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Einstürzende Neubauten

Palast Der Republik (MVD)
By Ewan Wadharmi

At first glance, it's an odd thought; the Godfathers of the German industrial movement performing in a palace that serves as the seat of parliament. But then, this was the seat of power for the DDR, the Republic of East Germany, and like that government and their infamous wall, this building is crumbling. Demolition is underway; the hall is empty and cold. That sounds more like our boys, whose name best translates as "Collapsing New Buildings." They lend a hand bashing on the remaining fixtures, emitting violent vibrations and sonic disturbances as retrofitted into their recent song-based structures. They attack sheet metal with gallon-sized tin cans. PVC pipes form an industrial xylophone. Specially machined aluminum snowflakes serve as multi-tone cymbals, and any and all available material is fair game for percussion.

Two older pieces start the performance; the clanging title track from *Haus Der Lüge* and "Armenia" from 1983's *Drawings of Patient O.T.* The later has evolved over the years from brutal metallic rage to a pulsing, hypnotic soundscape periodically pierced with jagged shrieks. Singer/mastermind Blixa Bargeld squeals like a vampire caught in sunlight when the occasion arises, then croons ala Brian Ferry. Far more dignified in his suit than the old makeup, mohawk, and leather. It should be noted that he rarely plays guitar for Neubauten anymore, perhaps tapped out by The Bad Seeds. Alexander Hacke, in addition to brutalizing his bass, pays headbanging homage to Scorpions. A one hundred voice choir enhances "Was Ist Ist," already one of my favorites, into a chilling, nipple-hardening experience.

The rest of the material comes from this decade, largely *Perpetuum Mobile*, whose oscillating pop-bottles are played with an air compressor. The coolness and bouncing bass of audience favorite "Dead Friends" soon breaks down into encompassing chaos and back again. Lovely experiments in harmonics on "Grundstück" involve the choir again to great effect. Later, they bring out the infamous jet turbine, which they can apparently ship to the States, but for some reason, not the clavicle that Bargeld plays at this show. Previously unrecorded improvisations are an extra treat. "Sabrina" and "Alles" from *Silence is Sexy* close out the satisfying concert.

The sound and editing are expectedly first class, and the videography commendable. Be sure to play the very helpful commentary, where the guys slip in and out of English, but give a lot of insight into the German language songs. Pick it up if you're at least mildly interested in Neubauten, industrial music, performance art, or politically relevant architecture. (www.mvdvisual.com)



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