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## Einstuerzende Neubauten – Palast Der Republik (DVD-Video/Music)

Picture: B-    Sound: B-  
Extras: C    Film: B

These days when the word Industrial is used, at least as a way to describe music, it seems to refer to very heavy, beat-driven sound that is, for all it's heaviness, still very danceable. Disco and Techno moved out of the clubs and into the warehouse. Time moves on and words change meaning, but when I first heard the term Industrial it very specifically referred to the experimental German noise-rock band Einstuerzende Neubauten.



Einstuerzende Neubauten (which translates roughly as Collapsing New Buildings), utilized the objects of industry to create music. Rhythms were banged out on junk pieces of metal, glass, or whatever was lying around. Sounds were created by attacking shopping carts with drill bits, running metal rods over car springs, and shaking carts full of miscellaneous junk. One of their early albums gave a list of instruments used; a balpeen hammer on the understructure of a specific bridge in Germany was listed for one of the tracks.

Even as a fan, their early albums are fairly unlistenable. But as time moved on their experimentation started to follow more traditional paths, at least in terms of song structure. The extreme instrumentation is still being used, but in the service of more recognizable melodies and rhythmic composition. Some of it may even be danceable.

**Palast Der Republik** captures Einstuerzende Neubauten in concert on tour in 2004. As a concert film this DVD works exceptionally well. I saw this tour in Washington, DC and found the experience to be absolutely mesmerizing. Part of the joy the of live experience was simply watching and discovering how they made the sounds they made. Six men are on stage, surrounded by what looks like a pile of junk. For the next two hours they used this junk to create interesting, driving, and even beautiful music. The DVD captures this experience, focusing on individual members of the band as they work with the most unlikely musical instruments. At the actual show, and while watching the DVD, there were times when I wished my attention could focus for longer periods of time on a specific moment or a specific sound. Who knew PVC pipe and Styrofoam peanuts on a sheet of metal could make those sounds?

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While it is tempting to try to list the various items used for instruments it would be an exercise in futility. There is simply too much, and any list would fail to recreate the sounds they created.

Lead vocalist Blixa Bargeld (better known in the States as guitarist for Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds), provides a focus for the band. As a front man he is charismatic and powerful. His deep vocals span the range from quietly spoken to shrilly screamed, depending on the needs of the song. He sings mostly in German, so I don't understand a word of it. As a result, rather than focusing on lyrics I tend to hear his voice as another instrument, a human touchstone in the middle of the manmade clamor.

I can't stress enough that what emerges in Einstuerzende Neubauten's music is music and not simply a chaos of sound. What keeps them interesting is their continual exploration and attempt to create music with non-traditional instruments. They are able to take the cast-off trash of our world and with it create something beautiful. Beauty out of chaos seems like that's what art ought to be.

- Wayne Wise

Wayne Wise believes that, while it may be an overstatement, hugely successful mainstream acts like the Blue Man Group and Stomp probably owe a great deal to Einstuerzende Neubauten as well.



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