



Krautrock: German Music in the Seventies (Tracking Pop)

By Ulrich Adelt

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Krautrock is a catch-all term for the music of various white German rock groups of the 1970s that blended influences of African American and Anglo-American music with the experimental and electronic music of European composers. Groups such as Can, Popol Vuh, Faust, and Tangerine Dream arose out of the German student movement of 1968 and connected leftist political activism with experimental rock music and, later, electronic sounds. Since the 1970s, American and British popular genres such as indie, post-rock, techno, and hip-hop have drawn heavily on krautrock, ironically reversing a flow of influence krautrock originally set out to disrupt.

Among other topics, individual chapters of the book focus on the redefinition of German identity in the music of Kraftwerk, Can, and Neu!; on community and conflict in the music of Amon Düül, Faust, and Ton Steine Scherben; on “cosmic music” and New Age; and on Donna Summer’s and David Bowie’s connections to Germany. Rather than providing a purely musicological or historical account, *Krautrock* discusses the music as being constructed through performance and articulated through various forms of expressive culture, including communal living, spirituality, and sound.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Far too long, krautrock has been neglected as an area of study in Anglophone academia. Adelt’s study puts a welcome end to this unsatisfactory situation. His book provides an excellent overview and expertly places this remarkable period of German music in its historical as well as transnational context. Without doubt, it will serve as the standard reference on the topic.”

— Uwe Schütte, Aston University, Birmingham

“Contrary to prior assessments of krautrock’s almost 50 year trajectory, Adelt does not romanticize its iconic Germanness. On the contrary, he investigates the transnational, hybrid, and crossover quality of krautrock as a discursive formation. . . . Adelt’s study traces the performative dispersal of this inversion in various forms of expressive culture, among them, communal living, spirituality, visual elements but, most importantly, sound. The result is a lively and engaged encounter with a few decades of German rock music which—instead of wanting to anchor musical production in narrow confines of nation, or in rigidified identity categories such as race, class or gender—brings forth the mobile, transformational quality of sound aesthetics, making and mirroring contemporary globalized cultural flows.”

— Sabine Broeck, University of Bremen

About the Author

Ulrich Adelt is Associate Professor for American Studies and African American and Diaspora Studies, University of Wyoming.

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