

AGITATION FREE -- a brief biography

Agitation Free was one of the leading exponents of German experimental rock music in the early 1970s.. Starting in 1967, the Berlin band had begun to develop long and, for its time, very free Instrumental improvisations. By 1972 they attained cult status with a congenial mixture of improvisational Rock paired with electro-, ethno-, jazz- and trance elements.

They were experimenting in concerts with liquid projectors, slides, and their own experimental films, in ways analogous to underground bands in California and the UK.

Sonic sophistication led **Agitation Free** to collaborations in the avant-garde music scene with composers such as **John Cage**, **Erhard Großkopf**, **Peter Michael Hamel** und **Ladislav Kupkovič**. The Electronic Beat Studio, that **Agitation Free** initiated with composer **Thomas Kessler**, evolved into a creative center for the Berlin groups **Ash Ra Tempel**, **Tangerine Dream** and others. Early in 1970, **Agitation Free** appeared in the "First German Progressive Pop Festival" at the Berliner Sportpalast.

In April 1972, the band toured Egypt, Lebanon, Cyprus and Greece at the invitation of the Goethe Institute. Manifold impressions from this trip found expression in the first album, "**Malesch**" (Vertigo), a fascinating soundweb of exotic original recordings from the Near East journey combined with cutting edge Krautrock – an irrefutable forerunner of today's world music.

Constant touring brought the band steadily increasing recognition all over Europe. They appeared in the cultural program of the Munich summer Olympics in 1972, went on their first French tour for two months in early 1973, appeared in May at the "German Rock Super Concert" in Frankfurt and produced their next album, "**2nd**" in July 1973.

Continuous taping of rehearsals and group discussions induced german radio stations SFB and WDR to produce an experimental radio drama with the group, a highly unusual undertaking long before "Reality Shows" became widely popular.

The relentless touring steered the five musical individualists in such different directions that the band broke up in 1974.

Although a number of posthumous albums, (featuring recordings made between 1972 and 1974 appeared following the band's demise), and a studio album ("**River of Return**") appeared in 1999, it was almost 35 years after disbanding that the original band came together once more to perform.



Agitation Free
Gusti Lütjens Lutz Ulbrich Burghard Rausch Michael Günther Michael Hoenig
Photo: Tony Kallmann

In February 2007, **Agitation Free** reunited to perform a series of concerts in Tokyo to mark the occasion of member **Michael Hoenig's** addition to the "Progressive Rock" section of the Tokyo Tower Wax museum. **Agitation Free** guitarist **Lutz Ulbrich** had already been a wax-presence there for several years. As fate would have it, everything came together perfectly. Unknown to them, a multitrack recording was made of all three concerts that took place at the O'West venue in Tokyo's Shibuya district, which eventually led to Hoenig compiling the best of the performances in the original musical sequence of the three concerts. The resulting new album, "**SHIBUYA NIGHTS**", offers clear evidence that Agitation Free remains one of the best and most original groups among their illustrious German contemporaries.

The album's ultimate triumph is that much of the music, first performed four decades ago, not only evokes the revolutionary innovative spirit of glorious days gone by, but, as played here makes for even more compelling listening in today's homogenized musical environment.

Agitation Free, with musicians changing frequently in its early days, was one of the most influential bands in what became known as the "Berlin School", and became a career springboard for many musicians. **Christopher Franke** helped **Tangerine Dream** to gain worldwide recognition. **Axel Genrich** went to **Guru Guru**. **Frank Diez** played with **Al Jarreau**, **Bobby McFerrin**, **Mercedes Sosa** and **Joan Baez**, joined the NDR Big Band and is professor for Jazzguitar in Hamburg.



Michael Günther became the technical coordinator of the Berlin Jazz Fest.



Michael Hoenig performed with **Klaus Schulze** and **Tangerine Dream** before he released two solo albums and he gained worldwide attention with his Soloalbum "**Departure from the Northern Wasteland**". He then became known in Hollywood as a film composer and as producer of contemporary classical music. He has worked with artists as diverse as **Miles Davis**, **Phillip Glass**, **Morton Subotnick**, **Harold Budd** and **Jack Nitzsche**.



Gustl Lütjens went on to be a sought-after studio musician, toured with **Shirly Bassey** and **Nena**, and later found a large audience, primarily in the USA, with his new-age band **Living Mirrors**.



Burghard Rausch became a founding member of **Bel Ami**, now is the drummer for the "Krautrock supergroup "**Electric Family**", and has had a career as a music journalist/moderator for radio and TV.



Lutz "Lüül" Ulbrich joined **Ashra**, worked with **Velvet Underground** singer **Nico**, produced noted solo albums, music for theater, wrote an autobiography and has celebrated worldwide success since the late 1990s with the **17 Hippies**.