten fans.

There's great tension in each Neubauten's song, and it really translates well to a live production.

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The band could have easily mailed it in and lip synced the tracks, but thankfully for fans they decided not to. Listen for lead singer Brixa Bargeld's uncanny ability to scream his ever-loving head off. You've really got to hear it for yourself to appreciate it.

The film contains two settings for its live performances. The first is in the abandoned Nakamatsu Ironworks, where the band plays in front of what appears to be just the film crew, and still maintains an acute intensity. The second performance is takes place in Tokyo's Kohrakuen Hall. There's no substitute for a live audience and the band appears to feed off of it in their powerful presentations of "Die Zeichnungen des Patienten" and "Der To dist ein Dandy."

So what is the film about? You mean you've read this far and still don't know? Yeah, me either. I tried not to look too deeply into themes and symbolism that may not even be there. To put it simply, this is an art film. And I think if you say "art film" you can get away with just about anything. Maybe it's typical for Japanese-made films about German industrial bands. I just know it rocks.

I wholeheartedly recommend *Halber Mensch* to all Neubaten fans, anyone with an interest in industrial music of the 1980s, or folks with a penchant for creepy kabuki dance troupes—and not necessarily in that order.

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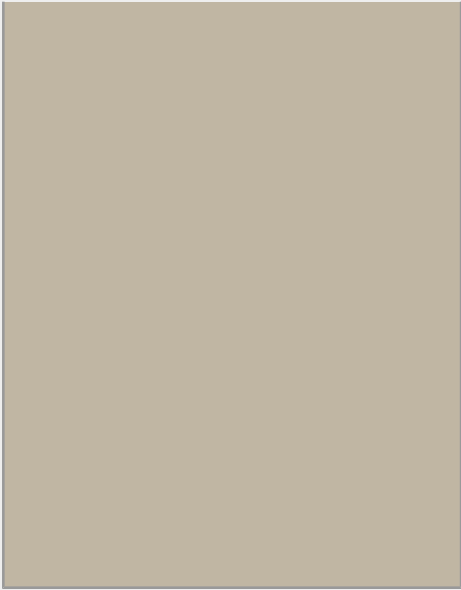
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