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Magazine

March
Issue 2017
U.S. \$4.95



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*The Rolling Stones
during the photo session
for the "Between the
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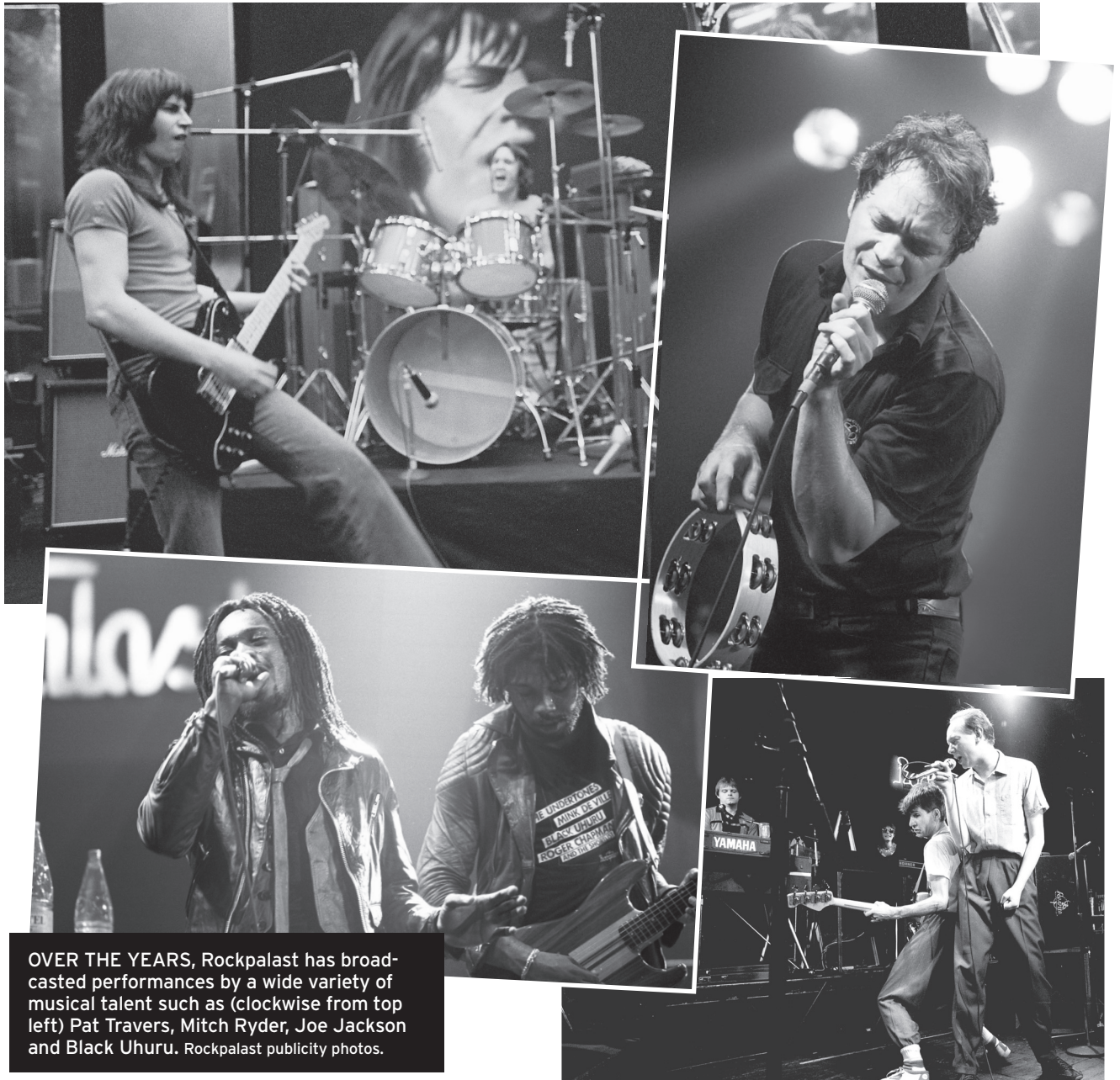
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THE ONGOING STRENGTH OF ROCKPALAST



OVER THE YEARS, Rockpalast has broadcasted performances by a wide variety of musical talent such as (clockwise from top left) Pat Travers, Mitch Ryder, Joe Jackson and Black Uhuru. Rockpalast publicity photos.

MANFRED SCHÜTZ, Managing Director of Made In Germany - Music GmbH, is not one to hide his passion for the rock genre. When asked about the future plans for the Rockpalast video series, for instance, his answer was simple: "Rock 'N' Roll!!!!"

The German television music show Rockpalast has successfully aired since 1974 and Schütz' record company Made In Germany (MIG) has an agreement with the TV broadcaster of Rockpalast (WDR) to produce the show's performances on both DVD and CD formats for the consumer market.

Schütz explained the process from television performance to consumer audio/video but started out with a little background on the Rockpalast show itself.

GOLDMINE: How did Rockpalast come to be produced in 1974? Was there a shortage of music programming on televi-

sion at that time?

MANFRED SCHÜTZ: No, but you must consider that in Germany there were only few channels at that time – ARD with a third regional channel and the ZDF. Both had shows for popular music. The new concept of Rockpalast was that the concerts were recorded and simultaneously aired live, at first only in Germany and later all over Europe. The concerts were aired on the third channels Saturday starting at 8 p.m. From 10 p.m. the shows were broadcast on the first channel, the ARD, into the morning hours. These Rockpalast shows became a cult program in Europe because of the fact that all rock fans over Europe would see their favourite bands. In shared flats and elsewhere people had big parties along with the Rockpalast shows – Rockpalast was mostly watched with a group of people.

And Rockpalast gave us the opportunity to see American artists live which had been unknown in Europe before. From Kid Creole over

Mother's Finest to Terry & the Pirates – most of these bands had not been heard by a big audience in Europe before a Rockpalast concert. And on Mondays, after Rockpalast, customers stood in line in front of the record shops (to order the music).

Another reason for the success of Rockpalast was the great quality of the shows. The artists knew that all of Europe watched and accordingly their musical performance was always magnificent.

GM: Has Rockpalast always aired on the weekend? What exact times is it aired now ?

SCHÜTZ: That varies. The program is aired in various channels at different times. Most of the shows are available as streams, see this link: <http://www1.wdr.de/fernsehen/rockpalast/startseite/index.html>.

GM: How did the MIG's agreement with TV broadcasters come to be?

SCHÜTZ: As I have seen all concerts in the '70s and '80s myself, I knew what a quality these concerts have. WDR is the producer of the concerts and has paid for everything. That is why we have an agreement with WDR for all shows. When an artist confirms the release then the work begins. All concerts have been recorded with the current technology of their time. The tapes have been remastered and digitalized. We always design the package with original photo shots of the concert.

Luckily, WDR has kept the 24-track tapes of all big Rockpalast nights. Of the the smaller shows there are only mono tracks available because TV was only aired in stereo since 1985. Radio has already broadcast in stereo since the early '70s that is the reason why we are working with the radio tracks for the smaller shows.

GM: You have a wide variety of music out on Rockpalast releases – Black Uhuru to Johnny Winter. Don't you believe that only helps you market the Rockpalast title as a trusted brand?

SCHÜTZ: Yes, exactly that is the point. Rockpalast as a TV show has always been something special in Europe, something with a certain spirit. This spirit came from the producers Peter Rüchel and Christian Wagner in particular. It was their selection from Rory Gallagher to Roger McGuinn and from The Police to Black Uhuru.

The market is flooded with radio concerts mainly from U.S. radio stations. But with Rockpalast it is the variety of the concerts, the selection of the artists and at last their performances. Terry & the Pirates have only played in Europe once, and that was the Rockpalast in December 1982. Nicky Hopkins and John Cipollina were so unbelievably great, and that defines the brand of Rockpalast.

So it is not only Elvis Costello but Albert Collins, too

GM: With all these Rockpalast broadcasts how do you know what to release and when? How is that scheduled?

SCHÜTZ: Of course we will go on and we want to get to one hundred releases. But there are always two obstacles to overcome. The first being the quality of the tapes. Although the WDR has done a lot to preserve the condition of the recordings but partly the TV recordings are more than 40 years old and no complex studio productions.

Sometimes, only 20 seconds of the show are missing but filling these holes in an affordable way is impossible.

Point two is the artist himself. Of course we acquire their rights but often we are dealing with estates and some artists do not want to deal with the history. Some do not like their own performance or they have sales expectations that stem from pre-digital times.

But many artists are happy to belong to the Rockpalast brand as are this year – Pat Travers and George Thorogood. On our website www.mig-music.de we regularly inform on our upcoming releases. At the moment we are negotiating with (approximately) 20 artists about a release.

GM: Do the DVDs sell more than the audio CDs of these live broadcasts?

SCHÜTZ: That has changed over the last three years. Of the first releases always about 60 percent of total sales were DVDs. But more and more dealers have only CD racks and none for DVD. That's why we will only release so-called combination products, i.e. 2-CD/1 DVD in a CD format.

GM: What Rockpalast release has been the best seller so far? Why do you think that is?

SCHÜTZ: Our Rockpalast bestseller is the one of Michael Schenker Group. The reason for that is that this concert is already available since 2010. We have releases that do not stop selling like, i.e. Roy Buchanan, and we believe that out there are collectors that aim for completion. So, Rockpalast is not something new that sells for a fortnight and after that never again – Rockpalast is selling continuously over the years.

GM: What is your personal favorite Rockpalast release and why?

SCHÜTZ: My personal favourite is Kid Creole and the Coconuts. When we saw the concert for us here in Germany it was like a culture shock wave. That was Broadway – that was America, and musically it was perfect. Technically this Rockpalast has also been our most difficult. The horn section was placed directly behind the three ladies of the Coconuts. And partly their voices could not be heard due to the volume of the trumpets. Here our sound engineer has done wonders.

GM: Talk a bit about the most recent Rockpalast releases.

SCHÜTZ: We have done the split into all musical styles with concerts of Peter Hammill or Iain Matthews to Black Uhuru and Aswad. And it will stay that way. Especially Black Uhuru from 1981 with Sly & Robbie I like to listen to. Of this concert we were able to produce a perfect sound because we got the 24-track tapes. And in 1981 was the year Black Uhuru had their musical peak. And it will go on like this – in spring 2017 George Thorogood and Champion Jack Dupree will be released – that is called suspense and Rockpalast is exactly that ... thrilling.

GM: It's amazing how long Rockpalast has lasted on television. It's a testament to how much Germans love music.

SCHÜTZ: Yes, that is true. Rockpalast is around since 1974, and the show is very active and popular to this day. Of course, the relevance has changed over the years but up to 70 shows per year were still recorded. And yes – it is true: Germans love rock music.

– Patrick Prince

