2 Krautrock and the Radical Politics of 1968

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Krautrock emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s and cannot be understood without the upheaval of '1968'. In some respects, 1968 actually had a more political contour in West Germany than in other Western European countries – with the exception of France, perhaps. There were three main reasons for this: the immediate pre-history of the 'Third Reich', the fact that the country was at the crossroads of the Cold War, and a philosophical tradition of thought that was always on the trace of fundamental truths.

Attitudes towards National Socialism had shaped the youth revolt in West Germany, and it was already fully formed before 1968. The vast majority of the older generations had been entangled with National Socialism through active complicity or all-too-passive acceptance, and therefore could not claim a guiding role in the present. Imprints of National Socialism continued to exist in a hidden anti-Semitism, anti-communism, and authoritarianism. A considerable section of society and politics opened the door to the elimination of democracy through the introduction of the *Notstandsgesetze* (Emergency Laws) in 1968, which allowed the government to curb civil rights in the case of uprisings, leading to suspicions of the door being potentially opened to a new dictatorship. The social force that was able to loosen these ties to the past was the young generation, especially young intellectuals. Detachment from Nazi ties as a prerequisite for social reform was an almost unquestioned basic argument in debates about sexuality, forms of housing, and political measures.

West Germany's position on the eastern front of the West and the division of Germany with the GDR as the antithesis of the Federal Republic had already created an anti-communist climate in the 1950s that shaped political and cultural discourses in general. Abstract art was a manifestation of Western freedom, which in turn was threatened by rock 'n' roll; communist agitation was also repeatedly suspected behind strikes and demonstrations. Unlike all other countries of Western Europe – except for the fascist dictatorships in Spain and Portugal – the Communist Party had been banned since 1956. A left-wing opposition thus had no parliamentary mouthpiece and was relegated to the streets.

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Rudi Dutschke, the informal leader of the student movement, was born in East Germany and thus was particularly strongly politicised. The fact that a young Nazi sympathiser attempted to assassinate him in Easter 1968, the late effects of which were to kill him in 1979, contributed to the enormous radicalisation of the West German student movement. A particularly militant expression of radical thinking could be observed in the irreconcilable criticism that many actors directed at 1960s consumer society. This kind of society was represented not least by the United States, who were also delegitimised by the Vietnam War at the time. Symptomatic of this militancy was the arson attack on two Frankfurt department stores on 2 April 1968, carried out by Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Thorwald Proll, and Horst Söhnlein, a week before Dutschke's assassination – an act that is not unjustly regarded as a precursor to the terrorism of the Rote Armee Fraktion, or RAF (Red Army Faction). Political radicalism, in the shape of militant action and communist groups, continued to represent a relevant part of the political outcome of 1968 during the 1970s.

However, one must look at the whole of 1968 and understand it as a melding of new cultural currents and radical politics. While research in countries like Britain or Denmark has always emphasised the cultural revolution, in West Germany the focus was for a long time on politics and thus the student movement. Only in recent years has the perspective broadened to include the cultural aspects of 1968 and its significance as a youth revolt. Here, music plays a central role as an emotional bonding element and semantic carrier of meaning. Folk and pop music, especially from the United States and Britain, represented a youth culture, transported the ideal of a lifestyle separated from the older generation, and propagated political ideas that oscillated between participation and revolution. In West Germany, these musical imports were at the same time opposed by the political reservation that they were being used by the culture industry to make profits and manipulate consumers.

Scepticism towards the culture industry was more widespread in West Germany than elsewhere and led to the development of a genre of its own – Krautrock – which was quite heterogeneous both musically and politically but was characterised by the endeavour of German musicians to develop a style of their own that set themselves apart from the American and British models. In this way, the German scene reacted to a feeling of oversaturation that had already set in by the autumn of 1967: flower power, the expansion of consciousness, and psychedelic and pop art dominated magazines and record shelves without having any provocative effect. The emergence of Krautrock can thus only be understood in the specific

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German political context of 1968, from which, at the same time, it partially distanced itself.[1] The intermingling of pop culture and politics in the 1968 period fell apart shortly after – into a radical political scene on the one hand and a lifestyle-oriented music and drug scene on the other. However, contrary to received wisdom, in the practices of the Krautrockers, musical preferences were combined with radical political ideas and activities for a long time, partly even into the punk scene that emerged years later.

Catalysts: Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser and the Waldeck Festival

The mixing and unmixing of culture and politics can be traced particularly vividly in the story of Krautrock's most important protagonist, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser. This story is closely connected with the precursors of Krautrock, the festivals at Waldeck Castle, and the Essen Songtage of 1968. Kaiser, born in 1943, was one of the most enigmatic figures of the counterculture. He came from the folk-and-protest-song scene, had political interests, and recognised the signs of the times early on, rising with the beat and underground culture and falling because of its professionalisation, which he himself had helped to spur. As organiser of the Essen Songtage, an author and publisher of several books, and a record producer, he played a central role in the breakthrough of the underground in West Germany between 1966 and 1972. He persistently worked through the question of how the rebellious core of the new culture could be further disseminated and at the same time preserved from culture-industrial dilution.

Kaiser advocated a mixed concept of left-wing positions in terms of content and experimental aesthetics. This mixed concept became particularly visible in the years around 1968; during the early 1970s, the aesthetic side gained a preponderance. Kaiser sensed new tendencies earlier than others and immediately put them into practice – through interventions at Burg Waldeck festivals, talent cultivation, his own festival, magazine distribution, and book and record production. No other player in the West German counterculture combined reflection on new trends so early and effectively with the production of pop cultural material. This made him an avant-gardist on the one hand, but on the other hand he appeared as an

[1] Cf. A Simmeth, *Krautrock transnational: Die Neuerfindung der Popmusik in der BRD 1968–1978* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016), pp. 190 ff.; U Adelt, *Krautrock: German Music in the Seventies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), pp. 45 ff.

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opportunist who knew how to turn a new mass movement into cash. Kaiser himself saw his initiatives as part of an economy of counterculture that did not strive for commercialisation but for popularity. A culturally critical public – especially on the left – did not accept the drive to commercialisation as exemplified by the concert agency Lippmann + Rau or rock bands that earned money in and with the counterculture.

An important focal nucleus of West German underground culture was the festivals held at Burg Waldeck in south-west Germany between 1964 and 1969. Songwriters such as Franz Josef Degenhardt, Dieter Süverkrüp, and Walter Mossmann came to prominence through their performances, while at the same time international folk stars such as Phil Ochs or Odetta provided a connection to developments in other countries.[2] In the context of the student movement, the festival became radicalised and, in 1968 and 1969, also offered a space for young German bands (like Xhol Caravan or Checkpoint Charlie). Moreover, it became a forum for discussion about German counterculture. The initiators of the Waldeck, somewhat older intellectuals, were considerably more sceptical about the potential of beat music than Kaiser. At this point already, in the debate about a possible renewal of the Waldeck Festival of 1967, he was accused of wanting to 'commercialise' the festival.[3] The fact was that Kaiser had pleaded, firstly, not only to accept the rise of folk music to mass culture, but to welcome it joyfully, and secondly, to spike it with that rebellious sting through politicisation that would ensure the spread of its emancipatory content and stop it flattening out commercially.

The Monterey Festival had shown what an electrified mass culture could achieve, and Waldeck 1967 had shown that the German folk song offered heightened political potential. It was important to combine the two into a new event concept. When the political protest movement spread after 2 June 1967 – when Berlin policeman killed a student during a demonstration – Kaiser noticed the new thrust that his concept received from this movement and spiced it up with fashionable vocabulary. The 'new song', he declared in 1968, gave a 'foretaste of what the revolution is capable of achieving'.

So directly related to content . . . the talk of danger through corrupting success reveals itself as a liberal-bourgeois farce. The Fugs sell 100,000 copies of a single LP,

[2] H Schneider, *Die Waldeck: Lieder, Fahrten, Abenteuer: Die Geschichte der Burg Waldeck von 1911 bis heute* (Potsdam: Berlin-Brandenburg, 2005), pp. 313 ff.; M Kleff, *Die Burg Waldeck Festivals 1964–1969: Chansons Folklore International* (Hambergen: Bear Family Records, 2008).

[3] D Kerbs, Das Waldeck-Festival: Zu dem Bericht im Juliheft *Deutsche Jugend* 15 (1967), pp. 381–2 (381); R-U Kaiser, Chanson Folklore International, *Deutsche Jugend* 14 (1966), pp. 304–7 (304).

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Franz-Josef Degenhardt fills 1,000-man halls even in medium-sized towns; and yet both their song lyrics have become nastier and more aggressive. It only becomes dangerous for the new song forms when they lose contact with the content of the revolution-to-be-achieved and fall in love with mere formal experimentation. Then, however, they are immediately manipulable, consumable. The new German songs are far from being in such danger. For they still have enough unconsumable fare to bring to consumers.[4]

The Revolution Begins: Internationale Essener Songtage

Kaiser became famous through the International Essen Song Days in 1968. He had pleaded in vain for the annual meeting, which had become traditional, to no longer be held in the youth-movement context of Waldeck Castle, but to be moved to an urban space.[5] Through urbanisation, the festival was to be brought closer to society, absorbing its current tempo and new musical forms. Essen was born out of the impulse of the American underground, mixed with London and Amsterdam influences, and the heterogeneous elements of the counterculture that were meanwhile also blossoming more strongly in the Federal Republic – from the protest singers to the early communes and experimental pop bands to the Provo subcultures. Under the sign of the non-commercial fusion of pop and politics, the Songtage were the most important event of the West German counterculture in the late 1960s.

They were embedded in a theoretical framework that Kaiser had created: political pop music could become mass culture, but in order not to be at the mercy of the exploitative interests of companies and public media, the 'new people' needed independent means of production and performance spaces.[6] From 25 to 29 September 1968, not only well-known American underground greats like The Fugs and Mothers of Invention, along with British artists like Alexis Korner, Brian Auger, and Julie Felix, performed in Essen, but also singer-songwriters like Dieter Süverkrüp and Franz Josef Degenhardt and hitherto mostly unknown German music groups like Amon Düül, Guru Guru Groove, Xhol Caravan, and Tangerine Dream.[7]

[4] R-U Kaiser, Das neue Lied und die Revolution, *Deutsche Jugend* 16 (1968), pp. 127–32 (132).

[5] R-U Kaiser, *Das Songbuch* (Ahrensburg/Paris: Damokles, 1967), p. 40; O & H Kröher, *Rotgraue Raben: Vom Volkslied zum Folksong* (Heidenheim: Südmarkverlag, 1969), p. 99.

[6] Cf. R-U Kaiser (ed.), *Protestfibel. Formen einer neuen Kultur* (Bern: Scherz, 1968), pp. 195 ff.

[7] D Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side: Konsum und Politik in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), pp. 601 ff.; D Mahnert & H Stürmer, *Zappa, Zoff und Zwischentöne: Die Internationalen Essener Songtage 1968* (Essen: Klartext, 2008).

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With 40,000 participants, the biggest pop festival in Europe at that time, it represented a European Monterey from which impulses emanated beyond just the commercial. Pop music was in the foreground, but the political element was more heavily weighted here than in the American or British scenes. Music and happenings were complemented by political texts, radical cabaret, and discussion rounds.

Essen showed, firstly, that alongside the politically grounded protest culture, a broad pop-cultural field had established itself, which in part contained political components. However, one may doubt that it represented, as the organisers claimed, 'the beginning of the end of conventional and only commercially oriented music exploitation'.[8] First, while the festival did provide a forum for bands like Amon Düül and Tangerine Dream, who combined electronic, improvisational sound patterns with political demands, attracting media attention for the first time and winning record contracts, this did not mean the end of the commercial exploitation system, but rather its opening and differentiation. Second, it became clear from the reactions of the audience and the public that the electrified version of the underground attracted larger crowds of young people than the traditional, more chanson-based scene of protest singers. Their audiences were and remained limited. Third, it became apparent that there were narrow limits to the political radicalisation of the masses. While many visitors probably shared the connection between pop and politics, but felt little inclination to engage in activities of their own in this context, only a small group was prepared to push the concept of individual political action further at the expense of music.

Thus, in the early autumn of 1968, it became clear that a more radicalised political wing was separating itself from the bulk of the counterculture. On the other hand, the connection between pop and politics had proven itself precisely through the festival, and many of its protagonists – not least the *spiritus rector* himself – held on to it until the early 1970s. To some observers, it seemed as if pop music in the variant visible here had a politicising effect. The writer Erasmus Schöfer, at any rate, was convinced after Essen that 'the phenomena of beat and pop were latently critical of society in their broad impact on the young generation and would gradually come to an awareness of this character of theirs'.[9]

[8] Broder/Degenhardt/Kaiser/Witthüser, Spiegel-Redakteur missbraucht Spiegel, 20.10.1968, *Deutsches Kabarett-Archiv*, Mainz, LN/N/1.

[9] *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung* (2 October 1968); *Badische Zeitung* (2 October 1968).

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Politicisation of the Music Scene Since 1970

Between 1968 and 1970, the two elements of the counterculture of 1968 – radical politics and 'youth culture' – drifted apart again. Yet there was no lack of attempts to hold them together. The politicisation of pop came from various sources: the protagonists of pop journalism, bands, some recipients, and the state. Just how important pop culture had become could be seen in summer 1970, when about 500,000 young people attended the various pop festivals in the Federal Republic, including a large part of the left-wing scene.[10] The climax and end point was the Love and Peace Festival, which took place on the island of Fehmarn in early September. Instead of a European Woodstock, however, Fehmarn turned into a provincial Altamont – the culmination of those negative phenomena that determined the image of the festival summer of 1970.

The conclusions that radical left-wing masterminds drew from this experience were broad. Pop music was attractive to large masses and thus profitable. Instead of protesting the miserable conditions under which the festivals were held – inflated prices, failing bands, and aggressive security – and changing them through political action, the visitors remained in an apathetic consumerist attitude. In their eyes, this showed that 'capitalists in hippie look'[11] had also incorporated this originally rebellious segment into the capitalist manipulation context. One could only refuse this appropriation, even if one liked the music offered there. In spring 1971, right at the beginning of the new festival season, several subculture activists – among them Henryk M. Broder, Jens Hagen, and Helmut Salzinger – called for a boycott of pop concerts and festivals. One of the underground magazines argued:

> You voluntarily go to a prison and still let the jailers earn from it! . . . How long is this going to go on: Love and peace inside, beating policemen outside, gangs of stewards just waiting to strike, dogs, barbed wire, barriers and organisers bundling notes. All this with your consent! Don't take part in this anymore!!![12]

But the festivals were also politicised from above when the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior issued a general ban on festivals in July 1972. According to the ministry, open-air pop festivals represented a 'serious disturbance of public order' caused by loud music, endangerment of

[10] S Paul, Pop-Festivals und ihre Folgen, *Sozialistische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Gesellschaft* 4 (1970), pp. 79–82 (80).

[11] *Elan* 10 (1970), p. 7. [12] *'Ran* 5 (1971), p. 41.

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minors, hygienic deficiencies, devastation of the landscape, but above all the mass consumption of narcotics.[13] As a result, more than fifty rock bands sent an open letter to the Bavarian minister of the interior demanding the withdrawal of this measure.[14] For many commentators, it was clear that the drug problem was only a pretext to put an end to a new, unwelcome youth culture. Politicians were only interested in eradicating the mass experience 'that it is possible to live together without social constraints in a very nice way and much more freely than it is possible in this state so far'.[15]

The journalist Ingeborg Schober pointed out that in West Germany social problems were responded to with bans, while in neighbouring countries like Denmark or the Netherlands, youth centres and free rock concerts were financed by the state, without the occurrence of many of the negative side effects of commercial festivals.[16] In general, this debate forced the scene itself to differentiate more precisely and propelled the tendencies towards self-organisation. This could best be realised at self-made festivals with a regional reach. But it was precisely these festivals that were being deprived of the opportunity to develop alternatives to the greed of the promoters, not focusing primarily on profit.[17]

In general, a national component could not be overlooked in the anti-commercial self-image of the German scene. The underground magazine *Germania* saw it this way: while the British and American bands were already completely paralysed by the consumer industry, the potential for the German scene, which was 'still three years behind', was to ward off the threat of commercialisation through self-organisation.[18] In essence, the rise of German rock bands in the early 1970s, under the sign of authenticity and self-organisation, was underpinned by national tones directed against commercial dominance from abroad.

Tim Belbe and Thomas Wollscheid from Xhol Caravan contrasted the 'consumer music' produced by the music industry of the 'Anglo-Saxon countries' with the 'music of indigenous groups', which was characterised by 'free' production and 'honest' statements and was thus 'folk music of our time'.[19] The 1973 appeal of the 'IG Rock' (rock music union) stated that 'foreign groups are flooding the Federal Republic of Germany so massively' that German bands hardly had any performance opportunities left, and that when international greats toured, the opening programme was also

[13] *Riebe's Fachblatt* 9:4 (1972), p. 7. [14] *Riebe's Fachblatt* 11:6 (1976).
[15] K Martens in *Riebe's Fachblatt* 10:5 (1972), p. 7. [16] *Sounds* 10 (1972), p. 12.
[17] *Flash* 13 (28 September 1972), p. 5.
[18] *Germania* 9:1 (1971). [19] *Song* 1 (1970), p. 28.

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'dictated by foreign countries', against which joint action by 'all German musicians' was necessary.[20] The feeling of dominance from outside was coupled with considerable self-confidence. Surveys in 1972/73 showed that about one-third of concert-goers and over half of German rock musicians seriously expected German pop groups to be able to 'outflank' their British and American competitors in a few years.[21]

Between 1971 and 1973, several associations were set up to promote cooperation between bands – in Hamburg there was a 'Rock Lib Front', in southern Germany a 'Band-Coop', in Mainz a 'Rock-Büro' and in West Berlin a 'Rock Front'. By cutting out producers, middlemen, and promoters, the groups were expected to be able to maintain their freedom and market their products more cheaply. Finally, these approaches to self-organisation were to form nodes of a countercultural network, as the theoretician of West German counterculture, Rolf Schwendter, had in mind as a model of a counter-economy within the capitalist system.[22]

The ideal groups were rock bands who produced and distributed their music independently and played for a small fee, or often for 'free', such as Ton Steine Scherben, Franz K., Hotzenplotz, or Can. Although three-quarters of West German rock musicians thought the principle of self-organisation was advantageous, most attempts at cooperation promptly failed.[23] Professional bands who were not primarily politically oriented quickly realised that overcoming competition in the pop scene was an arduous business and speculated that, in view of the desolate situation, 'a big, commercially raised agency for German groups' would be more likely to help.[24] The slogan of mutual aid, in any case, as the group Kraan saw it, had instead promoted exploitation under countercultural auspices: if the bands did not play cheaply, or preferably for 'free', they were ostracised as a 'commercial group'.

The economy of anti-commercial consumption included other practices that enabled low-cost participation in popular culture. They not only had the advantage of costing nothing or little, but also gained an ideological superstructure through the morality of anti-consumerism, which had a long tradition in Germany. These practices not only included the forcing of free concerts, but also the production and distribution of bootlegs, theft from book or record shops and the individual hijacking or collective

[20] *Riebe's Fachblatt*, 3/4 (1973), pp. 6, 10.

[21] R Dollase, M Rüsenberg & H-J Stollwerk, *Rock People. Die befragte Szene* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1974), p. 115 ff.

[22] R Schwendter, *Theorie der Subkultur* (Hamburg: EVA, 1993).

[23] Dollase, Rüsenberg & Stollwerk, *Rock People*, p. 209. [24] *LOG-Zeitung* 6:1 (1973).

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storming of concert halls. Especially between 1969 and 1971, groups of young people – often numbering 100 to 200 – stormed the halls at concerts of popular bands like Steppenwolf, Canned Heat, and Pink Floyd to gain free admission.

Unlike the rock 'n' roll and beat riots of the 1950s and mid-1960s, these actions contained a weighty political component that was in the spirit of the times. 'They are very young', said concert organiser Peter Hauke of the participants. 'All under 20. Mostly students who hide behind political arguments. And say this is just a political demonstration against capitalism.'[25] Their slogan, 'The concert halls are ours!', once again made clear their claim of ownership over pop music. Actions were primarily directed against the concert organisers, but also against bands who did not fulfil audience expectations. The radical-left scene cheered on such activities as social revolutionary self-activity. In 1971, The West Berlin underground gazette *883* justified this concept in detail:

> Within the underground, it was possible for us to communicate freely with each other for the first time. We could express ourselves freely among ourselves, could smoke pot, fuck, etc., without being bothered too much by bourgeois values. The underground was the way of life of the new, struggling left . . . . But capitalism, which is fighting for its life, is dependent on either commercialising or smashing up emerging socialist islands. A gigantic pop industry has emerged; . . . By trying to [enjoy music] without having to spend our hard-earned money, through street fights at pop concerts, we reduce the profit rate of the promoter pig.[26]

Most concert-goers, on the other hand, appeared to be all too compliant consumers. They were therefore considered 'direct allies of the pigs' and had to reckon with physical attacks on another occasion when *883* called for a boycott of all pop concerts: 'If you pay, you get punched in the face.'[27] Less radical activists tried to de-escalate. Tom Schroeder, for example, also considered pop music to be the property of the public but warned against 'putschist individual actions' and called for the use of 'organisation, discipline and imagination'.[28] He called for the opening of larger halls for this new mass culture – barracks, exhibition halls, or football stadiums – to reduce ticket prices to a minimum.

Because entrepreneurs who did not act with the required seriousness thrived, the ideological construction that had already been omnipresent in

[25] *Underground* 4:4 (1970), p. 30. [26] *883*, vol. 83 (3 July 1971), p. 7.
[27] NN, Macht Schluss mit dem Terror der Veranstalter!, *883*, vol. 71 (15 November 1970).
[28] *Underground* 4:4 (1970), p. 30.

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the 1960s was once again booming on this battlefield of consumer culture: mindless 'managers' tried to exploit the young people who had been manipulated by artificially arousing their needs. However, the scene itself was already taking a closer look. While promoters like Hauke or the agency Mama Concerts, founded in 1970, were considered primarily profit-oriented, Lippmann + Rau was able to defend a profile as an ethically motivated and fair promoter. Papers like *Underground* and *Sounds* gave Fritz Rau – the organiser of the disastrous Jethro Tull concert in Frankfurt on 21 February 1970 – plenty of space to explain his position.[29] In fact, Rau provided a far from superficial analysis of the novel practice of storming concerts to enforce a right to free music consumption: The industry had 'operated a bit too much with buzzwords like "underground" and "pop revolution"', so that now a 'friction' had arisen:

> Young people suddenly find themselves in a vacuum: on the one hand the habitus of the revolutionary and on the other hand all this embedded in the practices of our consumer society. Of course, young people feel this dichotomy, and in my opinion, this is also the reason why these riots have happened.[30]

From Rau's point of view, too, this political activism represented a German specificity that was not to be observed in the large north-western European live cultures in England and Scandinavia.[31]

In fact, it cannot be overlooked how strongly the German rock scene stood out from other national scenes due to its political underpinnings. In Britain or Denmark, for example, youthful musical taste was regarded as a leisure time enjoyment whereas in West Germany it was essentialised as the expression of a generation-specific spirit of opposition. In his feature 'Germany Calling' for the *New Musical Express*, Ian MacDonald saw a special feature in the fact that the German scene was much more political and militant than the British one.[32] In an interview with *Pop* magazine in 1973, Led Zeppelin singer Robert Plant complained at length about the politicisation of their music in Germany, which had already led to riots on their first tour in spring 1970, and summed up his view in a nutshell: 'The German audience is O.K. in and of itself, just far too political.'[33] After boycott actions against his concerts, Edgar Broughton also considered German fans to be partly 'more arrogant than elsewhere'; they were 'less hippie-like and much more political'.[34] The band Ten Years After even

[29] Ibid.; *Pauke* 4:2 (1971). [30] *Sounds* 4 (1970). [31] *Underground* 4:4 (1970), p. 28.
[32] *New Musical Express* (9 December 1972), p. 18.
[33] *Pop* 11 (1973), quoted in *Sounds* 2 (1974), p. 20.
[34] *Sounds* 27 (1971); Wagner, *Klang der Revolte*, p. 27.

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claimed they saw 'madness sparkling in the eyes of the German audience' at their gigs.[35]

In its anti-commercial self-image, it already becomes clear to what extent the German rock scene linked its musical preference to radical political claims. A quantitative insight into the connection between music and radical politics is provided by the research conducted by Rainer Dollase and colleagues in the early 1970s. As many as 17 per cent of concert-goers said they were led to a 'socially critical attitude' by the music.[36] Musicians attributed an even stronger political component to it, with 53 per cent of them generally intending to contribute to social change and 42 per cent setting themselves the goal of promoting socio-critical attitudes among their audience – not only through political song lyrics or statements, but also through the composition and arrangement of the tunes.

Even if such ideas remained more than vague, the political aspirations of rock music among producers and recipients alike were remarkably high and in this formed a specific feature of the time and of national culture. The German audience could also appear as particularly political because music was not to be consumed passively but was meant to lead to political practice. Thus, at the end of their concerts, Floh de Cologne always called for the audience to become active in left-wing youth associations, and Ton Steine Scherben were known for their mobilising power, especially during demonstrations.

From Ohr to Cosmic Couriers: Revolution as Ecstasy

In 1970, Kaiser realised that the real existing counterculture was actually changing society. By changing their lives, following more informal values and building their own networks of production, distribution, and communication, the followers of the counterculture changed 'not only their own situation, but also the balance of society as a whole'.[37] Kaiser was still interested in further expanding this countercultural network – especially its media sector. Among the many initiatives with which he fertilised the counterculture was the discussion about the further development of a 'hedonistic left'.[38] The debate about how 'rationalist' (i.e. political) and

[35] Quoted in ibid., p. 33. [36] Dollase, Rüsenberg & Stollwerk, *Rock People*, pp. 210 ff.
[37] *Sozialistische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Gesellschaft* 10:4 (1970), p. 75.
[38] *Roter Mohn* 4 (1 May 1971).

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'emotional' (i.e. music- and drug-centred) sub-cultures could be held together began in spring 1970 and ended with a split into two currents, with Kaiser belonging to the faction focusing on pop, drugs, and religious beliefs, while Rolf Schwendter was the protagonist of a more politically contoured direction.

What particularly upset many critics of Kaiser was the fact that in 1970, in addition to his powerful position in the press, he also set up an independent record label for the countercultural sector of pop music, together with an old veteran of the record industry. Peter Meisel (Hansa Musik Produktion), who also produced German *Schlager* stars, joined Kaiser to found the label Ohr (ear) in spring 1970.[39] Meisel, who was considered a 'pike in the carp pond' of the record industry in the mid-1960s, had taken Amon Düül under his wing and produced two successful LPs with them.[40] Connected to Metronome's distribution network, Meisel and Kaiser looked after five German rock bands in June 1970, covering a broad musical spectrum and with a partly political, in any case anti-commercial claim, including Embryo, Tangerine Dream, and Floh de Cologne. Later, bands like Amon Düül I, Birth Control, and Guru Guru joined them.[41]

At first, the German pop scene had high hopes for Ohr, because having their own label was the first step towards holding their own in a market dominated by British and American bands. For the bands, the cooperation with Kaiser and Meisel had advantages, because they now had sufficient technical possibilities to produce records for the first time and were being promoted systematically. On the other hand, members of the counterculture had already been irritated in 1968 by the PR avalanche unleashed by Kaiser and Broder, which had promised a lot but could by no means deliver everything. Now, as the founder of Ohr, Kaiser once again preyed with financially heavy promotion on a clientele that was not only unprepared for it, but also resolutely rejected the usual commercial hype.

In addition, he hung ideological labels on his bands, for example claiming that they were committed to a particularly altruistic ethic (which led to irritations in marketing) and ended up selling them as mediums of cosmic supernaturalism. The application of grandiloquent advertising to the underground scene contributed significantly to Kaiser's already damaged reputation, eroding dramatically from 1970 onwards.[42] From the more

[39] *Der Musikmarkt* 13 (1972), p. 42; *Musik-Informationen* 7 (1970), p. 10; *Spiegel* 29 (13 July 1970), p. 126.

[40] Cf. *Vorwärts* (19 January 1966).

[41] *Musik-Informationen* 7 (1970), p. 10.

[42] Cf., e.g. *Sounds* 2 (1971); *Riebe's Fachblatt* 8/9 (1973), pp. 1, 8 f.

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pragmatic point of view of the bands, the fact that no political or aesthetic constraints were imposed was to Ohr's credit. In fact, the connection between an established representative of the record business and an up-and-comer from the folk and underground scene was innovative in that Ohr systematically placed German rock music on the market for the first time, thus preparing the national and international Krautrock boom. In 1972, leading industry magazine *Musikmarkt* identified a 'considerable asset' in this market segment and praised Kaiser for having 'significantly promoted' this development. Of course, approval by a mouthpiece of commerce irrevocably damaged Kaiser's reputation in the counterculture: 'He was one of the first to grasp the market opportunities for a new German pop music and beat the advertising drum accordingly.'[43]

In autumn 1971, Kaiser and Meisel founded a second label called Pilz (mushroom), which presented a programme oscillating between folk rock and contemplative electronic music with groups such as Bröselmaschine, Hölderlin, and Popol Vuh. The commercial success of these two ventures was considerable; in the 1972 polls of the German magazines *Musikexpress*, *Sounds* and *Schallplatte*, they occupied thirty-seven places, with the Ohr band Birth Control ranking first in each case.[44] With his last creation, the Kosmische Kuriere record label of 1973, Kaiser concentrated almost exclusively on spherical sounds and also took off for unattainable heights. From around 1971 onwards, he became increasingly vehement in his advocacy of a mystical view of the world, which was mainly fed by the ideas of Timothy Leary. Kaiser saw himself as a 'dealer' who helped spread those substances with which a new 'sensitivity' could be created: hashish, LSD, and rock music. As such, he did not primarily want to earn money, but to spread an alternative consciousness and strengthen the sense of community in the counterculture.

In his view, drug use helped to overcome individual and social failings: drug users 'hear more finely, react more sensitively, dress more fantastically, live more peacefully and take care of each other. Their hearing is sharpened, their eyes look deeply, their feeling responds sensitively.'[45] Robert Feustel described the overriding context thus: 'the hope of finding a way out of the valley of failed modernity hangs on the chemical substance'.[46]

[43] *Der Musikmarkt* 13 (1 July 1972), p. 42. [44] *Sounds* 5 (1972).

[45] R-U Kaiser, *Rock-Zeit: Stars, Geschäft und Geschichte der neuen Pop-Musik* (Düsseldorf/ Vienna: Econ, 1972), pp. 253 ff. (263).

[46] R Feustel, *Ein Anzug aus Strom. LSD, Kybernetik und die psychedelische Revolution* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2015), p. 3.

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Conclusion

It is true that in the two typically separated subcultures elements of each other's preferences were still present – pop music consumption in radical political subcultures and leftist positions in the subcultures of music and drug consumers. Nevertheless, with their explosive growth, the scenes also became increasingly separated from each other. More political bands on the one hand – Floh de Cologne, Ton Steine Scherben, or Franz K – split with bands more interested in new musical paths like Amon Düül, Can, or Tangerine Dream. That they were nevertheless united by their countercultural origins is illustrated by the fact that they all were subsumed retrospectively under the rubric of Krautrock. The stronger attraction of the sensually disordered is demonstrated by the example of the Munich pop journalist Ingeborg Schober. In 1967, at the age of twenty, she went to London, fell completely into the pop frenzy there, and returned in summer 1969 to Munich, which had become more radical – politically as well as culturally. In an interview with her, director Wim Wenders described his first encounter with the band Amon Düül at a festival at the Academy of Arts in spring 1968. According to Wenders, the band modelled their approach on bands like Velvet Underground or Hapshash and the Coloured Coat:

> It was terribly chaotic. And I remember that in those first sessions they also suddenly stopped in the middle because nobody knew how to continue. And at the same time, I really, really appreciated that. And that's why Amon Düül were a real myth for me at the time, because they were a band that was looking for something. That was the meaning, the content of this music – a search. And they had a few pieces that they played over and over again, which were then different each time and each time a piece further. The pieces were based on very rhythmic scraps and then became longer and longer in the rhythmic arcs, and more and more balanced and also more and more beautiful.[47]

In such statements, political claims still shine through – a reference to society and the emancipatory potential of self-activity – but had moved far from the directly political claims of left-wing radicalism that emerged in a much purer form in the music of bands like Ton Steine Scherben.

[47] Quoted in I Schober, *Tanz der Lemminge. Amon Düül – eine Musikkommune in der Protestbewegung der 60er Jahre* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979), p. 31.

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Recommended Reading

U Adelt, *Krautrock: German Music in the Seventies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

D Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side: Konsum und Politik in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006).

A Simmeth, *Krautrock transnational: Die Neuerfindung der Popmusik in der BRD 1968–1978* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016).

C Wagner, *Der Klang der Revolte: Die magischen Jahre des westdeutschen Musik-Underground* (Mainz: Schott, 2013).

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