



FAUST



Faust are - together with projects like *Neu*, *Can* or *Amon Düül* - the founders of a musical movement, which was labeled as "Krautrock" by the international music-press. The contemptuous term soon became a buzzword for a new appreciation of music, that negotiates rigid forms of composition and production.

Faust are a bright shining star at the firmament of alternative music. Among their admirers are bands like the *Red Hot Chilli Peppers* or the canadian Prog-Rock project *Godspeed! You black emperor*.

Founded in 1971 near Hamburg, the band continues to explore new forms of musical expression. Studio-recordings represent just a brief moment in the flow of constantly changing material. Faust's aesthetic is unpredictable. It's also their negotiation of a principle of simple reproduction, which makes them so unique. The typical sound of Faust always manifests itself in new dimensions.

After several years of solo projects, the band returns to the international stages of avantgarde in the early 90s. Since then four new studio-records were released and they all illustrate the band's potential to show up new and exciting directions in musical expression. A record with remixes and a project together with New York based Hip Hop-Heroes *Dälek* is further evidence that the band is always interested in experimenting with new forms and issues.

In 2006 the last survivors of an era will come together to play a tour, which will probably be their last one.

Faust Impressions

Keith Moline

The Wire, May 2005

There's a point halfway through Faust's 12 minute fuzz epic Krautrock that constitutes one of the great moments in recorded music. The monolithic, bloated distortion set up by the guitars and electronics is suddenly cleaved apart by Zappi Diernaier's massive, threshing drumbeat, the music wobbling uncertainly for a few moments until the rhythm is established. It's a perfect example of the ragged fallibility that humanises Faust's work, and it's the aspect of their aesthetic that Diermaier seizes on with his 11 video analogues of tracks, some previously unreleased, culled from various points in their long history.

Great care has been taken with the musical preparation, adding new elements to classic tracks like So Far and It's A Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl; but these are restricted to the outer reaches of the surround sound spectrum, leaving the original music intact. Conversely, sounds from their early years in their communal studio at Wumme have been added to more recent material, making for a cohesive body of work despite its content spanning three decades.

Diermeier's visual work is fearlessly literal. Because Rainy Day reminds him of the Wumme winter when it was recorded, he offers seven minutes of snow footage. In a sly reference to the controversial implications of the term Krautrock, he reclaims the word by presenting the track of the same name as a "hotch potch of scenes just like sauerkraut". The editing and image processing seem at first to be simplistic and intrusive, but somehow it works remarkably well. There's a childlike tastelessness to the visuals that connects perfectly with Faust's kitchen sink aesthetic. Also included is a 30 minute CD taster for Diernaier's next DVD **I Spin**, featuring evocative street recordings overlaid with his ferocious percussion. Interesting enough, but trying to match the power of Krautrock is an unenviable task.

Keith Moline, "Faust Impressions", The Wire 2005

Faust

Experimental Club, 8 Oct 2004

To talk about Faust is to talk about one of the most influential formations in avant-gardist music of the last forty years. Revolutionary explorers of chaos and sonorous collage, transgressors of all labels, Faust has always been an immense centrifuge of recycled "information" which is after expulsed in the form of surreal audio, completely different to everything: **Stockhausen, Velvet Underground**, dadaism, free jazz, technology, **Frank Zappa**, concrete music, **Tony Conrad**, deconstruction rock, **Sun Ra, La Monte Young**, electroindustrialism... and now in 2004 even hip-hop...; everything, absolutely everything, digested and broken down by a free and anarchist creativity, expansive to infinity in the objective of constructing sonic tissues, audiocollages, which have influenced the experimental and electronic music of the last decades.

An extensive need to explore characterises various of the more outstanding names of German music during the seventies (the movement was baptized as the Krautrock in accordance precisely with a theme of Faust that carries the same title), which was headed - apart from Kraftwerk - by three notorious and completely unique bands: **Can, Neu!** and Faust. Groups with completely different styles but who shared a common attitude of transgression, experimentation and creative freedom, Faust being by far the most radical regarding intentions and sonic results, leaving behind a legacy which has inspired the following generations of unconformist musicians and no-musicians coming from punk, rock, electronic, industrial music or noisy improvisation: **Throbbing Gristle, PIL, Swell Maps, Wire, The Fall, Cabaret Voltaire, Julian Cope, Sonic Youth, Half Japanese, Jim O'Rourke, Spacemen 3, Loop, Pavement, Stereolab, Tortoise, Cul De Sac, Kreidler, To Rococo Rot, etc, etc.**

Nowadays the members of Faust are still true to themselves. They are more independent than ever, working for their own firm Klangbad, opening their music to the manipulation by remix done by artists such as **the Residents, Kreidler, Dave Ball and Ingo Vauk, Howie B, Daniel Miller and Gareth Jones, Mathias Schaffhäuser, etc** (the remixes CD Freispiel, Klangbad, 2002), and editing surprising and unpredictable CDs such as their recent *Derbe Respect, Alder* (Staubgold/Klangbad, 2004): a joint album by Faust and the North American industrial hip-hop threesome **Dälek**. Besides, they've been able to reinvent themselves as a live group, with a show that can only be seen occasionally at festivals and special events. The actual members of Faust are: Hans-Joachim Irmeler (*organ, electronics*), Lars Paukstat (*percussion*), Michael Stoll (*bass*), Steven Wray Lobdell (*guitar*) and Werner 'Zappi' Diermaier (*drums*).

FAUST

The avantgarde of krautrock

by Claudio Fabretti

Among the most representative groups of "kraut-rock", Faust widened the music boundaries. In the early Seventies they created a sort of "technological art rock" that was probably twenty years ahead of their contemporaries. Today, many bands recognize the importance of this German band's legacy.

Faust are a German band that started playing a sort of "electronic art rock" in the early Seventies. Their music was probably twenty years ahead of their contemporaries, thanks to an infinity of genial and experimental inventions. The bands influenced by Faust experience are uncountable: from Stereolab to Tortoise, from a big part of new wave to industrial music. Though, the works of those bold Germans remained just a cult of a few experimental rock fans for a long time. Only in the last years, the discover of German kraut-rock brought to light their music and make it know to a wider audience.

Producer/advisor Uwe Nettelbeck formed this group in Wumme, Germany, in 1971, in order to challenge the "pioneer rock" of Can, Amon Duul and Kraftwerk, the bands that were ruling the avant-garde scene in Germany. The initial line-up was Werner Diermaier (drums), Joachim Irmeler (organ and electronics), Arnulf Meifert (drums), Jean-Hervé Peron (bass guitar, guitar, vocals), Rudolf Sosna (guitar and keyboards) and Gunter Wüsthoff (sax and special effects). Faust have taken the search for new sounds farther than any other group. Their music is technological rock taken to extremes: "In every country musicians are beginning to synthesize new sounds", they told. "The trouble is that this hasn't been done consistently enough. As a musician one now needs enough understanding of electronics to systematically build the instrument which will produce exactly the sound one wants to hear. The ideal is for each musician to make his own instruments".

Since spring 1971 Faust have been putting this theory into practice, living in almost monastic isolation in the north German countryside between Hamburg and Bremen. The former schoolhouse in which they live also serves as their studio and sound laboratory - the old classroom is filled with a jungle of electronic equipment, with 8-track recording facilities. So their debut album Faust was born. It was a rock artwork, with a radiographic cover on a transparent vinyl. But the art of the band was put into music as well: a mix of electronic effects, unusual rhythms and anarchic suites. Every track was a surprise invention upon invention. The ironical and surrealistic lyrics reflected the "freak-out" poetic of that time. More a hippie than a political group, Faust expressed also the free spirit of the post-1968 generation: "I think you can't make music without being political", Joachim Irmeler told. "So for sure we lived in a special, shall we say 'gang'. You couldn't stay away from what happened on the street, and so for sure it's influenced by what happened all over the world. We were shaped by things, but we were not a really political group. The politics influenced much more the lyrics and the poems, not the music, and I was much more into music".

Their second album So Far (again a novelty package, this time virtually all-black, with

a set of 10 picture inserts depicting each track) acted more on parody, with shorter tracks and a wider range of styles, metronomic rock anthems (with nonsensical lyrics), guitars fuzzed with intense electronic effects, pseudo psychedelia onto trippy folk, dadaism and free-jazz.

In that period the German band collaborated with avant-garde artists such as Slapp Happy and Anthony Moore, but also with Tony Conrad, a member of the entourage of LaMonte Young and the early Velvet Underground (together they released the album *Outside The Dream Syndicate* in 1973).

The Faust music could seem to be hermetic, but despite apathy in Germany, soon gained public attention in Britain, so that the Virgin Records engaged them and published *The Faust Tapes*, a compilation of studio out-takes from the previous albums. In 1974 Faust cut their masterpiece: *Faust IV*, an experimental work destined to influence a multitude of rock bands in the following two decades. There are tracks on this album that sound like what other people were only beginning to do 10 or 15 years later. "Yes, that was the problem for us, being first", Irmeler explained ironically. "At the beginning it was like 'ok, maybe it will last for about half a year, then they will understand'. Then I thought 'let's wait two years'... and then it was about 5 years, something like that. I began to think 'what's the matter with you?'".

Faust IV is an invention upon invention bounty of delight. The overture "Kraut-rock" is a long electronic suite nodding in the direction of the post-John Cage generation of "systems" composers (especially Philip Glass). "The sad skinhead" is a genial reggae-rock joke. "Jennifer" is a loud bass-guitar oriented song with magnificent keyboards and a free-jazz improvisation at the end. "Just a second" is a guitar solo accompanied by electronic effects and obsessive vibrations. "Giggy Smile" is a light musical digression, with strange noises and percussions on the background. "It's a bit of a pan" is the anarchic-electronic album's final. After that record Rudolf Sosna left the band and Jean-Hervé Peron worked with Henry Cow for a while. They were replaced by Peter Blegvad and Uli Trepte. Despite existing for almost two further years a planned fifth album, although announced by Virgin, was never realised. Faust's story seemed to be finished.

After innumerable rumours, it was confirmed that the nucleus of Faust were again playing live in the late-80's. The return of Faust started with a concert in Hamburg (9 October 1990), and then in October 1992 Faust stepped back onto the international scene, with a concert at the Marquee Club in London. The original members: Werner Diermaier, Joachim Irmeler and Jean-Hervé Peron, were augmented by one Achim, on extra percussion. In 1994 they published *Rien*, mixed by Jim O'Rourke. Before the end of the decade, they cut three other records: *You Know Faust* (1997), *Ravvivando* (1999) and *Faust Wakes Nosferatu*, that called to mind the old kraut-rock spirit even if far away from their golden years.

"A radical mix of *Musique Conrete*, Stockhausen, the Velvet Underground, and moments of almost pastoral beauty. That's the NME definition of Faust music. The musician Julian Cope called them "the greatest thing ever" and "a source of intense inspiration". *Melody Maker* added: "Anyone who's loved the last half-decade's re-invention of the guitar, (Sonic Youth, My Bloody Valentine et al.), will instantly recognise Faust as a prime ancestor of 'our' music". Merging musical search and irony, Faust created a German alternative to the American avant-garde rock of Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart and the Velvet Underground. Their surrealistic suites helped European rock to make a step forward in using electronics and experimenting new sounds. *(taken from: www.ondarock.it)*

THE WIRE 3/2003

Faust: Kings of the Stone Age

"One part of the Faust story is I simply got bored with all known sounds," deadpans Werner 'Zappi' Diermaier, Faust's gargantuan percussionist and 'master of ceremonies'. He's lying flat on his back on a sofa, still in the fatigues he pulled on for the photo shoot earlier in the evening. "Another part might be Germany itself," Hans Joachim Irmeler, keyboardist, engineer and inventor, offers from the other side of the bed. "Because after this crazy war Germany was completely destroyed and in a way this was a blessing in disguise. Everything had to begin again from zero; industry, the arts, everything. There was nothing left for our generation and we refused to have anything to do with the generation that came before us. We invented artificial music, music that we created in the studio on our own, music that had little to do with western music in general. Later we called it 'Krautrock' because that consisted of the two things that we weren't. When we went to England or the South of France people would talk about krauts, referring to the generation of Germans that had come before us. We wanted to distance ourselves from that completely, just as we refused to have anything to do with handed down rock forms. So Krautrock was ironic, it was everything that we weren't, everything we stood against."

Diermaier and Irmeler are the sole remaining members from the early years of the Faust project, when in 1971 six dropout musicians sealed themselves off in an old schoolhouse in Wümmen, south of Hamburg, as part of a utopian social and musical experiment. They announced a moratorium on all new music, radios and record players were banned, the contents of group meals were arrived at by committee and everything was recorded - from the sounds of members using the bathroom and walking up and down the stairs through all-night jam sessions to original guitarist Rudolf Sosa's early morning conversations with the telephone operator.

Their first self-titled album - meaning 'Fist' - was assembled from these recordings and came in a clear plastic sleeve with an X-ray of a clenched hand and a minimum of explicatory information. It still stands as a great futurist grunt that telescopes through a compacted history of popular music to reach the sound of ground zero via a clutch of alien jams that lumber more than they swing. Spliced together with the concrete logic of iconoclasts like Karlheinz Stockhausen, it cuts folk songs from the German mountains with the sound of rolling thunder, echoed by Irmeler's self-made keyboards, while thuggish, minimal riffs demolish any notion of verse/chorus. "During this period our project to see if we could reduce what we were playing to a point where the listener would have to decide by themselves whether it was music or whether it was noise," Irmeler recalls. "We were focussed on that narrow point between the two." "Our idea was to create 'standing waves' in sound," Diermaier adds, evocatively articulating the austere architectural beauty of those early sides. Faust sent out seismic ripples, alerting future key players on the international underground to this hermetic cell of resistance operating well beneath any cultural radar. But the '70's Event' that was Faust eventually effected a rapprochement with rock music, when they secreted themselves in the belly of the beast via record deals with Polydor and Virgin and hooked up with a whole new generation of similarly forward-thinking musicians, both in Germany and abroad. But rapprochement eventually sank them, with the remains of the original line-up splintering after relocating to England in 1973.

Since they resumed activities in the early 90s, Faust's working strategies have changed accordingly. They're now completely independent, running their own label, Klangbad, in association with Irmeler's wife, Cornelia Paul, and they've set up a studio in the basement of Irmeler and Paul's home on the edge of the tiny village of Bad Dürmentingen, in Germany's deep south. What's more, they have overcome their hermetic tendencies, opening out their music through a series of remixes by contemporary tinkerers like Kreidler, The Residents and Surgeon, while releasing on Klangbad work by such fellow spirits as Finnish metal-minimalists Circle, Industrial HipHop crew Dälek (a collaborative album is due later in the year in a joint venture between Klangbad and Staubgold) and female electro conceptualists Nista Nije Nista, who are in residence in the studio at the time of my visit. Faust have also reinvented themselves as a ferocious live group, which is definitely one area where they've improved on the original incarnation. In all, Faust's music remains as challenging, perverse and powerful as it did when they first shook schoolhouse walls. As if to underline this continuity through upheaval, the group have just released Patchwork, an exaggerated and distorted look into the past that conflates key Faust tracks from their first heroic era with newer material that incorporates Stooges punk, serrated drone work and the noise of manhandled power tools. Further, it has been programmed with segues and cross-fades in the style of their most notorious calling card,

The Faust Tapes, the collage of Wümme-era jams that first seeded the British public imagination, thanks to Virgin's decision to release it at the pocket money price of 49p.

Indeed, Patchwork sounds like The Faust Tapes after a plunderphonics upgrade. A track like Stretch Over All Times smears 30 years of temporally displaced recordings into a cacophony of tectonic movement that eventually coheres into an out of phase lift from It's A Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl, a Stone Age pop song from their second album, 1972's So Far. Other pieces point more towards the future, such as the gobbiest Faust track yet called Nervous, a three-chord rocker based on an idea that one of the group's newest members, Lars Paukstat, came up with at a soundcheck. Coming from a background in various German punk and Metal groups, Paukstat started out as the group's roadie. He became a full member in 1997, since when his presence has fully adrenalised the Faust sound, while exposure to their working practices has effectively opened his ears. Exactly what they bring to each other is laid out on the first Lars & Faust album due later this year that draws as much inspiration from Bowery punk haunt CBGBs as it does from Kosmiche music. Besides Paukstat, the current Faust line-up is bolstered by the American guitarist Steven Wray Lobdell who also leads his own psych group, Davis Redford Triad, and bassist Michael Stoll, who replaced Jean-Hervé Peron when he split in May 97. Lobdell's lead guitar gives their music a psychedelic depth beyond the reach of early Faust records, while Stoll's bass exerts much the same kind of magnetic force as Peron's.

"Patchwork originally started out as the idea of giving ourselves a birthday gift, celebrating 30 years of Faust," Irmier relates. "Then Markus Detmer who runs the Staubgold label appeared, and he was very interested in older material. It's always a bit complicated when you use old stuff - it can look like you've run out of ideas. So we thought that if Markus picked the tracks, then it would save us from making difficult value judgements and he could also be a lot more frank about the music. We're just too close to it to be able to do that. In a way it's also a remix album, our own remix, and of course we were aware that we were putting together another Faust Tapes, only one this was a career-spanning selection, as opposed to just covering three years. We also wanted to demonstrate different aspects of Faust that people might not know, things that we did behind closed doors in Wümme, and show that this is still what's happening."

Indeed, the scene in Dürmentingen feels like an extension of the Wümme ethos. The various members of Faust - minus guitarist Lobdell - lie sprawled over a set of sofa beds in the living room, while Nista Nije Nista wander through in a daze. There's a non-stop conveyor belt of beer, wine and smokes, capped off on the first evening with Diermaier's legendary cocktails made with buckets of fresh oranges. In the evenings everyone gathers for a communal meal, while Irmier films virtually everything with a digital camera. Looking out from the first floor balcony over barren fields unfolding in ululating curves towards the horizon, it feels like we're out on the edge of the world. Coming in from the airport, we had passed through countless tiny, seemingly uninhabited villages, while Irmier spun a cassette of his upcoming solo album, Lifelike, an eerie, atmospheric combination of subtle electronics and wide-open field recordings. Its static quality perfectly matched the ghostly terrain. "Everyone is working," Irmier explains, back in real time. "That's all everyone does around here, to be able to afford to build their own house. The work ethos is everything." Faust are clearly as much out of place here as they were in Wümme.

Faust were originally birthed in Hamburg in 1969 from two almost antithetical groups: Campylognathus Zitelli, that featured Diermaier, Irmier and drummer Arnulf Meifurt, and Nukleus, consisting of Rudolf Sosna, bassist/vocalist Jean-Hervé Peron and saxophonist and electronics operator Gunther Wüsthoff. Named after a dinosaur whose remains were first discovered near their home, Campylognathus Zitelli played a freeform music while Peron's ensemble were wrestled with structural rudiments. "We had our own rehearsal room so we invited Peron's trio to come over and we just jammed," Irmier recalls. "They used words, whereas we never used words, so we were very happy to meet guys who were working in a different area from us. The initial sessions went really well and soon we began thinking a bit more seriously about pushing the project along. We wanted to work things out so that we would arrive on the scene with a bang. We didn't want to hang around playing clubs and cutting our teeth. The idea was that we would arrive fully formed, like we had been deep frozen at the point of our birth and suddenly exploded from the ice." "In Hamburg the music scene was very tight," Diermaier continues. "Most of the bands stuck together and knew each other and we found that if you're around that kind of scene all the time, it distorts everything and all of your own ideas are eventually destroyed via conversations like 'I play it like, this, oh, no I play it like that...'" "The more we got into this idea," Irmier resumes, "the more we began to focus on locking ourselves away from corrupting influences and becoming more involved with each other. We decided that we needed to try living together as a group for at least a year, where we would record everything that happened. So we

needed equipment, we needed a place to stay and we needed a sponsor with music industry contacts. One of our friends in the Hamburg film-makers' commune, Hellmuth Costard, mentioned a journalist he knew called Uwe Nettlebeck who might be able to help." Nettlebeck was a gonzo journalist with a ferocious reputation who had somehow infiltrated West Germany's national press. On Costard's word, he dropped in to see Faust at their space and was immediately caught up in the creative hysteria. "Uwe thought it sounded like fun," Irmmler says. "He was determined to place us with a major label so we could reappropriate their funds, almost in the spirit of revenge. We thought our music had the potential to really cross over and become huge just because it was so new and so original." Against the odds Nettlebeck did manage to score Faust a major label deal with Polydor Germany, which back then was not much more than a clearinghouse for UK/US signings or human tranquillisers like James Last. The group landed a huge advance, and before they had even signed the contract they blew a stack of it on fully equipping the old schoolhouse they had found well out of town. "It was more than a musical experiment by that point," Irmmler relates. "We had no idea what would happen. There were big fights and as I was the youngest and a bit shy it was very difficult for me, especially relating musically to the others. I was preoccupied with all sorts of paralysing musical questions like, shall I play this? Is it worth playing? How can we come together, incorporating everyone without diluting anyone's ideas or tastes? That was the question that underlay everything." "To me it was not very complicated," counters Diermaier. "In my nature I'm very easygoing." "Zappi was always a very helpful to me," laughs Irmmler. "If I was a bit annoyed or whatever, I would tell him and he would tell me, 'Ah, don't worry'. Then he'd disappear off with one of his many girlfriends."

Inevitably Polydor began to get jittery about their new investment. None of the group had actually signed anything, the label had not heard a note, yet already Faust were massively in debt, splashing their advance on everything from equipment bills and rent to insuring Diermaier's dog. Polydor demanded to hear some demos. Faust obliged by assembling a now legendary cassette filled with what Irmmler describes as "pure blasts of noise, the sound of someone cleaning dishes and us all trying to impersonate a female choir." The tape was lost long ago, but one track, Lieber Herr Deutschland, turned up on Munich & Elsewhere, released in 1986 long after the event. "It didn't make any sense," Irmmler confesses. "Some parts were concrete music and others were made up of field recordings. Polydor had expected a work in progress, so they began to really push us. When we finally signed the contract we had been holed up in Wümme for most of 1971. Uwe told us that he couldn't hold the label off any longer, that they'd lost their patience. We said 'OK, let's start the album.'"

The group spent an age working on what they thought were the perfect track titles, with the result that the deadline for delivery of their debut album was almost upon them before the tapes had even started rolling. "So we tripped and took LSD and we had to make the record in one night," Diermaier grins. Whether it was the effects of the acid or the psychotic hothouse atmosphere the sextet were working in, the sessions gained much of their impetus from a conceptual conceit that cast the first Faust album as the next, irrefutable step in the evolution of contemporary music. "We had the idea that there should be special arrangements for each of the tracks," says Irmmler, "and we drew very intricate pictures trying to visualise their form when we suddenly realised that the first side should really be a report of the contemporary situation, of how things sounded in 1971. So that's why at the start of the record there are bursts of Satisfaction and All You Need Is Love, followed by blocks of noise. Then we said, 'OK, this is the opener to give the people an idea and then we go back and show where we're coming from.' So the piano comes in and what sounds like big band music, that was like James Last or something, and then we sped forward, going through to rock music. It's like a compressed history of music and the idea behind it was that we would show that all this was good once, The Beatles, etc, but it was over, it was no longer enough, we demanded a complete severance with it. Now comes the noise, the new thing. That's what the track Miss Fortune was: a live jam from the vaults that said we are the new thing." "Near the beginning of the record you can hear Rudolf Sosna say, 'I mean, the point is I'm waiting'," Diermaier adds. "Then - boom! We come charging in."

In West Germany in the early 70s, Faust weren't the only illicit underground network operating to usurp the tyranny of the status quo and undermine any attempts to rebuild cultural and state apparatus on the bones of the past. In the summer of 1971 the West German authorities had posted millions of wanted posters featuring mugshots of 19 members of the Baader-Meinhof group/Red Army Faction (RAF), the terrorist cell that had come to prominence via a series of police shoot-outs and department store bombings. In a contemporary poll, one in five Germans under 30 admitted "certain sympathies" with the RAF while one in ten said they would willingly shelter RAF members for the night. The uncomprehending German state responded with a crackdown on anyone who appeared to have countercultural affiliations, prompting disaffected Germans to affix bumper stickers to their cars

that read "I Do Not Belong To The Badder-Meinhof Group." The Faust commune inevitably came to the attention of the authorities.

"I am the specialist on life at Wümme," Diermaier declares. "I had a big dog and most days I would go for long walks through the surrounding swamps. I'd wear this long black Count Dracula cloak, and as I was very big and the landscape in North Germany was very flat I probably drew a lot of attention. One morning I was sleeping and suddenly the door was kicked in and there was a man with a machine gun. He screamed at me to stand up and put my hands against the wall. Out of the window I could see loads of armed policemen, all training their guns on the schoolhouse. What had happened was that I had been driving with my girlfriend who happened to look a lot like Gudrun Ensslin from Baader-Meinhof. We had stopped for petrol in a garage and the owner had called the police."

"It shows how hysteric those times were," Irmeler nods. "It's true that the RAF did a lot of heavy things and shot down many people they shouldn't have, but the police shot more people dead by being too badly prepared for situations like that. They'd haphazardly stop traffic on the autobahn and they were so out of control that if someone became nervous or panicked, he ran the risk of being gunned down. It was a heavy time and we certainly attracted a lot of attention. If Zappi had looked normal, like the RAF themselves actually did, then he wouldn't have had so much trouble. Instead he was a wild thing."

In the wake of their first album, Faust set about planning their live debut. But, increasingly unhappy with the group's lack of a public profile, Polydor once more forced their hand, resulting in a disastrous concert at Hamburg's Musikhalle. "Faust always wanted to go new ways," Irmeler states. "That included finding new technical set-ups. Live we wanted to work with multiple speakers, an early version of surround sound where we could precisely project the sound, like a focussed little ball. The idea was to involve the whole audience in the sound. A month ago I visited our engineer at the time, Kurt Graupner, and we talked about this. He said he wished that Polydor had given us three more months to prepare our live set-up. If they had he was sure there would have been a revolution."

On the night, the concert took on the air of a Fluxus event. First, the audience were asked to come back later in the evening when the group were ready. Still unable to make anything work, Faust turned a bank of colour TVs to let the audience watch the news, while Diermaier toppled a tower of empty tin cans that he had painstakingly put together for the planned finale. The German press leapt at the chance to beat them down, with headlines like "Faust's Rock Damnation". Arnulf Meifurt, the eldest member of the group, had had enough. When their aftershow party turned into a near riot, Meifurt felt that Faust's pranksterish tactics were getting in the way of the real goal of the project, with the result that Nettlebeck forced him out. Since this interview, however, he has resumed contact with Irmeler, and the two have announced their intention to collaborate on a new project, tentatively called Two Fists For A Hallelujah.

Faust's second album, *So Far* (1972), makes a little more sense than the first. Its opening track, *It's A Rainy Day*, *Sunshine Girl*, mainlines the same kind of kinetic street energy that fuels early Velvet Underground tracks like *I'm Waiting For My Man* and *Heroin*, combining avant garde aesthetics with primitive, nasty rhythms and a cooing vocal. "Just look at him," Irmeler points at Diermaier by way of explanation. "Zappi was always important to the sound. He is his own invention and that's why his drumming is such a major part of Faust, it's rhythmic but it's also sonically important, those noises of his are always going on behind the melody."

That Velvets connection became much more explicit after Nettlebeck flashed on the idea of setting up a collaboration between New York minimalist and LaMonte Young/early Velvets associate Tony Conrad and the Faust rhythm section of Diermaier and Peron, augmented by Sosna and a still uncredited Irmeler on organ. Conrad had been introduced to Faust's activities by another member of the Hamburg Filmmakers Commune. Keen to find any musicians that were willing to record his still undocumented music, he hooked up with Nettlebeck at Polydor and the two drove out to Wümme. It was an inspired pairing. Conrad's pulsating drone work fits perfectly with Faust's concept of standing waves, with Diermaier's slow, chain-gang drumming provided a resuscitating cast-iron heartbeat that helps suspend Conrad's singing violin strings in mid-air, effectively pulling his music free of all of the speculative detritus that had built up over the years. "It was very exhausting," Diermaier remembers. "Conrad played six violin overdubs. After 20 minutes he said 'I made a mistake with my violin - we have to play it again'. Awww... this took three or four days, eight hours each, it was a really heavy session."

The record was eventually released as *Outside The Dream Syndicate* on the Virgin subsidiary Caroline. In 1994, 22 years later, it was re-released by US label Table Of The Elements, and both parties took up where they left off when the reformed Faust teamed up with Conrad at a ToTE showcase at New York's Knitting Factory. Outside The Dream Syndicate signalled a new open door policy at Wümme, where Faust cut some dazzling records with Anthony Moore and his group Slapp Happy. Also, they began allowing local groups like Tomorrow's Gift to use the studio. But their honeymoon period was abruptly ended with the final deterioration of their relationship with Polydor.

"Polydor were a huge company, only interested in money," Irmmler relates. "One day they just refused to pay any more. Initially we wanted to stay in Wümme but we were unclear as to whether we owned it outright or whether Polydor did. As it turns out we're still paying for it today but at the time we decided to move on in order to look for new atmospheres and we decided to leave Polydor as well."

Momentarily directionless, Faust splintered for a while, reconvening for a series of A&R showcases that led to Simon Draper signing them to the newly minted Virgin. With a new deal in place, the group decided to relocate to England, stopping over for a series of French shows on the way. "We already had what would become The Faust Tapes in our luggage," Irmmler recalls. "We took the actual tape from Wümme because we wanted to have something with us we could release in case things didn't work out for us in England and we were unable to put together a new album."

Released in 1973, *The Faust Tapes* is a masterpiece of editing, an audio diary of their time in Wümme held together with molten electronics that throbs with an immaculate internal logic. Hidden in its grooves are some of Faust's most straightforwardly gorgeous songs. The original release also looked fantastic, packaged like a bootleg with typewritten reviews glued all over one side and a Op art Bridget Riley print called *Crest*, another manifestation of Faust's fascination with standing waves, on the other. "There was also a political aspect behind us making it available for only 49p," Irmmler insists. "We wanted to show how you need to have money to get into the charts and how companies back then regularly bought copies of their own record in bulk to ensure it made it in. Initially we were going to get Virgin to do that for us to expose it but then we thought why don't we give people a gift while we're at it?" Faust's gamble paid off: *The Faust Tapes* sold a staggering 100, 000 copies and lodged itself in the consciousness of freethinking heads across the UK. For many of its buyers, it was their first exposure to experimental music.

The group's English sojourn also marked the beginning of Faust's Industrial phase, a scrapyard methodology that still informs their current incarnation. "I remember we were in Birmingham for a show and near the concert hall I saw a man using a huge jackhammer in a construction site," recalls Diermaier. "I thought it was a fantastic musical instrument and so I asked him to play in the concert with us that night. I wanted him to come in his working overalls but he turns up in a really smart three-piece suit with his entire family. We had a big stone on the stage and we covered it with tarpaulin so he wouldn't spray shards over the audience. He started the machine right on cue but then he lost control and just kept playing until the concert was over. At the end he was just grinning, he looked so pleased with himself. After that we began to use a lot of construction tools on stage and later other German groups like *Einstürzende Neubauten* took that on. We rented equipment in every town we played, anything that made a sound, cement mixers, sanders, sheets of metal. We were also using pinball machines that triggered sounds and incorporating live TV broadcasts into our sets."

Sadly, the original group's final album, *Faust IV*, recorded at Virgin's Manor Studios back to back with Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* in 1973, barely hints at the group's now tumultuous live sound. Apart from the opening *Krautrock*, a colossal melange of computer distress codes and oscillating UFO rhythms, the bulk of it consists of slight pop songs and distressing reggae workouts, with some Wümme material tacked on for good measure. "It was weird recording *Faust IV*," Irmmler admits. "We had to use different types of [tape] machines there. Normally we would use Studer machines in Wümme and now we had to work with Ampegs. It's something like a Rolls Royce compared to a Beetle, so Kurt had a lot of problems with that. Also the Manor's in-house engineers weren't very helpful, they became a bit annoyed because we brought in our own people and they weren't involved enough. Wümme was ostensibly made out of crap but it was very well put together crap and worked perfectly for us whereas The Manor didn't at all. It was designed for rock bands. It was immediately clear to us that Branson wanted to become fat and oily and he really wanted to change a lot of things about us, to make us more palatable to American audiences, just as he did with *Tangerine Dream*. But what really finished us with Virgin - and with Uwe - was when Branson got Uwe to do the final edit on *Faust IV* behind our backs. We already had the running order but we weren't happy with it and we also felt that we didn't have enough songs. Uwe edited in *It's a Bit of a Pain*, a song that we had recorded in Wümme as the B-side to the "So Far" single. It's an OK track but the fact that he did that was the

final straw for me. I wasn't too polite a guy then, I told everyone else, this is really against everything we stand for. I couldn't accept it so I left, and that was the end of my career with Richard Branson."

A few days later Rudolf Sosna also quit, forcing the remaining members to recruit Peter Blegvad of Slapp Happy on guitar and ex-Guru Guru bassist Uli Trepte on "astral radio" for a series of upcoming shows. Although Sosna and Irmeler were eventually enticed back to finish the tour, things were never the same again. After returning to Munich the original Faust regrouped one more time and, working nights at Giorgio Moroder's Musicland Studio in Munich, they recorded a still unreleased album, provisionally entitled Faust Five And A Half because, according to Irmeler, "it had more weight than a normal number could carry." The group planned to license it to Virgin but the label didn't bite with the result that most of the tracks have languished in the vaults ever since. However, two tracks, *Munic/Yesterday* and *Knochentanz*, were eventually included on the compilation, *71 Minutes Of...* Thoroughly demoralised, the group members drifted off to their own individual lives. It seemed a sad end for such an inspiring episode.

"Faust is a project, not a rock band," Irmeler ripostes. "A part of the rule we had was that any combination of us could be Faust," Diermaier adds. "But you have to trust in Faust and to believe in it totally." In the late 70s Diermaier and Irmeler recruited a big name guitarist in an attempt to reanimate the group but the spirit was weak and the Gestalt failed to materialise.

It wasn't until 1988 that the two once more felt the sleeper stirring. "By about 1988 Zappi was a very famous producer of parties and happenings," Irmeler says. "He would have these surreal events where he would hang from a crucifix in the middle of a room with this really bitter expression on his face, covered in ketchup. Or he would have a peepshow or present an underwater saxophonist. The idea of Faust was raising its head once more with these parties and small musical events, and by the end of the Eighties we felt that the time was right because musically everything was so boring. In 1988 we played a show at an old swimming pool during a party that Zappi had organised. It went great and we became hungry to do stuff again." The duo immediately got in touch with Peron who was also keen to resolve unfinished business. Unfortunately the rest of the original line-up had dropped off the map. Gunther Wüsthoff was last heard of working as a courier for a film company, while Rudolf Sosna, according to Diermaier, "was going through two bottles of gin a day".

Faust's second coming took place on a Hamburg stage in 1990 and was preserved by Table Of The Elements on a limited edition CD, *Faust Concerts Vol 1*. Here the group were focussed more on the kind of lysergic folk songs that lined the cracks in *The Faust Tapes*, occasionally topped off by Peron's goofy vocalising. "It was Faust," Diermaier shrugs. Irmeler agrees: "We knew the years had all changed us as people but this only made us more sure that we were right. If we sounded just exactly the way we did in the 70s that would have been really bad." What's more, the group finally had the time and resources to fully realise their vision of creating a total environment for their live shows. "In Berlin we built scaffolding five meters high and perched on the top we had this really big tenor singer just belting away," Diermaier marvels. "I was playing drums and metal but now my percussion arsenal was even bigger than before. I used a lot of metal plates and tools and I play two toms alongside them; the combination is important. I also use a huge oil drum that's unbelievably difficult to transport but sounds amazing. I play it with a big hammer and it doesn't even dent. We called the instrument Ocean because it sounded like being submerged in waves. Irmeler's organ sound is unique because he always made the electronics himself and so the typical Faust sound that comes from the organ is still there, still bolstering the sound."

The Table Of The Elements connection opened up new samizdat channels, establishing links with fellow seditionaries such as Michael Morley of Gate and The Dead C, Steven Wray Lobdell and Keiji Haino. "We played with Haino in the US, at a concert in Death Valley," Diermaier says. "It was a very simple idea, we all stood on various peaks and signalled to each other with metal, didgeridoo and voices. Haino was absolutely possessed, just screaming and jerking. He always insists on wearing his sunglasses, even in the dark, but there in the desert, with the sun beating down, he took them off. He's very small and I accidentally smacked him on the head with one of my metal poles."

The Desolation Canyon performance, called *Long Distance Calls In The Desert*, eventually turned up on the reinvigorated Faust's first studio album, 1994's *Rien*, a brickbat assemblage of live recordings, studio miniatures and full on psychedelic rock spliced together with exacting precision by Jim O'Rourke, with contributions from Haino, Morley and Lobdell. It stands as one of Faust's greatest discs, with Diermaier and Irmeler functioning as the lungs of the group, umbilically linked to Peron's pulsing bass and maniacal vocal. The album's most remarkable track is the closing *Eroberung Der*

Stille, Teil 2, a mesmerising and emotionally devastating take on Górecki's masterpiece of epic melancholy, Symphony No 3. It feels like a requiem for all of Europe's dead, as the sound of collapsing buildings, helicopter blades and immolating guitar noise gives way to huge, sighing strings undercut by Haino's despairing epiglottal convulsions. "It sounds like the ruins of Europe," Irmmler agrees. "The title translates as Conqueror Of The Silence and at the time we made that track we wanted to see if we could work out a new silence and if we could somehow brand that silence. We did a whole show based around that theme where we played an incredibly noisy set that gradually got more and more quiet before dropping completely into silence. We used Górecki because there was a special kind of sadness in that music."

Just as in the wake of the Second World War artists searched for a new language that could express more fully the horror of the Holocaust, Faust demanded a new silence, forever pregnant with the turmoil of the past. In the fall out of Faust live, it often feels like they've permanently scrambled the composition of the air. "Ever since the early days we often tried to create something like the atmosphere after a thunder storm," Irmmler states. "The sky opens, particles disperse and a new atmosphere comes in. We would like to express this and be able to control it."

Live, Faust's conjuring of the elements is abetted by an armoury of threshing machines, wind cannons, old showerheads and vats of gunpowder, all strategically deployed in an attempt to dissolve the venue walls. "The smell is important too," Irmmler adds. "Zappi really pays close attention when he's mixing the materials that will get blown through the wind machine. He's always after a particular smell and after the show is over the air should smell totally different. Small things like that impact on your perception and you hear the music anew and focus on different aspects of it." "I remember once we wanted to fire hay out of the machine," Diermaier recalls. "It wasn't allowed because of fire regulations so we put all our catering in the machine, all our food, and shot it over the audience." During a two night run at The Garage in London in 1996 they almost burnt the place to the ground. "We have to keep the contents of our gigs a secret because no one will ever really allow us to get away with it, especially in England where bringing fireworks through is always difficult," Irmmler confesses. "As far as we know we were the first people to use fireworks and incendiary devices in the Royal Festival Hall and it was only after very long conversations where we didn't even mention everything that we had planned. We had to admit some of what we do in order to get them to switch the smoke detectors off but even we don't know what's going to happen once we're onstage."

Some of Faust's strongest material is spread across the series of live discs they've released on their own label, especially the monstrous Edinburgh 1997, marking the debut of the current line-up. Relations had soured between Peron and the duo of Diermaier and Irmmler over what the pair saw as Peron's increasing intractability, feeling that Faust were edging towards becoming Peron's backing group. Things came to a head when Peron announced he wouldn't be attending a couple of gigs scheduled in France. "We had been having big problems with him leading up to that," Irmmler sighs. "I felt that he was testing the water in a way, to see how we would react. We decided we wouldn't beg him to change his mind and we went ahead and did the show on our own. There's nothing to regret in Peron leaving. To be frank, it was a blast of fresh air."

The first studio album to feature the new frontline, Ravnivando, feels like a real step outside. The classic Faust elements - dizzying carousel rhythms, bone percussion and power tools - are in place, and though the music has lost some its unyielding quality, it has gained a cinematic depth of field, much more faithfully orbiting Faust's spectacular live show. The fidelity to vague song structure that also marked Peron's tenure was effectively out the window. "To me Ravnivando sounds like a listenable movie," Paukstat says. "It's beyond straight songs, it's structured more like a radio play." "We really recorded an unbelievable amount of stuff for that album," Irmmler adds. "We tried recording every track under a series of different conditions - inside in the studio, outside in the garden - just to understand how it functioned. That helped us to understand the space the album was coming from." The title of the album is illuminating. 'Ravnivando' is a musical term that indicates a revival of previously developed subjects and themes, a process that's made most overt in the alpha and omega of Patchwork. "The cover of Ravnivando is also important to me," Irmmler asserts. "It's a picture that was taken where the Barcelona Olympics were held. They tried to bulldoze the landscape and flatten everything out but the bulldozers weren't successful and within a few years these amazing malformed trees had grown out of the soil. For me it feels like a lot of the seeds we first scattered back in the 70s are finally growing... and in a way we could never have imagined back then."

David Keenan, "Faust: Kings of the Stone Age", 2003, © The Wire