

EINSTURZENDE NEUBAUTEN

½ Mensch

Directed by Sogo Ishii

MVD



If it seems like it was 20 years ago, that's because it was. **EN** (or **Einstürzende Beergarden**, as we liked to call 'em in the 80's) were industrial shriekshow kings from Berlin who battered chunks of metal and screamed and wore their hair like electrified porcupines, and we all **LOVED** them, because they were **EXACTLY** what we all imagined Germans to be like: guys beating shopping carts with hammers and calling it art.

Lead yelper and hairfarmer **Blixa Bargeld** went on to the much more civilized job of guitarman for **Nick Cave**, but this, this was his **BIG** statement, as filmed in 1986 by nutcase Japanese director **Sogo Ishii**, who went on to shoot the ultraviolet rock n' roll fantasy "**Electric Dragon 80,000 V**" (2001). It's a performance film, shot – imagine that – in an

abandoned warehouse. The colors are so muted that it's almost black and white, and although it appears to have been filmed over a few different sessions, it looks like they preferred dusk. There is fire, leather pants, guys banging on things, metal-pressing machines running amok, a head shaving, more shopping cart abuse, and many shots of skinny German guys rolling around on the ground, yelling their heads off.

But that's not the weird part. Well, it is, but not the *weirdest*. At the midway point –around "**Zerstörte Zelle**" – a bunch of Japanese guys in corpse-paint and bandages show up outside the warehouse and start dancing around. Then one of the percussion guys gets his leg eaten up by worms. And then the band fights the Japanese zombies, with sheet metal.

I might have dreamt some of this, actually. The end part I'm watching now, though, and I must say, it's a little **Monkees**-esque. Possibly even **Fat Albert**-esque. Watch it, and see what I mean.

I would guess that even the band thinks this performance is a little ham-fisted at this point. In fact, there are reports that **EN** have called for a boycott of **Half Mensch**. Unfortunately, those boycotts are written in German, so I can't tell you

what they say*. What I do know is that aside from Ishii's whack-ass visuals and the band's deadpan, furrowed-brow seriousness, this DVD fuckin' rocks. It's mixed in 5:1 stereo, so you can pop it into your home theater system and watch the walls fall right down from the supersonic industrial battering. Although they still make brain-frying German noise bands that play with fire, they just don't make 'em with the sheer will-to-provoke that EN display here. Sure, it's all kind of funny now, but it's **LOUD** funny, and that's close enough for rock n' roll.

*That's not true. The 'boycott' is some row over royalties. I'd say it's really not our problem.

– *Sleazegrinder*

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