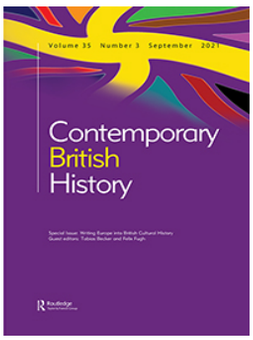

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NEU! Europe: Krautrock and British representations of West German countercultures during the 1970s

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses how British popular music culture defined and responded to Krautrock, a subgenre of West German underground rock, during the 1970s. It examines and contextualises British and West German interactions in popular music immediately before Krautrock and at the time of its early definition. The article then explores how so-called Krautrock bands related to the British public and press and how they were described and understood in relation to their nationality. The article suggests that stereotypes and prejudices, shaped by the memory of World War 2, remained a significant aspect of British discourse on West Germany into the 1970s. However, interest in Krautrock gave rise to social and cultural interactions that inspired some to challenge and renegotiate ideas of Germany and Germanness. To some, bonds made through music, culture and politics proved more profound than the history of conflict between Britain and Germany.

KEYWORDS

Popular Musicb; Krautrock; Xenophobia; Music Industry; West Germany

Introduction

'Krautrock' is a term coined by British music journalists and broadcasters used to describe a subgenre of avant-garde rock and electronic popular music. The definition was, at first, an umbrella term for music made by several West German artists who started in the late 1960s and then found an audience both in 1970s Britain and internationally. David Stubbs found, when interviewing West German experimental rock groups of the 1960s and 1970s for his book *Future Days*, 'no German musician of that generation accepts the word "Krautrock", or the word as it is understood by English writers'.[1] Krautrock was well known in British popular music subcultures from the 1970s onwards. At the time the term was coined, taking into account the extent readers shared music papers, the music press of the 1970s wrote for a combined readership of around 3,000,000 weekly readers.[2] These readers could find advertisements, articles, reviews and references to Krautrock bands almost every week. Krautrock was rarely aired during primetime radio listening hours, but it could be found on more counterculturally inclined shows such as John Peel's Radio One show, *Top Gear*. BBC Radio shows of *Top Gear*'s stature were broadcast to an audience of around 10 million every week. Indeed, several Krautrock bands toured extensively and developed a grassroots following. Their UK releases of recorded music

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seldom broke the singles chart, but Krautrock albums sometimes reached the top 100 of the album charts. Tangerine Dream, the most successful Krautrock band in the 1970s album charts released (on the UK-based label, Virgin) one top ten album and six top forty albums during the 1970s. Regardless of chart success, however, Krautrock had what might be deemed a 'following' in the UK particularly within young, often male-dominated and white, subcultural milieux.

The term Kraturock came to encompass the music made by bands including Amon Düül II, Ash Ra Temple, Can, Cluster, Faust, Harmonia, Kraftwerk, NEU!, Popul Vuh and Tangerine Dream. Amon Düül was based around a radical arts commune in Munich that had emerged from the 1960s German student movement. The band bore the name of the ancient Egyptian god of the air and sun, Amon, and like Popul Vuh who were named after the sacred text of the indigenous American K'iche people, they reflected the renewed interest in non-Western spirituality in the European and US countercultures.[3] Despite this point of shared interest, Amon Duul and Amon Düül II (a slightly more structured version of the collective led by more musically proficient, if perhaps less beguilingly chaotic, commune members) claimed that they sought to reject all British and American music, even that of the underground. In spite of these aims, Amon Düül II relied upon a conventional rock set-up of drums, bass, guitar and vocals supplemented by synthesisers, electric guitar modulation and distortion effects. They made dramatic, intense and unconventional driving rock. So did Can, who lived in Cologne but included Malcolm Mooney, a black American, and then Damo Suzuki, a Japanese 'hippy', on vocals.

Faust's music was at least as unusual as Amon Düül's, particularly their first two albums, *Faust* (1971) and *So Far* (1972). Rather than emerging from a commune like Amon Düül or resembling the conservatoire-educated members of Can and NEU!, however, Faust were 'manufactured' by their manager, Uwe Nettelbeck, in dialogue with an artist and repertoire (A&R) representative from Polydor Germany. From their studio, a disused school in Wümme near Hamburg, they recorded improvised or extended pieces that buried rock instrumentation below dissonant sounds, playful surrealistic lyrics and tape techniques borrowed from *musique concrete* to create an avant-garde pop culture bricolage. Arne Koch and Sei Harris argued that Faust 'thrived' on 'self-understanding that echoed key tenets of the Fluxus art movement'.[4] By *Faust IV* (1975), they included more conventionally structured and sounding avant-garde rock songs and even included a track, perhaps inspired by their recording for Virgin Records at The Manor Studio in Oxfordshire, titled 'Krautrock'.

Krautrock's most renowned group is Düsseldorf's Kraftwerk. From their 1973 album *Autobahn* onwards, they dispensed with acoustic drums, bass and guitars for synthesisers, samplers and drum machines. However, their sound was different to predominantly electronic 'cosmic' Krautrock musicians, such as Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze, Cluster or Popul Vuh, who embraced—and in some respects pioneered—ambient techniques. Kraftwerk's approach led journalists and academics to argue that they inspired a turning point in western pop music by creating a new idiom and demonstrating new approaches to song structure, sound and texture for electronic dance music and early Hip-Hop.[5] Their robotic, stiff self-presentation, album art, promotional videos and live performances recontextualised ideas and imagery in a manner derived from conceptual art. They placed, for instance, Soviet Constructivist imagery alongside images that referenced modern technology and advertising. In doing so, the band presented an image of German identity

that was knowing, playful and modern—bordering at some points on science fiction. David Stubbs has argued that this contributed profoundly to the creation of a modern rebuilt Germany.[6] However, as Melanie Schiller has argued, this was lost on press outside of West Germany who typically 'refer, often in an exoticising manner, to the band's notorious Germanness "while generally failing" to address the specific complexity of Kraftwerk's articulations of national identity'.[7] It was not, however, Kraftwerk alone who were perceived by British and American critics in relation to outsiders' perceptions of West Germans and German identity.

Krautrock bands embraced a range of musical philosophies, styles, approaches, relationships to the music industry and sounds and, although informed by left wing politics and countercultural philosophies, they lived varied lifestyles. Members of groups frequently expressed their incomprehension of the fact that the British press and music scene understood them as part of a single West German avant-garde rock music scene. Ulrich Adelt's survey of Krautrock offers a definition of the 'genre', which takes into account its slipperiness and gives justice to the varied groups and individuals that found themselves defined in relation to it.[8] He describes Krautrock as both a 'discursive formulation' and a 'field of cultural production' that was constituted through performance, expressive culture and a network of people. Adelt argues that Krautrock provided a catchall term for West German artists with links to the West German student counterculture and left political activism. These artists made music that encompassed aspects of African American, Anglo-American, experimental or electronic sounds and techniques. They formed an 'imagined cosmic community' based around the notion of evading the conventions of African American or Anglo-American music. Significantly, Adelt argues that Krautrock existed within a context of national identity and global connections—that 'deterratorialised' ideas of Germanness and caused non-Germans to identify with 'a transformed and transmogrified Germany'.[9] He noted that even when used ironically, the term 'Krautrock' 'stirs up essentialist notions of national identity and citizenship'.[10]

This article analyses the context of Anglo-German popular musical interactions that preceded Krautrock's emergence and how the subgenre was defined, understood, reported and received in Britain during the 1970s. Doing so provides a means to explore the changing and in some cases highly resilient British post-War attitudes to West Germany from the perspective of popular music. Responses to Krautrock during the 1970s reveal, on one hand, the perception that there was more to Germany than the Nazis and stereotypes. British and West German musicians, fans, journalists and music industry workers cooperated, listened and learnt to develop informed opinions. Consequently, they found and explored mutual political, cultural and social bonds and common grievances. However, even positive representations of West Germans were frequently filtered through undesirable preconceptions and cheap jokes at their expense.

Broader tropes about Germany and the weight of historical memory, nevertheless, informed the construction of Krautrock and subsequent conversations. The history of Anglo-German antagonisms from the nineteenth-century colonial competition to the First and Second World Wars, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, and the discovery of the Holocaust maintained a profound hold over British representations and perceptions of West Germany in the 1970s.[11] This culture existed in spite of peace and closer social, cultural, economic and political ties: 10,000 British soldiers married German women between 1947 and 1949; by 1951, 60,000 West Germans had moved to Britain; Britain

and West Germany were both liberal democracies and NATO allies engaged in the Cold War, and, from 1973, they were co-members of the European Economic Community or 'Common Market'.[12] Despite the changing relationship, tropes about Germans circulated widely in British society, providing a counterpoint to ideas of British identity, characteristics and values. Several scholars have recognised the importance of the World War Two to those born during or shortly after it: ideas of Germans and Germany that were rooted in wartime enmity and, transmitted orally or through post-war popular culture, were inescapable.[13] Patrick Major argues Britain had a particular 'cultural obsession' with Germany that 'may also have contained an element of nostalgia for its lost global power status, and betrayed a resentment to its new "big brother"'.[14] British popular culture perpetuated ideas of Germans that conceived of them in ways that linked their ethnicity with shared biological, cultural and psychological traits. The 'Germans' of popular culture had blonde hair and blue eyes, they were possibly mad or aggressive, their society was technologically advanced and pathologically clean, overbearingly organised and, perhaps, most importantly, Germans putatively exhibited a lack of humour. The definition of and discourse around Krautrock encompassed these received perceptions of Germans, but also provided a means to challenge stereotypes and offer means of cultural exchange that could be decoded by the young and subcultural in Britain in particular.

The international New Left, counterculture and new age subcultures provided a new basis for a shared and typically idealistic 'structure of feeling' that brought young West Germans and British people closer and Krautrock embodied and represented aspects of this culture. In Britain, the young, subcultural and fashionable in particular, as Felix Fuhg has demonstrated, had looked to the continent for fashion—particularly Italian and French fashions—during the 1960s.[15] The process of post-Fordist mass production that enabled this international explosion of new styles for British youth was underpinned by structural changes that employed and, assisted by parental disposable income, provided greater means to consume to a greater proportion of youth than before. This gave space to explore the politics of individualism, non-authoritarian forms of left politics and new lifestyles. The events of 1968, in particular, had made West Germany and British youth more aware of a shared history of student radicalism; West Germany's student protests had been a spectacular rebellion against the power of former Nazis, undemocratic legal reforms and the governance of universities. This radicalism and the new lifestyles of the young—beyond committed political radicals—is where Krautrock grew from; it constructed and represented aspects of both a politicised and more depoliticised post-War youth culture with an international outlook. Beate Kutschke argued that Can represented an international network of 'politically engaged, New-Leftist' musicians who 'shuttled between cities in different countries and continents and exchanged knowledge of musical styles, aesthetics and socio-political issues'.[16]

Krautrock bands were often influenced by the idea held by some young German radicals of the time, described by Joachim Häberlen and Jake Smith, that capitalism had negatively affected the inner emotional world of people which spurred them to develop 'alternative emotional practices'.[17] These practices encompassed acts of violence but also 'cuddling, experimental communicative practices, or novel forms of living together'.[18] This new emotional register rejected the past and capitalism, but also overlapped with a New Age scene and 'therapy boom' that was also found in Britain. As Will Morris argued that within these post-1968 'urban sub-cultures and alternative "scenes"' in West

Germany, politics and culture were afforded, at least, equal weight by participants.[19] The young West German Krautrockers and British fans explored and shared new political, emotional and musical registers that crossed national borders. Therefore, as Krautrock music and musicians gained greater prominence in Britain and unlike most West Germans in (or more accurately, portrayed in) post-War British popular culture spoke for themselves, the subsequent cultural interactions gave rise to opportunities to challenge, complicate and sometimes even reject existing national stereotypes.

An analysis of the music press, local and national newspapers, live performances, records, tours, interactions with the music industry, radio and television appearances and reminiscences from music fans provide the basis for these claims. The article begins by explaining the relationship between British and West German music scenes during the 1960s that preceded Krautrock and then deconstructs the music press's definition of Krautrock in the 1970s. It subsequently compares representations of Krautrock bands and interpretations of their interactions with the British public as they performed and released records in 1970s Britain. Finally, I consider how British fans of Krautrock understood the genre in relation to ideas about West Germany. As scholarship from a growing number of historians has previously demonstrated, studies of popular music can provide broader insights into ideas of youth, politics, social identity, class and leisure.[20] By interrogating how West Germans and West Germany were constructed and represented through the prism of the category 'Krautrock', this article shows that British popular music—conceived as a node in international music industry, incorporating a network of musicians and fans and the fields of cultural production and transmission—is a repository of interactions and discourse that can shed light on British perceptions of other peoples beyond its borders.

Sehr Komisch

West German music rarely caught the attention of British popular music fans until Krautrock gained a level of prominence. The post-war British music press typically mentioned West Germany in reference to Anglo-American pop stars' tours or when US musicians talked to them about family or friends stationed in West Germany. These representations were significant to British youth, around 1963–1965, around 450,000 people bought the *New Musical Express* every week, and although the messages could be decoded, negotiated and interpreted in diverse ways, there were few other mass circulation avenues into young West Germany culture. West German music fans, in comparison to British or American listeners, were seen as resistant to newer rock 'n' roll sounds and scorned West German pop (known as 'Schlager'). However, the rise of the Beatles drew more attention towards the West German music scene—although the musicians most written about were almost exclusively British and American. The Beatles travelled from Liverpool to Hamburg in August 1960 to perform a fourteen-week residency in clubs owned by Bruno Koschmider around the Reeperbahn, which was a red light district near the port and working-class St. Pauli district. The band returned several times over the next few years. The Beatles and the music press were impressed by the scene in Hamburg. In February 1963, the *NME* reported that the Beatles had visited Hamburg for the fifth time to perform at Christmas and described their West German following as 'fantastic'.[21]

Despite having worked in West Germany, built a following and developed close friendships, the Beatles used clichés about Germany and Germans for comic effect throughout the 1960s—a time when they experienced unprecedented commercial success and cultural influence. In their first feature film, *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), John Lennon imitated a frenzied German officer when playing with toy battleships in the bath and using the showerhead to mimic a submarine (or U-boat) periscope. Fellow-Beatle Ringo Starr (Richard Starkey) joked to the *NME* in 1966 that he was excited about meeting Adolf Hitler on his next tour of Germany.[22] Lennon appeared in Dick Lester's satirical war film *How I Won the War* (1967) as Private Gripweed, again mining the War for comic effect (but from a perspective more closely aligned to his later peace activism).

The Beatles' successes prompted the British music industry, musicians and music papers to explore the scene in Hamburg and take advantage of commercial opportunities across West Germany. British singers and groups reached the top of the singles chart in West Germany in 1962: Petula Clark scored a number one in late-November 1962, Cliff Richard a year later, the Beatles in 1964 and the Rolling Stones in 1965. The Kinks, the Shadows and the Troggs, and many others, released records, toured and appeared on West German television. In the *NME*, Gerry and the Pacemakers boasted that they had spent so much time in Hamburg that they accidentally introduced songs in German at a hometown concert in a Liverpool Ballroom.[23] *Record Mirror* conducted a special report listing 12 well-known bands who frequently visited Hamburg and described its alluring underground nightlife that, by offering young people relative freedom, complicated perceptions of German conservatism.[24] Peter Jones, a music journalist, lamented 'it is a pity there isn't anywhere like [the Star Club] in Britain' and explained 'there is more big beat per square yard on the Reeperbahn, with its nest of clubs, than in most cities in Europe'. However, reports that accompanied increased interest in the West German popular music scene almost always made reference to the war or cultural misunderstandings that relied on the idea of uptight or officious Germans.

British artists successfully released records and toured West Germany, but—beyond a few notable exceptions—few German popular musicians found similar acclaim in Britain. There are a small number of notable exceptions, however. Marlene Dietrich, a German actor, singer and cabaret performer, was well known in Britain before and after the War. Dietrich starred in silent films of the 1920s but had moved to Hollywood in the 1930s and become a singer. In 1939, she renounced her German citizenship for US citizenship and was an outspoken critic of the Nazi Party (which perhaps arguably increased her appeal in Britain). When she played a residency at London's Café de Paris in June 1954, which was recorded as a live album and introduced by Noel Coward, the London *News Chronicle* reported, 'the customers stood ten deep without supper to see her'.[25] By the time of Dietrich's final UK tour in 1975, *Melody Maker* reported that her physical frailty due to ill health 'doesn't deter her rabid fans or stop the flow of notes and bouquets across the orchestra pit'.[26] Dietrich, however, was a representative of an older Germany; she both evoked and embodied the pre-War Weimar cabaret that British artists, writers and bohemians had looked to for inspiration.[27]

British music fans, both young and old, might have encountered Karlheinz Stockhausen. The innovative composer, born near Cologne in 1928, introduced a new repertoire of approaches (particularly concerning spatial music and aspects of chance composition), techniques (including the use of electronic instruments) and sounds to his

students and listeners. Stockhausen's brush with mainstream popular culture followed enthusiastic public testimonials from famous fans, Paul McCartney (who adapted Stockhausen's approach on the track 'Revolution 9' [1968]) and Pete Townshend, for instance. Peter Blake and Jann Haworth used a photograph of Stockhausen amongst a collage of politicians, spiritual gurus and pop-cultural icons on the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) album cover (John Lennon had rather tiresomely asked for Adolf Hitler's inclusion). Stockhausen had a remarkably large profile in Britain for an avant-garde composer. Popular daily newspapers and broadsheets reported upon his works and he was the subject of a BBC2 feature in 1965.[28] The *Melody Maker* also monitored Stockhausen and reported upon his projects, recordings and concerts. Reports habitually implied that he was not the German of popular stereotype but an amiable and humble man with a mid-Atlantic accent. He was also happy to answer questions about how his work rejected the politics, ethics and aesthetics of the Nazis. This is perhaps unsurprising considering that his mother, suffering from depression, was killed in a mental institution due to the Nazi Party's euthanasia programme and his father (a soldier) died in combat. As a teenage orderly in a hospital, moreover, Stockhausen had seen first-hand the brutality of war.

During the 1960s, Heinz Burt, who had moved to Britain at the age of seven having been born in Germany, had hits as a member of the Tornados and as a solo artist. However, Heinz was perhaps less well known than Nico (Christa Päffgen), a model, musician and actor, by the 1970s. Nico's career followed a similar trajectory to Dietrich—early life in Germany and a time working in film before establishing a career in music after moving to the US. After her family moved to escape the wartime bombardment of Cologne, Nico grew up around Berlin, later became a model and acted in films including Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960). She made waves in popular music before 'Krautrock' musicians despite being born to the same generation, but her music came to the public's attention—and particularly young music fans and Bohemian subcultures—via the 1960s New York demi-monde thanks to her collaboration with the Velvet Underground and association with Andy Warhol. Nico featured on the, initially underappreciated but retrospectively celebrated, *Velvet Underground and Nico* album in 1967, then made a trio of albums *Chelsea Girl* (1967), *The Marble Index* (1968) and *Desertshore* (1970).

Nico and the Velvet Underground's provided an influential example of how avant-garde techniques might be used in popular music. LaMonte Young had mentored John Cale, a member of the Velvet Underground who also produced Nico's solo albums; Cale, the young viola player from Swansea, had applied minimalistic drones in popular music. Young was part of a generation of minimal composers associated with composers of aleatoric, or chance, music, such as John Cage, and new European composers, including Karlheinz Stockhausen and Cornelius Cardew. Nico and the Velvet Underground along with others including the Beatles, Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention set a precedent for British music journalists to explain Krautrock groups' marriage of pop, rock, contemporary art and avant-garde music to the popular music fans. In spite of her connections to the world of underground rock, the counterculture and avant-garde, the music press almost always described Nico's looks, low voice, dour and depressive demeanour as 'Teutonic'. The term made reference to an ancient Germanic tribe and implied that she embodied essential German characteristics. In an *NME* review of her album *The End* (1974), Nick Kent quipped that, to review Nico, a journalist must 'start by wrassling (sic)

your way through a constant deluge of adjectives like 'bleak', 'Teutonic', 'nihilistic' and 'cavernous' just so as to set the scene'.[29]

Coining Krautrock

As the previous section demonstrates, the relationship between British and German music was predominantly defined by British musicians in West Germany and a few West German artists of relatively limited appeal—a cabaret singer, pop singer who passed for British, an avant-garde pop singer and a modern composer. Considering this dearth of knowledge about German popular music, the British press-authored definition of Krautrock was not, at least at first, shaped by embedded, detailed knowledge nor was it a completely meaningful term coined to assist in identifying, understanding or enjoying a type of music. Music journalists could hardly help but perpetuate stereotypes. The musical category 'Krautrock' was created in response to commercial pressures that shaped the music industry. In 1969, Britain's participation in European economic integration was expected to grow as France, after Georges Pompidou replaced Charles de Gaulle, along with French civil servants and business, removed barriers to Britain joining the EEC.[30] The music industries of West Germany and Britain saw an opportunity for consumer electronic exports and pushed their products overseas; if West German music was to be a commercial success in Britain, a relationship with the music press was necessary to reach consumers of popular music.

The music press defined and understood Krautrock bands in relation to British and American popular music, revealing both directly and indirectly perspectives on West Germans, West Germany and general preconceptions about Germany. As journalists coined the term and responded to Krautrock, they were experimenting with the form and style of music writing—music papers were adopting longer-form articles and New Journalism-inspired subjectivity, style and register—which gave rise to subjective impressions of West Germany. Music papers are not, however, transparent documents allowing the reader easy access into British attitudes but texts to decode with the understanding that they are the product of a very specific middle-class, male and metropolitan commercial music and publishing culture.[31] They were written for a young and male-dominated (around two-thirds of its readers were men) readership. Nevertheless, they provided 'maps' for the relationships of mutual understandings and interests of those interested in popular music.[32] Coverage in the music press ensured a platform for musicians in Britain; it could make or break an artist's career. Consequently, the way that they understood Krautrock in relation to their ideas of Germany—defining a subgenre of West German rock from loosely related bands that refers directly to a wartime epithet, 'Kraut'—reveals much about British press, popular cultural and British social attitudes concerning Germans.

In 1970, shortly before Ian MacDonald (or perhaps a member of the editorial team as the term does not feature in the main body of the article) coined the term 'Krautrock', Can, a group containing former students of Stockhausen, Irmin Schmidt and Holger Czukay, received coverage for their album *Monster Movie* (1969). United Artists—a large US label with a varied international catalogue of recording artists and groups—released Can's album which provided a platform to attract reviews. In a *Melody Maker* review, Richard Williams wrote 'nobody in Britain is playing this kind of music, which is well worth

hearing'.[33] Arguably, Williams' had neglected to mention the experimental approach to music of London's AMM that included the composer Cornelius Cardew—Can had probably encountered Cardew as he had assisted Stockhausen between 1958 and 1960, lectured and performed in West Germany. Schmidt and Czukay were certainly aware of his attitude towards their former teacher (that culminated in Cardew's Maoist critique, *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, published in 1974).[34] Also, even though Can might have sounded different to the British music scene, listeners with some knowledge of the avant-garde classical and minimalist music canon, as well as those who had shared interest in countercultural ideas, would have been able to make sense of them. Many music fans knew how 1960s rock drew from avant-garde techniques; *Melody Maker* readers were privy to articles on free jazz and the black minimalism found in the music of African-American artistes (including stars like James Brown).[35] Despite their position in a radical international aesthetic scheme linked to the New Left, Richard Williams still emphasised their 'essential' Germanness.

Music journalists mentioned the musical, political, social and cultural characteristics of emerging West German musicians to negotiate myths and antipathy concerning Germany; they wrestled with the idea of a wartime German chimera and the 'innocent' West German post-War youth. Music papers received revenue from record companies advertising new releases—some of whom were new West German bands. Richard Williams first wrote about 'Euro-Rock', a short-lived term, in a 1970 article with the tagline 'Richard Williams takes a Common Market-minded guess at a future trend in pop'.[36] Williams, perhaps unsurprisingly considering his remit, guessed that 'the Continent of Europe' would provide the answer and pointed towards two Danish and three German bands. Of the West German bands, he included Can and Amon Düül (or Amon Düül II as the original, larger and more improvisational group had split by 1970). Having had more time to familiarise himself with German Rock, Williams now stressed the bands' parallels with the Velvet Underground and their place in broader countercultural communities. He also made much of Can's link to Stockhausen and that Malcolm Mooney, an African American, had been their singer (Mooney left the band in 1969 and was replaced by Damo Suzuki, a Japanese vocalist, who remained in Can until 1974). The article portrayed the West Germans in question as non-discriminatory, democratic and cool.

A few months later, Michael Watts, who like Williams, a young journalist who had joined the *Melody Maker*'s from a local newspaper, reported on Amon Düül II's run in with the Musician's Union—at the time, a rather conservative union—to highlight their anti-authoritarian credentials and how they 'do their own thing'.[37] After the obligatory mention of Stockhausen, John Weinzierl, their founder, guitarist and songwriter, explained the difference in British and West German music to Watts by describing their need to 'make our own sound' and the lack of opportunities to see live rock music in West Germany. Weinzierl's bandmate Olaf Kubler then claimed that the group would quit if their music was commercialised rather than determined by their group's development and that 'because music is a means of communication' their musical practice was intrinsically political. This idealistic and countercultural approach to music that engaged with 'serious' music rejected authority and echoed the sentiments of the rebellious Anglo-American rock musicians of the 1960s. From around 1972, music papers and fans were beginning to voice concerns about wealthy rock musicians making commercial music to satisfy their contractual obligations to major international record labels and living lavish, hedonistic

lifestyles—some even left Britain to avoid paying tax. Like contemporary countercultural bands from the time, such as Hawkwind, Pink Fairies and Soft Machine, and the later punk scene, Krautrock offered an alternative aesthetic and ideologies that emerged from the New Left and counterculture that appealed to British music fans.

The term 'Krautrock' first appeared in print in December 1972, 3 weeks before Britain joined West Germany in the Common Market. Ian MacDonald (Ian MacCormick) wrote an extended feature over three issues of the *NME* entitled 'Krautrock: Germany Calling'.[38] The title played on the BBC's wartime introduction to its programmes, 'London Calling'. The legacy of World War Two and the Cold War influenced MacDonald's construction of Krautrock, West Germany and Germans. He introduced the feature by comparing the sound of US military aircraft to contemporary West German bands: 'Time was when a sudden loud crash around West Germany was probably just another F-One-Eleven. These days it's more likely to be the local amateur group shifting equipment into the Stadthalle for their own economy-priced, self-promoted show'. The allusions to the War and the Cold War contributed to the idea that West German bands existed in a post-war wasteland or 'cultural vacuum'. This touched upon assumptions of British cultural superiority. Indeed, the status derived from being war victors, innovators in popular music and arts and the notion that British folk were inherently more funny than Germans, laid a foundation for condescension towards West German attempts to adapt Anglo-American rock. MacDonald, however, explained the West German contribution to developments in rock music from their adaptation of avant-garde ideas (with more Stockhausen references) to their cutting-edge use of synthesisers. He explained that they many of the bands shared socialist beliefs and rejected consumer capitalism but stressed freedom and non-hierarchical structures—when translated into music practice, this added spontaneity and MacDonald commented 'a British band would be at each other's throats' if they adopted studio recording approaches used by Krautrock groups.

German history, politics and questions of identity are almost as central to MacDonald's three articles as discussions of music. At some point, he envisions West Germans as Cold War allies rather than former enemies. For instance, he retold a story about Holger Czukay of Can: 'In 1946 out of fun and without a political, ideological, or sociological motive, the eight-year-old Holger Czukay blew up a Russian ammunition depot. "It was," he recalls, wistfully, "an unforgettable acoustical (sic) experience"'. MacDonald folded this mischief against the Cold War enemy into Czukay's 'special taste in music'. The allusion to the immediate post-War period, however, implies that Czukay, and others, were psychologically determined to be a conduit for the sounds of war and industrial modernity. This idea of geographical, social and acoustic characteristics of a place determining musical choices was commonplace in music papers. MacDonald adapted the trope to transfer preconceptions about German history into his conceptualisation of their musical practice and sonic palette. Ironically, Czukay had studied under Stockhausen who had explicitly sought to escape the sounds of war and regular tempos that evoked marching soldiers. At other points in the feature, MacDonald constructed 'Krautrock' in relation to the legacy of western youth during in the 1960s. In his account, the post-War generation of West German youth and musicians represented a more general international social movement. However, MacDonald added a stereotype when 'explaining' the German counterculture's characteristics. He claimed that 'Anglo-American school-leavers freak-out' but 'the German youth revolution was intended as a thorough point-by-point challenge to the

laws and moves of a strong military-industrial establishment'. He argued that this studiousness accounted for the West German rock scene's negative attitudes towards consumer capitalism but also played on common British stereotypes of German people—that they are organised, meticulous and even boring.

Out of all the British music papers, *Melody Maker* had the closest relationship with the music industry and revived their investigation into European rock music which had begun in the 'Common Market Rock' article 3 years earlier. The week before the first article, Roy Hollingsworth's travels were described as like 'the Grand Tours of the 19th Century'.[39] Beyond economic considerations, those writing for *Melody Maker* recognised closer ties with continental Europe as an opportunity for cultural exchange. Hollingsworth, a writer who combined news reporting with New Journalism subjectivity, visited Hamburg, Paris, Amsterdam, Rome, Brussels and Dublin. His writing rehearsed many of the clichés associated with each city and nation but he noticed that there was a Europe-wide youth ('long-hairs') interested in rock and popular music. Readers took heed: the week after Hollingsworth's investigation into West German popular music *Melody Maker* published a letter to the editor from a reader in Berkshire that asked, 'British rock rules the world, but for how much longer?' The letter concluded that Can, NEU! and Amon Düül II (as well as the French band, Focus) 'was surely the music of the seventies'.[40]

Journalists of the period were often treated to foreign trips paid for by record labels. Hollingsworth's article on the 'second-largest record buying country' was dominated by an encounter with the music journalist and producer who had been paid by Polydor Germany's A&R department to 'manufacture' Faust, Uwe Nettelbee (sic).[41] The way Hollingsworth reported his encounter with Nettelbeck reflected ideas of British cultural and musical superiority over West Germany—at a time when political and economic power in Europe was arguably shifting in West Germany's favour. He described how they drank wine and watched TV in his host's 'modern' house—a snapshot of the affluent West German consumer society. Hollingsworth was then highly critical of Slap Happy, an artist Nettelbeck produced, and suggested changes to a Faust recording; Hollingsworth, typically a writer who demonstrated a degree of humility, would have been unlikely to report any advice given to a British or US band. Hollingsworth reproduced Nettelbeck's response in comic book or film German: 'oh, zat's a shame'. Hollingsworth then concluded that the new West German rock bands 'just want to be intellectual and introvert, and understood by the understanding. But that's dreadfully selfish'.

Hollingsworth construction of the West German avant-garde that drew from his interaction with Nettelbeck was punctuated with jokes at the expense of Germans. The use of these stereotypes within this context illustrates the division between the music press and the German counterculture when compared to the British underground press. Unlike music papers that had to cater for much broader commercial considerations, underground press in Britain was written from the perspective of a milieu that had personal connections to the West German counterculture though networks of arts, politics and alternative lifestyles. They believed that the counterculture transcended national boundaries and many of the counterculture's participants saw arts and popular music as powerful tools for both self-expression and to provoke social change. They emerged from a scene that valourised art's power to liberate perpetuated by the Situationists and Yippies, writers like Richard Neville and Alexander Trocci and those who passed through similar

sorts of political, arts and media collectives and communal spaces like Arts Labs and underground papers.

At the start of 1973, *International Times* (*IT*) parodied *Melody Maker* over four pages, including a direct parody of its reporting on West German artists.[42] The imitation feature on the fictional 'Hansel Sturm, ex-Benedictine Abbot and innovator of transcendental rock' titled 'Sometimes I Think I Think' mocked the inauthenticity of Faust. The article satirised the need to mention a German musician's thoughts on World War 2 and the music press's attitudes to reporting on their patch—drugs, communal living and stoned philosophising. Four issues later, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, the founder of Ohr Records (an independent record label based in West Germany), spoke to *IT* to provide an impression of the West German music scene while he visited Paris to promote 'the first concert of West German rock groups outside of their home'.[43] His perspective on the West German music scene was significantly more nuanced than that of the music press. Kaiser explained that the West German record industry had grown significantly in 1972, 250 records had been produced by West German acts outselling British Artists in their domestic market. To him, there was not one but four strands of German rock, 'political rock/heavy rock/new rock/cosmic music' and three of the 'cosmic' bands, Klaus Schulze, Tangerine Dream and Ash Ra Temple, all from Berlin, joined Kaiser in conversation with an unnamed journalist. They discussed the development of German rock, their aspirations as musicians, influences (John Cage, Wendy Carlos and Terry Riley rather than Stockhausen), their opinion on Hawkwind's music and Timothy Leary's theories on hallucinogenic drugs and consciousness. This introduction to West German music came from a collaboration with West German musicians that built upon a fact-based introduction with a 'Q&A' format. The article differed from early constructions of German rock and the definition of Krautrock because *IT* allowed West German musicians to define the 'cosmic rock' genre in their own terms. This, for instance, gave an opportunity to reveal that the music explored space rather than time, a fact that had been lost in translation in Britain. When introducing Krautrock to a mass readership, the more subjective New Journalism of the music press along and their notions of critical expertise and interpretation contributed, however, to a definition of subgenre that was filtered through British imaginings of Germany.

A German invasion?

In 1973, as Britain joined Europe in a single economic market, music papers looked towards West Germany, France, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands and Belgium to gauge whether European rock would interest British music fans. West German bands, closely followed by Focus from France, piqued journalists' attention and, within this context, the 'Krautrock' subgenre was defined. This section explores how 'Krautrock' bands then interacted with the British music scene by considering the music industry and broadcasters and the press's response. This is the first sustained post-War interaction between German artists and British popular music. It provides a means to understand how British people renegotiated their ideas of Germans and Germany in response to tropes that drew on a history of enmity. This cultural exchange provided a chance for those interested or involved in popular music to construct, represent and perhaps understand alternative German identities that deviated from British stereotypes; these identities

frequently relied upon shared cultural, subcultural and social identities grounded in ideas of youth, the counterculture and the rock underground.

Once music papers had caught their readers' attention with reporting, record labels paid for a significant amount of music press advertising for West German rock bands. Between 1973 and 1975, the music press published several prominent full-page advertisements for Amon Düül II, Can, Faust and Tangerine Dream. The patronage of John Peel, a BBC Radio One radio DJ and the owner of Dandelion Records, contributed to raising the profile of Krautrock bands too. In the early-1970s, BBC Radio One had an audience of about 10 million listeners for its popular broadcasts (and 20 million when these were combined with broadcasts with Radio Two) and was, therefore, an important ally to record labels when promoting new music.[44] Peel played several West German bands on his show *Top Gear* (a drug-related *double entendre*) that was broadcasted twice weekly and frequently topped 'best of' polls in the music press. Indeed, he chose Tangerine Dream's 1973 album, *Atem*, as his album of the year. Peel later recalled the content of letters from the public concerning Krautrock: 'Whenever any of their extended works are played on the radio there is a heavy mail from listeners. Most of the letter-writers are for it, those that are against it are very against it indeed'.[45]

In search for the people who were 'for it', Krautrock groups released records and toured more regularly in the UK. The most high profile record release was arguably Virgin Records' 48p release of *The Faust Tapes* (1973). This extremely cheap release—a publicity stunt—caused problems that were reported by 'the Raver' in his *Melody Maker* gossip column:

> *The Faust Tapes*, Virgin's cheap album currently at number 18 in the MM chart will be deleted on July 20. Reason? Well, it was too popular.
>
> At 48p a go, the album costs more to produce than the price it sells for. So, on 60,000 sales Virgin have already LOST £2,000. Such are the crazy economics of the business . . . or so they say.[46]

Ian MacDonald wrote in the *NME*, 'The Faust Tapes is a must if you want an offbeat chuckle and don't mind having your mind bent a little. For an album that was never meant for general release it's excellent—and for 48p it's ridiculous'.[47] There were no jibes about German humourlessness when confronted with Faust's light-hearted musical experiment and it certainly raised their profile with the record-buying public.

Reporting on *The Faust Tapes* concentrated upon the cheap price of the records. However, reviews of record releases by West German bands typically negotiated a friction between generally positive music criticism and the reviewer's knowledge of and feelings towards Germany. Some journalists tried to evade and reconsider tropes regarding Germans and mediate positive aspects of the music, free from negative connotations in relation to their national identity, to readers. In 1975, Miles, a former *IT* music correspondent writing in the *NME*, described Tangerine Dream's album *Ricochet* (1975) as 'one of the most beautiful albums of the year' and implored readers to 'get out the headphones, the incense and red light bulbs'.[48] His review demonstrates an understanding of the band routed in his countercultural background and implied he perceived Tangerine Dream as part of a broader European movement. For instance, in

reference to their use of a grand piano he makes a comparison with the work of Eric Satie and explains how the music summoned the image of Jeanne Moureau, a star of French *Nouvelle Vague* cinema. However, Miles' considered and informed reporting was arguably an exception. For instance, Tangerine Dream received the lead review—ahead of Black Sabbath—for their album *Stratosfear* in an issue of the *Melody Maker* a year later.[49] The reviewer responded positively to the music but feared that the album would struggle for commercial success as it reminded the writer of Mike Oldfield's chart-topping *Tubular Bells* (1973). Unlike Miles' piece, the review became an extended discussion of 'Teutonic seriousness'. The article ascribed generic national characteristics to creative practice and argued that the 'German' approach to 'music as art' was pretentious. These approaches to Krautrock—the informed and those that lapsed into lazy stereotypes—were echoed by music journalists throughout the decade. However, writing derived from meaningful interactions and those shaped by understandings of contemporary West German youth culture concurrently redefined aspects of British popular music culture's engagement with Krautrock.

Krautrock bands which had or sought success in Britain were obliged to tour to promote releases and, in some cases, due to the economic benefits and enjoyment of touring in its own right. Live performances hosted a point of interaction and critical engagement: reviews and responses from fans and the public provide an opportunity to recover perspectives on West Germans in Britain. As memories and representations of the war retained a significant hold over the popular imagination, these interactions were laden with greater symbolic significance as West German musicians established direct contact with the British public. In some cases, the symbolism of German bands playing in Britain was perceived as illustrative of a new post-war relationship and a powerful example of changing times. For instance, when Tangerine Dream performed at Coventry Cathedral on October 1975, the press were clearly aware of the symbolic significance and potential for cross-cultural reconciliation. Coventry's city centre–including St Michael's, a fourteenth-century Gothic cathedral—had been heavily bombed during the Second World War. The concert caught the media's imagination and was even filmed and broadcast a year later on BBC 2 TV at 8.15pm on a Sunday evening. Tangerine Dream had decided to perform at cathedrals in the Coventry, Liverpool and York after doing the same in France and Germany due to the acoustic properties of the buildings (relatively long reverberation times, although typically less than a classical concert hall) and in order to create an eye-catching visual spectacle.

In a 2009 BBC documentary, Edgar Froese, a member of Tangerine Dream, quipped that he had seen a newspaper headline that said, 'Forty years ago they came to bomb the place, today they come with synthesisers'.[50] This comment would not be out of place in Britain's post-war comic repertoire and indicative of the type of 'banter' that Froese would have encountered, but it was not a contemporary newspaper headline. Despite a level of public interest that resulted in a sold-out concert, Tangerine Dream did not make the front page of even local newspapers. Two days before their performance, *The Coventry Evening Telegraph* previewed the concert on page 22.[51] The article described Tangerine Dream's influences (yes, Stockhausen), their technology and techniques, prior performances in cathedrals and the way that they melded pop and classical music in a way that was interesting to young music fans. The review that Froese incorrectly paraphrased

was in the *NME*. It was much more conciliatory and demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the time passed and cultural ties that had developed since the war:

> On 14 November 1940, the old cathedral at Coventry was destroyed by German firebombs.
>
> Since the end of that particular fracas, our friends from the wrong side of the Rhine have tried to atone for their destruction by sending a series of gifts to adorn the new Phoenix-like structure – such as the windows in the Chapel of Unity and the ancient stone from St Nicholas' Church, Kiel.

Last Saturday they sent Tangerine Dream.[52]

Fred Dellar was effusive about the 'experience' of listening to Tangerine Dream's ambient electronic soundscapes in the cathedral. There was a common perception that Tangerine Dream's meditative music could free them from the musical past as well as the past imposed on them by German history and British perceptions of German people.

No Krautrock bands toured Britain more extensively than Can and their commitment led to an unlikely hit, which demonstrates the power of cultural encounters to challenge stereotypes and transcend prejudice. In April 1972, Can played a tour of seven venues in England—mostly the university circuit—and returned in July to play a one-off concert at the near 3,000-capacity Rainbow Theatre in London. The following year from late-February through March, they played a 19-day British tour taking in the usual stops in London, Birmingham, Newcastle and Manchester but also playing to audiences in Westcliffe-on-Sea, Chatham, Plymouth and Penzance, as well as visiting Wales and Scotland. They returned in August to play the Empire Theatre in Edinburgh. During their tour, Can recorded live at the Paris Theatre for *BBC in Concert* and recorded a session with Annie Nightingale for *Top Gear*. Can returned in January–February 1974 for a 24-day tour that included another session for *In Concert* and a further meeting with Bob Harris to film a live performance on *the Old Grey Whistle Test*. They returned in September for 17 concerts and a session on *Top Gear*. This touring schedule, complete with a couple of yearly radio sessions, did not let up until 1977.

Can's persistence was rewarded with their hit single, 'I Want More', released in August 1976. The single reached number 26 in the British charts and remained in the top 40 for 10 weeks. The song's success meant a mimed-performance, introduced by Noel Edmonds, who seemed amused at the idea of a German rock group, on *Top of the Pops* (26 August 1976). Beyond the chart-friendly disco-inflected pop, Irmin Schmidt and Holger Czukay stole the show (Michael Karoli was on holiday so could not perform and Jaki Liebezeit was sat at the back of the stage) and by no means look like the rigid, humourless and authoritarian German of British popular myth. Instead, their grins give away that they are quite clearly happy to be on *Top of the Pops* and they are dressed in the relaxed, slightly hippyish clothes that you might expect the road crew to wear rather than the band. They exude warmth and no cynicism towards the younger, and slightly bemused, studio audience.

Thorough Can's interactions with Vivian Goldman, the music press exemplifies how bonds of mutual understanding had the potential to transcend the weight of British, German and European history. Vivian Goldman, a German-Jewish Londoner whose parents had moved to Britain to escape the Holocaust, frequently interviewed members of Can and developed a rapport. In December 1975, Goldman interviewed Irmin Schmidt,

Can's keyboard player. She included a banal detail in her feature to demonstrate to readers how they shared everyday similarities.[53] She wrote, 'Irmin is wearing the Teutonic equivalent of National Health specs. Quickly whipping out my own NHS specs, I proceeded to cross-question him about Can'. This passage allows a hint towards the interviewer's craft and Goldman offered a symbolic attempt to bridge cultural differences for her readers as well. The passing detail preceded a rich conversation about contemporary German culture, Can's musical practice and several personal anecdotes from Schmidt. Much the same can be said of Goldman's interview with Schmidt's bandmate Holger Czukay in October 1976 shortly after their *Top of the Pops* appearance.[54] The interview took place in 'the glorious Relais Basque cakeshop on Westbourne Grove, in the belief that Can's first British hit single can best be discussed in an aura of civilised continental charm and nosh'. The description makes clear Goldman and Czukay's relationship to and interest in exploring European cultures; the article implies that they have a shared cosmopolitanism .[55] Goldman described Czukay as 'an appealing individual with plaintive brown eyes and a confidential, charming air', who spoke with 'disarming modesty' and explained how he was quite happy to be a 'commercial' musician rather than an avant-garde composer. Goldman portrayed Can as an amiable and easy-going group of musicians who, despite their lofty origins as students of Stockhausen, came across as unpretentious.

The contradictions and pressures inherent in understandings of West Germany and Germans during the 1970s are encapsulated within the October 1976 issue of *Sounds* that included Goldman's interview with Holger Czukay. Goldman's article was on page seven of the issue; however, on page 8, the banner the headline proclaimed: 'HEIL SOCIETY!'[56] Goldman had presented Can as peers who simply happened to be German and interrogated their historical, social, cultural and political background sensitively. She did so better to understand and explain to readers how Can's specific combination of people, place, circumstances, musical approach and background informed their music. The following page, however, relied on a common British stereotype of Germany and Germans. In spite of the decades that had passed since the Second World War, the article portrayed Germans as militaristic and deranged. The 'HEIL SOCIETY!' segment reported how David Bowie (who dabbled in fascist aesthetics at a troubling moment when political fascism was rising in Britain) was an '*übermensch*', had moved to Berlin or 'enemy territory' and suggested the move was due to 'Grade A psychosis'—Bowie had become dependent upon cocaine living in Los Angeles. The photograph below was of a woman in profile wearing underpants, tights, beret and no bra performing a Nazi salute. The rest of the page poked fun at Germany mining Nazi Germany (along with a few references to contemporary Germany) for comedic value. A mocked-up 'German Top 10' featured fake songs based on puns that brought together pop references to Germany. This ranged from 'I've got a Brandt New Combine Harvester by the Wurstzels'—mixing the Wurzels song with the then Social Democratic Party of Germany leader, and former Chancellor of West Germany, and sausages—to 'Tubular Belsen by Golden Goering'—a reference to the concentration camp, infamous for the British Army finding around 13,000 unburied bodies as they liberated it, and Hermann Göring, a high-ranking Nazi.

Placing young, anti-fascist West Germans of the 1970s alongside references to the Nazi Party was ironic considering issues with fascism in the British music scene. Several artists around the time used fascist imagery or made pro-fascist statements to gain attention in

the media: David Bowie, in character as the 'Thin White Duke', called for a right-wing authoritarian government to arrest British decline and Malcolm McLaren, the Sex Pistol's manager, had provided members of the nascent British punk scene with swastika armbands. This was a strange moment for the typically left-wing or liberal music press: they typically supported Rock Against Racism but seemed to turn a blind eye to the comic, ironic or attention-seeking uses of fascist imagery. Indeed, the National Front fielded 176 candidates at local elections in Britain in 1976; they had actively sought to recruit from youth subcultures at concerts and on football terraces. However, as this article will explore in the following section, it seems that the majority of music fans who engaged with Krautrock rejected clichés regarding Germany; Krautrock bands were typically too politicised and stringently anti-Nazi to use fascist iconography ironically. It could be argued that readers could separate (what would now be seen as problematic) jokes and pantomime from reality. However, some music journalists were mindful that certain strategies were required to almost rehabilitate West Germans in reference to the supposed prejudices of their readership. As Matthew Worley has argued, Bowie's reactionary posing as the 'Thin White Duke' encapsulated fears that 'youth movements that helped define the 1960s had fragmented; popular music appeared depoliticised'.[57] By engaging with the idealistic and anti-fascist social movements and music of the 1960s, Krautrock bands assisted some journalists, like Goldman, in overcoming negative perceptions of Germans by demonstrating that they held something in common with British music fans.

The music press, in reference to the counterculture of the 1960s, pushed the idea of gentle and amusing West German hippies as an archetype in order to mediate Krautrock musicians to a British audience. Doing so meant that journalists constructed West Germans in ways that challenged British stereotypes of Germans as manic, violent and deranged or dour, humourless and orderly. Martin Hayman's interview with Can in *Sounds* in 1973 portrayed the band as deep-thinkers when it came to music but typically jokers who laughed at their own jokes and derived 'a gleeful pleasure' from the 'weird coincidences' that they seemed to attract.[58] In the same year, Karl Dallas referred to Faust as 'German longhairs' and reported how they were untouched by the seriousness of British progressive rock as well as having a line in ironic humour.[59] Fred Dellar described Edgar Froese, of Tangerine Dream, to *NME* readers as 'and amiable bear of a man, happy as Gerd Muller (the West Germany and Bayern Munich striker) on a hat-trick'.[60] This was a common tactic in music papers, musicians who were different to the perceived market for music journalists—due to their nationality in this case but also sometimes due to their class, gender, race, ethnicity or sexuality—were constructed by journalists in ways that protected the artists in the popular music market.[61]

Kraftwerk's futuristic aesthetic and references to ideas from the counterculture, literature, art and media also struck a chord with young British people. Their music was highly popular and well received by critics, providing another point of mass media cultural exchange. In 1974, Kraftwerk reached number 11 in the singles chart with 'Autobahn' and performed the single in 1975 for *Tomorrow's World*—a popular BBC television show that looked towards the trends and technologies of the future.[62] The voiceover explained that the music is called 'machine music' created in their 'laboratory' in Dusseldorf. Their subsequent album, *Radio-Activity*, reached number 4. However, Kraftwerk's use of German culture as a source of inspiration and reporting that tried to make sense of this further reinforces the typical way that ideas of West German identity were negotiated within

British popular culture. In some respects, British journalists were aware that Kraftwerk could provide a counterpoint to dispel stereotypes. Geoff Barton, writing in *Sounds*, in 1975 admitted:

> Up until a short while ago, my knowledge of Germany and the German people's way of life had been strictly limited. Dull geography lessons at school and the occasional reading of the American comic strip, Enemy Ace, featuring the adventures of a ruthless World War One fighter pilot, Herr Rittmeister Von Hammer; that's about all.[63]

Nevertheless, his article on the band explained how he clashed with Germans because of their respective 'temperaments' and portrayed the band's members as mad scientists capable of mind control—and Kraftwerk played along.

Kraftwerk are considered significant figures in creating a new German aesthetic and identity in post-War West Germany that escaped the ideology and symbolism of Nazism.[64] In the spirit of conceptual artists, like Andy Warhol and Gilbert and George, they redeploy clichés about German-ness ironically and often using the metaphor and imagery of the cyborg to refer to their work. In spite of this, the British music press was slow to move away from the Nazi stereotype that informed everyday preconceptions about Germans. Lester Bangs, an American writer, wrote in an *NME* feature in September 1975:

> In the music of Kraftwerk, and bands like them present and to come, we see at last the fitting culmination of this revolution, as the machines not merely overpower and play the human beings but absorb them, until the scientist and his technology, which has developed a higher consciousness of its own, are one and the same.
>
> Kraftwerk, whose name means 'power plant', have a word for this ecstatic congress: 'mensch-maschine', which translates as 'man-machine'.[65]

Bangs' exposé of 'the German Scientific Method' was titled 'Kraftwerk: The Final Solution To The Music Problem?', which alludes to the Nazi plan for the Holocaust. Some writers, Bangs and Nick Kent, in particular, would use the war as a comic trope and imply that West German musicians should be seen as one-dimensional enemies. Little attention was paid to contemporary developments in international politics or European culture; it was the stuff of comic books. Like comic books, Bangs and Kent sought to entertain the reader, they favoured a type of reporting that was lyrical, verbose and used shock tactics. They both mimicked the creatively fertile enthusiasm of rock stars and the less positive behaviours, such as problematic drink and drug use, misogyny and racism. Nick Kent's report on Can in 1974 relied on an impression of West Germans that seemed entirely informed by Anglo-American comic books and war films.[66] This began from the title, 'Ve Give Ze Orders Here', proceeding through references to the 'Vaterland', referring to the band as uptight and academic, then finishing with the idea that the band were 'sinister' and had a hidden ulterior motive beyond music. This type of reporting deployed stereotypes about Germans and Germany for comic effect to amuse readers but represented little meaningful interaction with the musicians or the music in question.

The loaded imagery of wartime Germany and a lack of nuanced contemporary knowledge could cause misunderstandings, but it is clear that more diligent music press journalists could learn from their mistakes and develop new ideas of West German identity. Andy Gill's reporting on Kraftwerk demonstrated how a broader impression of pre-war German art history enriched his understanding of Kraftwerk's music and image.

His 1978 feature in the *NME*, for instance, analysed Kraftwerk's conceptual approach as a band who straddled visual art and popular music around the release of their album *The Man Machine* (1978).[67] The feature argued that the album was 'one of the pinnacles of '70s rock music' and located the album within its social, political and cultural context. However, this context, Gill argues, was an essentialist notion of the 'German cultural and psychological make up', which led to totalitarianism. British perceptions of Germany led to Gill constructing a misleading narrative around Kraftwerk that reflected the significance of the Second World War in British understandings of Germany. It is telling, for instance, that Gill thought that the album cover had 'a blatant Nazi connotation' when, in fact, the album cover art took cues from Bauhaus and, as Ulrich Adelt has argued, Constructivist art and aesthetics associated with left-wing politics.[68] Gill did, however, demonstrate that he could learn as shown in a telling line within his review of their album *Computer World* (1981):

> Kraftwerk elevated 'conceptual rock 'n' roll' to new heights, dovetailing the music neatly into a larger artwork which, by referring back to the politically-tinged European 'machine art' movements of the '20s and '30s such as the Bauhaus and the Constructivists, commented on the increasing tendencies towards 'bourgeois totalitarianism' in present-day Europe.[69]

Gill at least had come to realise that Kraftwerk were not evoking the Nazi Party's aesthetic in their work—his initial intuition—and reframed them as enemies of totalitarianism.[70] He consequently contributed to reconsidering German identity, beyond clichés and stereotypes born from wartime hostility and post-war popular culture, to author an alternative, informed by an interaction with a group of young, talented and rebellious Germans with a line in ironic humour.

British fans of Krautrock

Krautrock bands did not receive enough coverage in music papers, radio and television to become household names. The ideological, do-it-yourself, politicised, counterculture and contemporary art-informed ethics of German avant-garde rock was not always geared towards mass commercial exploitation by record companies regardless of Virgin Records and United Artists' attempts (particularly around 1973). The music was complicated and often uncompromising; experiments in song structure pushed much of the music beyond the limits of the three-minute pop songs that dominated the charts. To some extent, antipathy towards Germans and Germany might not have helped their commercial hopes but, as this article has so far shown, negative representations were contested and it was no secret that Krautrock bands were typically left-wing and anti-fascist representatives of a 'new' West Germany who could be comprehended by those who knew about the social movements and music of the 1960s. Through the international counterculture and rock scene, German musicians and British popular music journalists and fans could make sense of each other.

There was a significant number of British fans interested in Krautrock who listened to the groups' music, bought records and attended concerts, but they still occupied a niche rather than the mainstream. One fan, calling himself Claude Maniac, wrote into the *NME* to complain about the situation: 'Concerning Can. I have 60 tons of solidified custard hovering in high altitude over Kent. If Can do not get more publicity in *NME* thousands

will get afters'.[71] Maniac's type of humour is quite common with young people of the time who formed part of the autodidactic (not to mention, male dominated) culture of rock music fans. In oral history interviews with fans who remember Krautrock in the 1970s, accounts are predominantly from young men, typically middle- or working-class men who attended selective non-fee paying grammar schools, who engaged in quite competitive forms of music fandom. They remember celebrating their favourite artists' hits like sporting victories, would squabble over which artists they thought were the best and compete over who had the most valid, in-depth or obscure tastes. Krautrock's audience was not, however, entirely class- and gender-bound. For instance, a working-class woman from an Anglo-Italian family who grew up in Bolton who was 15 years old at the turn of the 1970s recounted being a fan of psychedelic rock acts including Tangerine Dream and Amon Düül II.[72] To her, music, friendship and social life were 'bound together', she travelled to free festivals in France where she personally encountered Amon Düül II in a square in Aix-en-Provence. To those involved in the counterculture, Krautrock bands were obvious allies, yet she demonstrates her interpretive agency by viewing them as part of an international psychedelic rock scene rather than the preferred definition used by music journalists.

In some respects, Krautrock gained notoriety with fans through punk and post-punk's culture of absorbing influences.[73] In particular, David Bowie and Brian Eno's music of the mid-to-late-1970s had mediated Krautrock to the emerging punk scene and its fans. Eno praised the music of Harmonia effusively and collaborated with a member of Harmonia, Hans-Joachim Roedelius' other band Cluster, in 1976. In developing an approach to ambient music, Eno spoke in terms of 'music to induce calm and space to think', which evoked conversations around the more 'cosmic' Krautrock acts.[74] Bowie, like Roedelius, had founded an Art Lab during the 1960s and had a similar autodidactic streak to many Krautrock artists in relation to the underground arts, literature and media of the counter-culture. Attracted to the intensity of the divided city at the centre of the Cold War, Bowie made three albums in Berlin between 1976 and 1979. However, he did also develop his fascist 'Thin White Duke' persona there.

When talking to the press about formative or personally significant music, Krautrock fans that became musicians in their own right rarely refer to the nationality of Krautrock bands or national stereotypes. Unlike journalists, musicians could appropriate sounds and approaches to music over years, they do not need to make weekly efforts to mediate music in terms germane to a mass readership. Arguably, their words reflect a deeper engagement as fans and more personal investment as musicians. Mark E. Smith of the post-punk band, the Fall, a working-class autodidact, and a former student of Stand Grammar School, Salford, explained to Irmin Schmidt how he first encountered Can—not through radio but by word of mouth at 15 years old (c. 1972/1973) through fellow 'hardcore' Velvet Underground fans.[75] After filling in a mail order postcard and returning it to an address in London, *Tago Mago* arrived 2 weeks later. Schmidt asked Smith, 'did *Tago Mago* live up to your expectations?' He replied:

> Fucking yes. It formed my skills listening to it. I went to grammar school at that time and everybody was listening to Pink fucking Floyd and The Beatles. They were shit. But Can were great … And The Velvet Underground. Manchester people always liked Can. That's why we are called 'The Can People' since 1973. To earn some money I was working on the docks. All music during that period was fucking shite – David Bowie, Genesis, Pink Floyd and James

> Taylor. Crap. Can saved my life. Irmin, you fucking saved my life! And because you saved my life I even bought *Soon Over Babaluma*.

Like Smith, fellow north-west-based musicians Pete Shelley (Peter McNeish of Buzzcocks and Leigh Grammar School) and Julian Cope (of the Teardrop Explodes and a teenage pen pal of Smith's) both made their fandom of Krautrock clear. The idea of Krautrock's use of industrial sounds arguably encouraged an affinity with fans in the industrial cities of the North who saw yet another dimension of shared experience. Shelley wrote album notes for Can's compilation album *Cannibalism* (1978). He explained how:

> In 1972 I would spend a few evenings a week at a friend's house. He was interested in hi-fi and had a much better system than mine. We would talk and play records but only a few of the records he played would do anything for me. One day he brought an album by a group Can. The title – Tago Mago. Now, this was strange – not an 'odd' type of strange, but the kind that made me curious to hear more.[76]

Smith and Shelley were both voracious readers, cinema fans, television viewers, interested in visual arts and multiple genres of music, the avant-garde approach piqued their curiosity and had a profound effect on their approaches to music-making. It offered creative possibilities to explore, emulate and adapt.

Julian Cope, a self-proclaimed 'teenage krautrocker', explained how the Krautrock genre, on which he wrote a personal book, fitted into his music taste:

> Krautrock is what punk would have been if Johnny Rotten alone had been in charge—a kind of pagan freakout LSD explore-the-god-in-you-by-working-the-animal-in-you Gnostic Odyssey. A sort of very fit Hawkwind without the Doomsday Science Fiction. Krautrock has been obscured in the eyes of the public, who may be unaware that it was as Holy as the Stooges, Sun Ra and the MC5 all on one stage. Or that it was transcendental cosmic fuck-rock played by superfit amphetamine visionary poet-druids who always had an attitude to the moooon![77]

In describing his affinity with Krautrock, Cope folds together various threads of underground thought from British punk and (the hard, less peace and love oriented) aspect of psychedelia, the 1960s counterculture, free jazz, and radical US garage rock with ideas about the occult and spirituality all while writing in a cadence reminiscent of the Beat generation. Through radio, records and the music press, fans could find that they existed within a lacuna of shared experiences and feelings that transcended nationality. Similarly, as mentioned by Cope, Rotten (John Lydon) was a fan but, in his memoir, carefully positioned Can, who informed his music in Public Image Limited (PiL), as 'way beyond the trippy-hippie bongo crowd in the audience' and Faust having earned his affection by releasing cut-price *the Faust Tapes*.[78] This provided inspiration and a template for British punk musicians that is often forgotten in the talk of a 'year zero' in 1977 at which point prior influences were cast aside.

The trans-European cross-cultural fraternity exhibited by Smith, Shelley, Cope and Lydon is clear in popular music today. Krautrock was defined at a very specific historical moment in reference to broader perceptions about West Germany and developments in popular music. However, it provided musicians with a lexicon of approaches and sounds and its 'Germanness' is now mostly an afterthought or seen through the lens of reunified Germany. In Hackney, East London, perhaps this Friday or Saturday night, you can visit the Moth Club (an ex-servicemen's members club) and watch live bands perform 'Krautrock

Karaoke' with members of the public. On the same night, in the industrial estate next to Islington Mill in Salford (minutes from the Crescent pub [or the Red Dragon, as it was then known] where two German migrants to Britain, Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, once met) there might be musicians surrounded by art installations and manipulating sounds in a manner reminiscent of Krautrock's approach to avant-garde electronic and rock music. Attend a large-scale music festival and, at some point, a band will almost certainly break into a long repetitive section of a song underpinned by so-called 'motorik' drumming and accompanied by guitar feedback or swells and sweeps of synthesiser. Perhaps someone at the gig will have seen Kraftwerk perform at the Tate Modern in 2004. You can still catch Michael Rother of NEU!, one of the two bands playing under the name Faust or Damo Suzuki (with a band of local musicians rather than his fellow living members of Can) live too. NEU! t-shirts are on sale in record shops worldwide alongside others adorned with cultural icons like the Ramones crest, Bob Marley, the Rolling Stones' lips and tongue logo, the Northern Soul believer's clenched fist or Raymond Pettibon's LP cover for Sonic Youth's *Goo*. Instead of representing Britain's flirtation with the aesthetics of fascism in the 1970s, Krautrock in Britain continues to represent the left-wing radicalism and anti-authoritarianism of West Germany's post-war generation.

Conclusion

By interrogating the construction, debate around and effects of Krautrock, this article sheds new light on Britain's so-called 'cultural obsession' with Germany from the perspective of musicians, music fans, music journalists and the music industry. These responses to Krautrock demonstrate the power of wartime images of Germans and Germany in post-War Britain and explore ways in which they were contested and renegotiated. New impressions of West Germany could be found through the British music scene's open-minded exploration, in dialogue with young West Germans, of Krautrock and the culture and society that formed it. Numerous young British and West German people found that they shared musical tastes, approaches to music-making and philosophical understandings of music along with shared social, cultural and political values. To many, the ties of youth, the rock underground, the New Left and the counterculture seemed more profound than national identity. From the perspective of West Germany anti-authoritarianism, Krautrock bands and their music challenged, complemented and redefined hopeful ideas about music, social change, politics and alternative lifestyles which built affinity with British music fans and represents an example of transnational and experimental New Left cultures and countercultures. The impact of Krautrock in Britain reveals the possibility that in spite of clichés and stereotypes popular music can provide a setting to nurture cross-cultural solidarity and understanding. It demonstrates how social identities—counterculture, rock, youth, the left—have the potential to replace, transcend or be used to question the significance of ideas of opposed national identities and the memory of conflict in personal, political, social and cultural interactions.

British and American record labels did endeavour to popularise German rock in the British market and there was a significant 'cult' audience for records and tours by the Krautrock bands. Some people were not just willing to explore West German music and culture but did so enthusiastically. The way in which some aspects of popular music and rock culture stress the importance of open- mindedness and curiosity allowed space for

more meaningful representations of a changing West Germany and Germans. They found that Krautrock existed within both a West German context (the aftermath of War and reconstruction of West Germany) and the shared domain of the left, youth culture and counterculture. Through songs, albums, live performances and coverage in music papers, at least some people British and German musicians and music fans learnt they had more in common than they had been led to believe. Indeed, those who engaged with Krautrock most profoundly seem to have moved past clichés about the Germans that pioneered the subgenre and the society that formed them.

However, despite moments when stereotypes and prejudices were challenged, reports and imagery concerning Germans and West Germany also revealed ideas of British cultural superiority and the long-shadow cast by the memory of the War which demonstrates the power of these notions and their pervasiveness in British society. Popular music and krautrock did not, therefore, arrest negative perceptions of Germany and Germans held by some British people and frequently articulated in British popular culture during the 1970s. However, neither did membership of the European Economic Community nor Britain and West Germany's alliance during the Cold War.

Notes

1. Stubbs, *Future Days*, 6.
2. Glen, *British Music Papers*,1–2.
3. See Gemie and Ireland, *The Hippy* Trail; and Ireland and Gemie, 'Raga Rock'.
4. Koch and Harris, 'The Sound of Yourself Listening', 579.
5. For more detail see Schütte, *Kraftwerk*, particularly 253–280. Buckley, *Kraftwerk*; and Bussey, *Kraftwerk*.
6. Stubbs, *Future Days*, 21–83.
7. Schiller, 'Fun Fun Fun', 618.
8. Adelt, *Krautrock*, 1–5.
9. Ibid, 5.
10. Ibid., 6.
11. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*.
12. From 1947 to 1949, Britain, alongside the USA, administered the area that would become the Federal Republic of (West) Germany. During this time, around 10,000 British soldiers married German women, Anglo-German discussion groups emerged, exchanges and town twinning campaigns were encouraged. By 1951, 60,000 Germans had moved either temporarily or permanently to Britain in response to a labour shortage. See, Knowles, *Winning the Peace*, 118–21 and 168. In *German Migrants in Post-War Britain*, 1–10, Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert noted that unlike the pre-War German diaspora that was clustered around London, the German diaspora organised few ethnic organisations (unlike, for instance, African-Caribbean, Indian or Irish migrants) due to the stigma concerning Germany after the War. The remarkable improvement in the West German economy in 1952–3, US investment through the Marshall Plan, NATO membership and growth in bilateral trade prompted calls for a 'cordial and constructive' political relationship between fellow liberal democracies and Cold War allies. Britain's entry into the Common Market in 1973 and decision to remain part of the European Economic Community after a referendum in June 1975. See Wright, *Britain and Germany in Europe*, 3.
13. Eley, 'Finding the People's War', 818–891. The AHRC's *Cultural Memory and British Cinemagoing of the 1960s* project found, for example, that in the 1960s and 1970s, Second World War films and discussions of the War with parents or others adults with War memories were

almost ubiquitous in the formative years of the post-War generation. Numerous examples can be viewed here: UCL Library, 'Remembering 1960s British Cinema-going' (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/digital-collections/collections/cinema). Gerd Rohmann's study of Germany in post-War English fiction described how German-ness was constructed through the SS, Gestapo, 'obsessive orderliness', concentration camps and authoritarianism. These values were contrasted with 'English' liberal individualism and 'British methods of colonialism'. This trope was adapted to integrate ideas of a post-war 'self-assertive Germany' and to encompass a few young, bohemian left wing radicals within a technically advanced nation that was cold, efficient, rational and Faustian. See Rohmann, *Images of Germany*, 413–20. Patrick Major has shown using the example of biographies and cinematic representations of German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, however, these representations were contingent and complicated. Adapting to the context of closer Anglo-German political relations, some began to question the culpability and motives of all Germans during the War. See Major, 'A Love-Hate Relationship?' 457–8.

14. Major, 'A Love-Hate Relationship?', 457–8.
15. Fuhg, 'Did Britain Rule'.
16. Kutschke, 'Protest Music, Urban Contexts', 322.
17. Häberlen, *Emotional Politics*. Häberlen and Smith, 'Struggling for Feelings', 615–618.
18. Ibid.
19. Morris, 'Speil Appeal', 770.
20. An approach taken by Gildart, *Images of England*; Kenny, 'A Radical Project'; Robinson, 'Putting the charity back'; Wilkinson, *Post-Punk Politics and Pleasure*; and Worley, *No Future!*
21. Alan Smith, *NME*, 1 February 1963 (Rock's Backpages, hereafter RB). Also see, Jean Carol, *Disc*, 24 November 1962 (RB).
22. Smith, *NME* 24 June 1966 (RB).
23. Smith, *NME* 5 April 1963 (RB).
24. Griffiths, *Record Mirror* 6 April 1963 (RB).
25. *News Chronicle* 25 June 1954, 22.
26. Watts, *Melody Maker* 15 February 1975 (RB).
27. Storer, *Britain and the Weimar Republic.*
28. See Goodwin, *Daily Express* 2 May 1961, 4; Goodwin, *Daily Express* 4 September 1968, 4; *The Times* 6 December 1965, 14; and *The Times* 10 December 1965, 16.
29. Kent, *NME* 9 November 1974, 17.
30. Georgiou, 'British Capitalism and European Unification'.
31. The methodological approach concerning the press is found in Glen, 'British Music Papers', 12–17, Bingham, *Family Newspapers?* and Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding'.
32. Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out*, 83–84.
33. Williams, *Melody Maker* 30 May 1970, 12.
34. Cardew, *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism.*
35. Toop, 'Forever and Never the Same', 30–43.
36. Williams, *Melody Maker* 13 June 1970, 22.
37. Watts, *Melody Maker* 12 December 1970 (RB).
38. MacDonald, *NME*, 9 December 1972, 16 December 1972 and 23 December 1972 (RB).
39. *Melody Maker* 6 January 1973, 34.
40. *Melody Maker* 20 January 1973, 56.
41. Ibid., 19.
42. *International Times* 11 January 1973, 12–13.
43. *International Times* 8 March 1973, 18–19.
44. Maley, 'Cultural Devolution'.
45. Peel, *The Olivetti Chronicles*, 193.
46. *Melody Maker* 15 July 1973, 24.
47. Macdonald, *Melody Maker* 5 May 1975, 17.
48. Miles, *NME* 29 November 1975, 12–13.
49. *Melody Maker* 16 October 1976, 26.

50. 'Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany', BBC Four 28 July 2012.
51. *Coventry Evening Telegraph* 2 October 1975, 22.
52. Fred Dellar, *NME* 11 October 1973, 37–8.
53. Goldman, *Sounds* 6 December 1975, 12.
54. Goldman, *Sounds* 23 October 1976, 7.
55. This makes reference to Mica Nava's conception as cosmopolitanism as a 'structure of feeling' in which difference is celebrated and explored. Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism*, 5.
56. *Sounds* 23 October 1976, 8.
57. Worley, 'Marx–Lenin–Rotten–Strummer', 505.
58. Martin Hayman, *Sounds* 24 February 1973, 12.
59. Dallas, *Melody Maker* March 1973 (RB).
60. Dellar, *NME* 29 June 1974 (RB).
61. Glen, *British Music Papers*, 150.
62. The footage was recently rediscovered by BBC News. 'Kraftwerk appear on Tomorrow's World in 1975', BBC News Online 6 May 2019 (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/entertainment-arts-52562048, accessed on 1 June 2020).
63. Barton, *Sounds* 20 September 1975 (RB).
64. Stubbs, *Future Days* explores this further.
65. Bangs, *NME* 6 September 1975 (RB).
66. Kent, *NME* 16 February 1974 (RB).
67. Gill, *NME* 29 April 1978, 39–41.
68. Adelt, Machines with a Heart, 370–371.
69. Gill, *NME* 16 May 1981, 36–7.
70. Hochman, *Bauhaus*, 102–105.
71. *NME*, 21 August 1976, 62.
72. Memories of British Music Fans, 1960–1979, transcript 0006.
73. Worley, *No Future*, 50. Wilkinson, *Post-Punk*, 128.
74. Eno quoted in Toop, *Ocean of Sound*, 12.
75. Alex Denny, 'Mark E Smith speaks to Can's Irmin Schmidt in one of his final interviews', *Dazed Digital* 3 May 2018 (https://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/39949/1/mark-e-smith-the-fall-can-irmin-schmidt-interview, accessed June 2019).
76. Can, *Cannibalism* [Vinyl LP] (United Artists, 1978).
77. Cope, *Krautrocksampler*, 1.
78. Lydon, *Anger is an Energy*, 89.

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