



By: Sarah L. Myers

You must destroy to build.

It's the ethos of Einstürzende Neubauten, whose name translates to "collapsing new buildings." Right after this performance at the Palast de Republik, the former Parliament building of the German Democratic Republic was destroyed.

Recorded in Berlin November 4, 2004, Palast Der Republik spans 16 tracks and 25 years of Neubauten's career. Their "field study" inside the steel skeleton is perfectly executed with the help of 100 Neubauten supporters, and their usual accompaniment of plastic tubs, coils, springs, pipes, and air compressors.

Neubauten are a completely organic musical project. Their perceptions and observations come from somewhere else entirely. Music is all around us. Science is all around us. Neubauten have found a way to combine the two - creating their own instruments from scraps of metal, jet engines, plastic containers, and sheets of aluminum. Onstage they acquire professor status, "teaching" the audience and welcoming them to their "conference." Palast Der Republik is the best Neubauten performance on video for many reasons. The significance of the location is not unnoted. The band come from West Berlin, having produced their earliest recordings inside water towers and alongside the autobahn.



The unmistakable rattle of "Haus Der Luege" opens a set list of 18 Neubauten songs. It's probably their best known, as vocalist Blixa Bargeld ironically calls it one of their "greatest hits." He moves onstage like a scholarly mime, curling his fingers in the air, emoting each gesture and lyric with facial expressions, barefoot and dressed in a three-piece suit. He's not the dilapidated scarecrow of a front man he once was. The rubber pants and cod piece are gone. Earlier Neubauten performances have them igniting solvents and crushing bricks. With the evolution of their music came a new sophistication.

Bargeld's vocal abilities are astonishing. When he opens his mouth, he releases a sound Nick Cave once called unrecognizable and inhuman. A cross between a banshee and a tea kettle, Bargeld's scream is chilling and effective, adding something to the equally unsettling "Armenia" that's unattainable with conventional instruments. Here again Neubauten challenge our definition of composition. Bargeld experiments with his voice - tapping his cheeks for a hollow echo, creating gusts by swiftly blowing into the microphone, or combining it with others for a trance-inducing hum for "Vox Populi". Most impressively is his use of pure silence. Neubauten built an entire song around the concept in 2004 ("Silence is Sexy" from Perpetuum Mobile) and it's power in "Sabrina" offsets each verse beautifully.

The performance was also filmed as part of the Neubauten's supporters Phase II. While most bands have the traditional fan club, Neubauten rely solely on these contributors to perform concerts and release material. Subscribing supporters receive exclusive material and become an integral part of the recording process by way of web casts and community feedback, blurring the line between artist and advocate. One hundred supporters join the band onstage for "GS: 1" as part of the "Grundstueck" series. Neubauten also recorded and released every live show on 2004's Perpetuum Mobile tour, selling unedited CDRs directly after, redefining the notion of the live album.

Palast Der Republik includes two encore performances of "Die Befindlichkeit des Landes" and "Redukt", respectively. The latter has Neubauten moving from barely audible to an earsplitting uproar. American audiences will find this DVD the next best thing - the band played their last shows in the United States in spring 2004. It's unclear if they will return, as restrictions and complications often arise with their performance equipment, making overseas traveling



extremely difficult.

"Grundstueck" itself exists in four different parts, the first showing Bargeld banging away on the building's steel railing. With a slight nod he is joined by Alexander Hacke, then Rudolf Moser. Soon there are four of them, executing an entire piece of music using just pipes and slabs of metal. It's the type of performance art to which admirers Blue Man Group, Skinny Puppy, and Nine Inch Nails aspire. In Palast Der Republik, Neubauten transcend every genre and become an installation.

<http://www.neubauten.org>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6OZeWkuj7>



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