7 Can

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This chapter focuses on Can, a band who formed in Cologne around 1968 and remained active until 1979 – reforming to record a final album in 1986 and then a single song in 1999. It first considers the formation of the group, and contextualises their position in post-war West German culture as well as West German and international networks of music making. The chapter then surveys and analyses Can's musical practice, releases, tours, and relationship with the press and public in sections divided by who undertook lead vocals: Malcolm Mooney, Kenji 'Damo' Suzuki, and finally a revolving vocalist system (typically Michael Karoli and sometimes Irmin Schmidt). It concludes by providing an overview of Can's legacy in global music making since the 1970s.

Can and their collaborators fostered a remarkable camaraderie that lasted despite the pressures of the music industry, touring, and negotiating the politics of personalities, individual musical expression, and meaningful collective music-making. They made use of varied approaches to and styles of music, and developed connections and collaborations that left a mark enduring on modern music across the world. Ulrich Adelt noted that the band were uncommonly outward-looking, going 'beyond Germany's borders for musical influences', which enabled them to comment upon and distinguish themselves from 'the Nazi past and the influx of Anglo-American music into West Germany'.[1] This search for new influences – sometimes documented in their ironically-named 'ethnological forgery series' – extended to collaborating with musicians from different racial and cultural backgrounds. They worked with Malcolm Mooney, an African American sculptor, Damo Suzuki, a Japanese hippie found singing improvised tunes on the street in Munich when travelling through Europe, and, during the late 1970s, Rosko Gee, a bassist from Jamaica, and Anthony 'Rebop' Kwaku Baah, a Ghanaian percussionist.

As Beate Kutschke argued, Can represented an international network of 'politically engaged, New-Leftist' musicians who 'shuttled between cities in

[1] U Adelt, Machines with a Heart: German Identity in the Music of Can and Kraftwerk, *Popular Music and Society* 35:3 (2012), pp. 359–74 (360).

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different countries and continents and exchanged knowledge of musical styles, aesthetics and socio-political issues'.[2] Can performed across Britain extensively, where they charmed music journalists and enraptured members of the emerging punk, post-punk, and electronic music scenes, and had enough of a following in France to play sporadic concerts and occasional short tours. The band even scored hits: 'Spoon' reached number six in the German charts in 1971 and the band skirted the British mainstream with a performance of their number twenty-eight hit 'I Want More' on *Top of the Pops*, a Friday night television institution. However, they are better remembered as a group who cultivated a devoted international cult audience, which included numerous musicians from a diverse range of genres.

Can before Can

Considering the musical training of two of Can's so-called founders, their place in the rock scene and on the margins of pop success is curious – perhaps only comparable to John Cale of the Velvet Underground, who was taught by the minimalist composer La Monte Young as a postgraduate student. Czukay and Schmidt were conservatoire-trained and studied under Karlheinz Stockhausen, Germany's most notable post-war composer and a pioneer of electronic music. This brought them into contact with several luminaries of post-1945 Western modern composition, including John Cage, the American composer known for his explorations of chance composition. In interviews, Czukay and Schmidt often characterised themselves as too playful and outward-looking towards the 1960s pop and counter-culture scenes for the rarefied world of composition. Czukay advocated a method that encouraged spontaneity over technique, and Stockhausen had been one of few in the academy who tolerated this approach. Speaking to Richard Cook in the *New Musical Express* in 1982, Czukay reminisced: 'I was always being thrown out of music colleges. Stockhausen took me in – he asked me if I was a composer and I had to reply I don't know. If you are an "artist" you can lie the music away in professionalism.'[3]

Liebezeit, on the other hand, was a jazz drummer before joining Can. He explained his pre-Can career to Jono Podmore, who has edited a book on

[2] B Kutschke, Protest Music, Urban Contexts and Global Perspectives, *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 46:2 (2015), pp. 321–54.

[3] R Cook, Holger Czukay: Strangely Strange but Oddly Normal, *New Musical Express* (20 February 1982).

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Liebezeit's life and approach to drumming.[4] Liebezeit began performing in high school bands but was picked up by semi-professional rock 'n' roll bands in Kassel. He soon became aware of American jazz, and jazz drummers Max Roach, Art Blakey, and Elvin Jones caught his ear. This led him to performing with Manfred Schoof's group. Liebezeit played with an impressive list of jazz stars during his twenties, which were spent between Cologne and Barcelona, including Art Blakey, Don Cherry (they shared a flat in Cologne), and Chet Baker. However, from 1964, Manfred Schoof's group had moved towards atonal and arrhythmic free jazz, whereas Liebezeit had developed an interest in 'Spanish, Arabic, Gypsy, North African and Afro-Cuban music'.[5] In 1968, Liebezeit began to work with Can as they were fellow devotees of his 'cyclical approach to rhythm'.[6]

Michael Karoli, Can's guitarist, was ten years younger than his bandmates – Holger Czukay was born in 1937, both Schmidt and Liebezeit were born in 1938. He had moved from Bavaria to St. Gallen in Switzerland as a schoolboy; Czukay had been his guitar teacher in high school. After Karoli had graduated and accepted a place to study law at the University of Lausanne (where he played in several amateur jazz and dance bands), Czukay convinced him to join Can instead. Wickström, Lücke, and Jóri have noted that most West German musicians in the post-1945 period were self-taught and generally first learnt from American GIs and catered to their tastes – few were schooled in the Western art music tradition like Can.[7] Indeed, even fewer were able to integrate aspects of the emerging pop sounds of the 1960s and free jazz into their approach.

As has been documented in Rob Young and Irmin Schmidt's comprehensive autobiography/biography, *Can: All Gates Open*, the band's initial successes were related to composing film soundtracks.[8] Schmidt had made waves as a solo film score composer alone but moved towards a collaborative approach when commissioned to provide accompaniment to Peter F. Schneider's film *Agilok & Blubbo* (released in 1969) in 1968 – a year of student uprisings, and social and political unrest in Germany and the wider world. They named the new band The Inner Space; it featured Schmidt alongside Czukay, Karoli, and Liebezeit, with a vocal turn from Rosemarie

[4] J Podmore, Biography, in J Podmore (ed.), *Jaki Liebezeit: the Life, Theory and Practice of a Master Drummer* (London: Unbound, 2020), pp. 5–46.

[5] Ibid., p. 18. [6] Ibid., p. 21.

[7] D-E Wickström, M Lücke & A Jóri, Not without Music Business: The Higher Education of Musicians and Music Industry Workers in Germany, *International Journal of Music Business Research* 4:1 (2015), pp. 55–81 (61).

[8] R Young & I Schmidt, *Can: All Gates Open* (London: Faber, 2018).

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Heinikel, an actor and counter-cultural figure, and accompaniment from David C. Johnson, an American composer who had assisted Stockhausen at *Westdeutscher Rundfunk*'s (WDR) electronic studio in Cologne. The film attempted to capture and lampoon the politics of the moment; it was a satire of West German politics and the counter-culture that followed two young revolutionaries who conspired to kill an establishment figure until their plan was disrupted by a co-conspirator, Michaela, whom both of the film's protagonists fall for. Between 1968 and 1979, Can were credited with creating seventeen original film and television soundtracks – a selection of their early soundtrack recordings was released on the compilation *Soundtracks* (1970).

Can's success in the film industry was not universally well received. In what may be a case of envious revisionism, Chris Karrer, a member of Amon Düül II and labelmate on United Artists, claimed to Edwin Pouncey in the *Wire* that Can had knowingly undercut other bands competing for soundtrack work.[9] This animosity might stem from how, unlike Amon Düül and Amon Düül II, Can shied away from direct political commentary and tended not to play radical squats or communes – although they were generally of the left and anti-authoritarian. Can made their political points and represented the struggles of their generation through musical practice and sound.

The Malcolm Mooney Era: 1968–1969

Soundtrack composition paid for Can's equipment and recording space. Christoph Vohwinkel, an art collector with aspirations to host an artistic commune, rented them rooms within a castle near Cologne, Schloss Nörvenich. There they practiced in a group that included Malcolm Mooney, and recorded and made their initial live appearances – playing spontaneously composed music – in June 1968. Their first concert was later released as a tape in 1984 entitled *Prehistoric Future*. The band, as is documented on *Prehistoric Future*, improvised together extensively, developing, refining, and combining their own approach(es) to musical practice. During Mooney's time in the band, Can developed a distinctive sound as their rhythm section, Czukay and Liebezeit, played ostensibly simple but intricate, repetitive rhythms. The drums and bass complimented Schmidt's novel electronic approaches, which incorporated ambient textures and

[9] E Pouncey, Communing with Chaos: Amon Düül II, *Wire* (February 1996).

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more abrasive sounds in tandem with Karoli's overdriven and expressive guitar lines and Mooney's impassioned vocals. Les Gillon suggests that Can's egalitarian football-based metaphor for improvisation – 'the collective and non-hierarchical nature of the band as a team' – could illustrate a broader point about social freedoms that diverged from concepts of freedom in a 'rational' capitalist society.[10] Till Krause and David Stubbs have each argued that the social meanings associated with this approach and the resulting music were powerful in creating new ideas of national identity in West Germany.[11]

Can's approach to musical practice was innovative and has been explored by journalists and authors both during and after the band effectively disbanded in 1979. They were keen listeners and drew from a broad array of reference points beyond their musical training. Each has spoken about the influence of American bands such as the Velvet Underground and the Mothers of Invention (Karoli is claimed to have introduced his older counterparts to Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones as well); Liebezeit introduced Czukay to the propulsive rhythm of James Brown's funk, and they shared enthusiasm for non-Western approaches to rhythm.[12] Can, in general, were open to non-Western music as documented in their 'ethnological forgeries' series, which set to tape their attempts to emulate a range of non-Western musics. Liebezeit and Czukay developed a system based upon painstakingly accurate repetitions and minor variations of drum and bass patterns, which was often understood as a reaction to Liebezeit's aversion to the unstructured clang and clatter of free jazz.

The band privileged intuition alongside repetition. Schmidt and Karoli often described this approach as telepathy, with Karoli going so far to claim a telepathic relationship with 'the green eye of the reverb machine'.[13] The intensity of their approach was described by Mooney when he recalled the recording of their first released album *Monster Movie* (1969):

Our first record, *Monster Movie*, to give an example, the A-side is completely controlled, planned. The B-side, 'You Doo Right', is a first take in the vocals. There

[10] L Gillon, Varieties of Freedom in Music Improvisation, *Open Cultural Studies* 2 (2018), pp. 788–9.

[11] T Krause, 'Amerrrika Ist Wunderrrbarrr': Promotion of Germnay through Radio Goethe's Cultural Export of German Popular Music to North America, *Popular Music* 27:2 (2008), pp. 225–42 (229–30); D Stubbs, *Future Days: Krautrock and the Building of Modern Germany* (London: Faber, 2014), pp. 458–68.

[12] R Chapman, No Borders Here: Holger Czukay's Movies and on the Way to Peak of Normal, *MOJO* (March 1998).

[13] A Gill, Can: Art Terrorism! Sensory Derangement! Holistic Vomiting! Available Weekends . . ., *MOJO* (April 1997).

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were overdubs added, but the recording, which started at about 11 AM, ended around 11 PM. It was quite a session. I left the studio at one time for lunch, when I returned the band was still playing the tune and I resumed where I had left off and that is how we did 'You Doo Right'.[14]

What Mooney fails to mention is that the lengthy improvisations that made 'You Doo Right' were recorded to two tracks of tape later edited into pieces by Czukay. Throughout the existence of Can, Czukay would edit, cut, and recut two-track tape recordings of their sessions into coherent pieces, only moving to more conventional multi-track recording from the recording of *Soon Over Babaluma* (1974) onwards. Adelt argues that Can, and particularly Holger Czukay, used recording technology as a means to experiment with recorded sounds 'long before it became common practice'.[15] Kai Fikentscher similarly noted that Czukay was, like Phil Spector, George Martin, and Trevor Horn, a pioneer in using the studio as an instrument, demonstrating that 'recorded music could now be a product of illusionary performance'.[16] This approach had a bearing on the work of Brian Eno and Kraftwerk, among others, in their Kling-Klang studio.

Can independently released only 500 copies of *Monster Movie* at first. The first pressing was hoped to attract major label interest, and ultimately led to them signing a record deal with the American label United Artists. The album could be seen as one of the first templates for what would be deemed 'Krautrock' as it was codified and adapted into a recognisable sub-genre. Even though Krautrock is frequently questioned by its supposed creators, and its derogatory name misrepresents the work of musicians who were as outward-looking and aware of international music making as possible at the time, *Monster Movie* contains its hallmarks of repetitive, subtle rhythms and a free approach to guitar, synthesiser, and vocal embellishments. Mooney's lyrics were existential and surreal. He explored motifs from gospel songs and nursery rhymes, and vented thinly veiled anguish about relationships, sex, desire, reproductive anxiety, and hedonism. The album led to Can's first mention in the influential British music press (which was distributed across parts of Western Europe and the United States), when Richard Williams gave *Monster Movie* a positive

[14] A Patterson, Malcolm R. Mooney: An Interview, *Eurock 1983* (July 2019).

[15] U Adelt, *Krautrock: German Music in the Seventies* (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 2016), p. 23.

[16] K Fikentscher, 'There's Not a Problem I Can't Fix, 'Cause I Do the Mix': On the Performative Technology of 12-Inch Vinyl in R Lysloff (ed.), *Music and Technoculture* (Wesleyan: Middltown, 2013), pp. 290–315 (293).

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review in *Melody Maker*.[17] The album's opening track, 'Father Cannot Yell', was played twice to a nationwide British audience on John Peel's BBC Radio One show 'Top Gear' on 16 May and 26 June 1970. Several tracks from this time were later rediscovered and released as *The Lost Tapes* (2012) – they are a testament to Mooney's importance to Can's early music.

Mooney left Can and West Germany in December 1969, having experienced heightened anxiety due to the possibility, as an American citizen, of being drafted into the Vietnam War or accused of avoiding the draft. A psychiatrist advised Mooney to return to the Untied States, where he used his experiences as a sculptor to teach art to socially and economically disadvantaged children in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods of New York City.

The Damo Suzuki Era: 1969–1973

Between 1969 and 1971, Can toured across West Germany despite losing Mooney. In 1970, as well as releasing their collection of film soundtracks, Can played numerous *Stadthallen* (municipal halls), youth centres, a few festivals, and Munich's trendy Beat Club. In 1970 their concerts were, however, predominantly clustered around Cologne, Essen, and Dortmund within the Rhine–Ruhr area, their home region. During their travels, Can met Damo Suzuki singing improvised songs outside a café in Munich for spare change. They asked him if he would like to perform in their band that evening and he agreed because he had nothing better to do.[18] Damo Suzuki was born in 1950 near Tokyo in the town of Ōiso. Teenage Kenji – before he was known as Damo, an affectation in honour of his favourite comic book character that he adopted in Europe – became enraptured with the post-war American trope of the romance of the open road, which inspired him to move to Europe. He certainly sought a free approach to lyrics and vocal delivery: Suzuki broadly continued the style pioneered by Mooney, but Can's new singer was more abstract lyrically and slightly less informed by the blues and rock 'n' roll canon.

The first album that Suzuki recorded with Can was *Tago Mago* (1971). The album's title refers to the Mediterranean island of Tagomago, which is near Ibiza and had putative links – arguably contrived by Can members to impishly mislead the British music press – with Aleister Crowley, the

[17] R Williams, Can: Monster Movie, *Melody Maker* (30 May 1970).
[18] D Suzuki & P Woods, *I Am Damo Suzuki* (London: Omnibus, 2019), p. 77.

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Illustration 7.1 Irmin Schmidt, Holger Czukay, Damo Suzuki, Jaki Liebezeit, and Michael Karoli of Can, early 1970s. Courtesy of Spoon Recs.

English writer and occultist who was a practitioner of 'magick' and libertinism. Crowley, often reduced to his adage 'do as thou wilt', had provided inspiration to numerous hedonistic and sexually adventurous, if not rapist, rock musicians and their entourages during the late 1960s and 1970s. The album is remarkable on a sonic level as the lack of separation between each instrument when recording – only three microphones were used – caused sounds to bleed into each other creating unplanned harmonic characteristics and sounds to arise.

Typically, by the 1970s, when multi-track recording had become well established in the music industry, each instrument could be recorded with its own microphone or direct input cable and heard separately, even when recorded simultaneously (i.e. live). In a conventional recording, these multiple tracks could then be brought together as a balanced multi-instrumental whole once the volume levels were mixed and frequencies blended during mastering. In another departure from conventional recording techniques, Czukay also captured on tape what he termed 'in-between-recordings' – the sound of the band jamming but unaware that they were being recorded – and used them in the final mix.[19] The resulting sounds are

[19] H Czukay & A Short, History of the Can-Discography, *Perfect Sound Forever* (May 1997).

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darker, and although some of the lyrical content shares themes with *Monster Movie* there are moments of greater intensity, such as 'Mushroom', which interprets the atomic bomb as a moment of symbolic rebirth.

By 1971, assisted by their manager Hildegard Schmidt and accompanied by Damo Suzuki, buoyed by an appearance on WDR Television in January, and with their new album *Tago Mago* ready for release in August, Can were booked to play most major West German cities and larger towns between March and the album's release date. At the same time, the band's appeal in Britain was beginning to grow. In January 1972, for instance, Mike Watts of *Melody Maker* wrote an effusive – if strewn with casual assumptions about Germans – review of *Tago Mago*. He teased the prospect of Can's forthcoming British tour: 'Can are coming to Britain soon. I'm looking forward to their visit with guarded interest. They sound a weird bunch of geezers.'[20] After a German tour in February and March, Can indeed toured Britain for the first time. They started at Imperial College on 28 April 1972, then played the university circuit and a few other small-to-medium-sized venues for a month, before returning to the continent to play festivals in France and Germany. They visited later in the year as well, to play a one-off headline concert at The Rainbow in Finsbury Park, London on 22 July, which was impressive considering the venue had a capacity of nearly 3,000 people, much larger and more prestigious than the stops on their tour earlier in the year.

Can's tours around Germany and Britain demonstrate a willingness to play venues large and small in both the usual cities on the touring circuit and smaller less frequently visited towns. In 1973, taking advantage of Britain's widespread infrastructure for live rock performances and entry into the Common Market, Can made a somewhat unusual move (for a non-British band of their profile) by visiting smaller towns including Penzance, Plymouth, Westcliffe-on-Sea, and Chatham as part of a concert tour with nineteen stops across Scotland, Wales, and England. They then played their longest French tour (six stops), which included concerts in Paris, Rennes, and Bordeaux. This persistence, alongside the release of two of their most well-loved albums, *Ege Bamyasi* (1972) and *Future Days* (1973), meant that despite Damo Suzuki's departure from the band in late 1973 the band was in a strong position commercially. Suzuki had left Can to become a Jehovah's Witness like his new wife, and saw life in a band as incompatible with his new faith and lifestyle (Liebezeit recalled that

[20] M Watts, Can: Tago Mago, *Melody Maker* (29 January 1972).

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Suzuki 'left with no warning' and claimed that he was 'brainwashed').[21] Gitta Suzuki-Mouret, his then wife, has rejected Liebezeit's account; she claimed that the internal politics of the group left Suzuki feeling isolated and keen to move on.[22]

Thanks to *Ege Bamyasi* and *Future Days*, Suzuki's remaining time in Can was well documented. *Ege Bamyasi* was the first Can album recorded in a former cinema, soundproofed with army-issue mattresses in the town of Weilerswist (some fifteen miles south of Cologne), which they named Inner Space. The album included 'Spoon' which was Can's biggest hit in West Germany, reaching number six in the charts. Its success was mostly due to being the theme of *Das Messer* (*The Knife*), a West German crime thriller that appeared on television from November 1971. The album, which is less intense and more immediately alluring than *Tago Mago*, received critical acclaim. The lyrics are again existential and often not always clearly meaningful but evocative and filled with imagery.

Future Days was also well-received by critics (the *New Musical Express*'s eleventh best album of the year). It is punctuated by more prominent electronic sounds, ambient stretches, and Liebezeit's polyrhythmic drumming than its predecessor. If *Ege Bamyasi* provided a template for experimental rock, post-punk, and indie musicians, *Future Days* is perhaps more aligned with Can's contribution to electronic music – particularly the way that the album's final track 'Bel Air' cleverly progresses through different movements and variations. Suzuki's vocal approach is more understated, even marginal, but – when heard – he questions the meaning of life in a modern consumer society and interrogates the possibilities of personal freedom within such a society's constraints.

Can after Suzuki: 1974–1979 (and Beyond)

After Suzuki left, Karoli and Schmidt slightly reluctantly shared vocals. The change did not upset the band's popular momentum, and Can's growing profile on the British rock scene allowed them to undertake a twenty-two date tour, with two live sessions on BBC Radio 1 and a television appearance on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* to play 'Vernal Equinox' in 1974. With each of the four Can founders born either just before or just after World War II in Germany, an interesting dynamic emerged, as music fans in Britain, a society often obsessed with the war and prone to seeing Germany

[21] Suzuki & Woods, *I Am Damo Suzuki*, p. 122. [22] Ibid., pp. 122–3.

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and Germans through the lens of Nazism during the 1960s and 1970s, adopted Can most eagerly.[23] Can tended to get on with British journalists, particularly *Sounds*' Vivian Goldman, the daughter of German-Jewish refugees who had escaped the Holocaust to London, and were typically presented as disarmingly funny eccentrics.[24] Nevertheless, during interviews, the band often seemed compelled (and it is not clear if it was a personal compulsion or at the request of journalists) to describe moments of their youth in post-war West Germany in a way that constructed them as inherently predisposed to anti-fascism – few British or American artists were pressed on their political affiliations in the music press during the early and mid-1970s.

Can recorded six further albums after Damo Suzuki left. The first was *Soon Over Babaluma* (1974). Perhaps due to capriciousness of the British music press, the album had become somewhat of a joke. However, it has been reappraised since the 1970s and is now viewed as a development of *Future Days* that informed electronic music styles of the 1980s and 1990s. The line-up of Czukay, Karoli, Liebezeit, and Schmidt alone made two more albums, *Landed* (1975) and *Flow Motion* (1976), their first records recorded with a full sixteen-track recording set-up – a distinct move away from their sometimes muddy, if alluring and often unique-sounding, two-track records. *Flow Motion* is a more pop and disco influenced album in comparison to the more experimental sounds of *Landed*. It delivered Can's biggest hit in Britain when 'I Want More' reached number twenty-six in the singles chart. This gained them an invitation to *Top of the Pops*, with Karoli, who was on a safari holiday at the time, replaced by a friend for the performance. The song caught the public's ear and gained radio play, and between 1974 and 1977 Can seemed to have played almost every town in Britain, in addition to cities where they had a large following – like London and Manchester – where they performed on multiple occasions.

Can's later albums saw Holger Czukay take a lesser role, and this is often seen as precipitating the band's split. Czukay moved from bass to manipulating electronics such as transistor radios and tape recorders. He met his replacement on bass, Rosko Gee, when performing on the *The Old Grey Whistle Test* in 1974, when Gee had appeared backing Jim Capaldi, his former Traffic bandmate.[25] Can had also taken on an engineer, René Tinner, which marginalised Czukay's contribution even more. Rebop

[23] P Glen, NEU! Europe: Krautrock and British Representations of West German Countercultures during the 1970s, *Contemporary British History* 35:3 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2021.1925551.

[24] Ibid. [25] Young & Schmidt, *Can*, p. 256.

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Kwaku Baah, another former member of Traffic and an accomplished percussionist, was brought in to enhance and embellish Liebezeit's polyrhythms; however, he ultimately clashed with Czukay.[26] Notwithstanding an enhanced level of creative tension (Czukay did not contribute to *Out of Reach* and only edited tape on *Can*), their final (non-reunion) albums *Saw Delight* (1977), *Out of Reach* (1978), and *Can* (1979) have their merits even if they are less well appreciated than their predecessors by fans and journalists. On these albums, Can warped and explored pop sounds in a way that could be seen as a precursor to the approach taken in scenes such as the 1980s New York underground.

The band disbanded on good terms in 1979. However, in the summer of 1986, Malcolm Mooney temporarily returned to Can for a 'reunion' album entitled *Rite Time* (1989), which was recorded in the south of France. From 1979 onwards, Hildegard and Irmin Schmidt curated Can's re-releases, box sets, and remix albums through their label Spoon Records. On the band's thirtieth anniversary, Spoon also promoted the Can-Solo-Projects tour. The showcase exemplified the richness of the original Can members' solo work and collaborations: Holger Czukay and U-She performed alongside Jaki Liebezeit's Club Off Chaos; Irmin Schmidt played (with Jono Podmore); and Michael Karoli's Sofortkontakt! appeared. Many Can solo albums and remasters were released through a collaboration between Spoon and Mute Records – the latter label founded by Daniel Miller, one of the British post-punk musicians influenced by Can and other German musicians of the 1970s that used electronic instruments and employed studio-as-instrument techniques. Czukay's music arguably gained the most acclaim, perhaps due to high-profile collaborations with Jah Wobble of Public Image Limited, David Sylvian, formerly of the British group Japan, and the Edge, the guitarist in U2. Czukay released much of his later solo work and moments from his back catalogue on Grönland Records.

Can's Legacy

Can have been often cited by post-punk, indie, and electronic musicians as a key influence on their taste and musical practice. Perhaps their most prominent early advocates were British post-punk musicians like Julian Cope of The Teardrop Explodes (author of *Krautrocksampler*), Mark

[26] Ibid., pp. 281–2.

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Illustration 7.2 Can live in Hamburg, 1972. © Heinrich Klaffs.

E. Smith of the Fall, Genesis P-Orridge of Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV, and John Lydon of Public Image Ltd. Alex Carpenter's essay in this collection notes the influence of Krautrock – and to varying extents Can – on Siouxsie and the Banshees, Bauhaus, Killing Joke, Cabaret Voltaire, and Simple Minds as well. Smith wrote the song 'I am Damo Suzuki', which appeared on the *This Nation's Saving Grace* (1985), in homage to Can. The lyric refers to aspects of Suzuki's life and the band's history, and bemoans the later Can albums that were released on Virgin Records in Britain; the song's descending bassline has similarities with the Can track 'Oh Yeah' from *Tago Mago* and 'Cool in the Pool', a track from Holger Czukay solo album *Movies* (1979). The band's appeal to musicians from the north-west of England was also clear in the amalgamation of electronic and avant-garde rock found in bands on the Factory Records label based in Manchester.

Despite Can never visiting the United States, American musicians from the 1980s and 1990s alternative underground, such as Pavement's Stephen Malkmus and the members of Sonic Youth, have declared Can's influence on their music making. In 2012, as part of a celebration of the album's fortieth anniversary celebrations, Malkmus performed *Ege Bamyasi* in full with Von Spar – appropriately a band that came from Cologne with a singer from elsewhere. Several post-rock musicians and even mainstream rock artists such as the Red Hot Chilli Peppers and Radiohead have paid

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their respects. Local musicians from the underground, post-punk, indie, and alternative rock tradition, alongside improvisers and electronic musicians, have typically made up the nightly changing 'sound carriers' that accompany Suzuki's (almost) continual international tours since 1997.

The link between Can, other Krautrock artists, and the development of electronic music may be overplayed, considering the roots of electronic music can be drawn as far back as the 1920s and 1930s, but a certain form of 'danceable' electronic music has certainly taken cues. Simon Reynolds has argued that Can anticipated and inspired 'dance genres like trip hop, ethno-techno and ambient jungle'.[27] On a local level, Hans Nieswandt has argued that they popularised electronic music in Cologne by bringing the approaches and sounds pioneered by Stockhausen to a wider public.[28] Rob Young has noted that the band's legacy is kept intact by the Kompakt record label in Cologne, artists such as Mouse on Mars, and those involved with the Basic Channel/Chain Reaction/Rhythm and Sound labels in Berlin.[29] Can's position as forerunners of ambient music has been recognised by their peers, not least Brian Eno. Furthermore, Can's enticing beats and sounds have also been sampled by hip-hop producers. Kanye West, for instance, sampled 'Sing Swan Song' on his track 'Drunk & Hot Girls' (*Graduation*, 2007), on which he collaborated with Yasiin Bey (then known as Mos Def), and Q-Tip sampled 'A Spectacle' to create a backing for 'Manwomanboogie' (*The Renaissance*, 2008). There are few bands that could claim to have caught the ear of such diverse communities of musicians and compelled them to try to incorporate the sounds and approaches into their own work, with so many varied effects. To borrow a pun from Malcolm Mooney, it's all about a 'CAN DO' attitude.

Essential Listening

Can, *Monster Movie* (Music Factory, 1969)
Can, *Tago Mago* (United Artists, 1971)
Can, *Ege Bamyasi* (United Artists, 1972)
Can, *Future Days* (United Artists, 1973)

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