

TO ROCOCO ROT  
JOHN PEEL BBC  
SESSIONS 97-99



# To Rococo Rot

## The John Peel Sessions

CD / LP / digital

Release: November 4th, 2022



**Without a doubt, To Rococo Rot are an exception within the German music landscape. From 1995 until they broke up in 2014, the group around Robert Lippok, Ronald Lippok and Stefan Schneider researched a unique sound between electronic music, ambient, post-melancholy and the further development of a new, free music like krautrock. Pitchfork described their sound as "unmistakably digital, yet 100% human".**

**With releases on labels such as Kitty-Yo, City Slang and Mute Records as well as concerts worldwide, the band has built a remarkable reputation. The trio was invited three times by John Peel to record radio sessions in the BBC studios. Bureau B is pleased to make the recordings from these three sessions from the years 1997 and 1999 available on record for the first time, which, in addition to the live versions of selected album tracks, also contains exclusive, unreleased songs.**

Pop music is just another word for: anything is possible. When people pursue happiness, freedom, sexual fulfillment, friendship and love, when they don't let depression and poverty and injustice and abuse and alienation stop them from communicating, then this sound we call pop is created. It rings out in the brightly lit Penny arcades of the late 19th century as well as in the dark rooms of a gay bar in present-day Berlin. On a stage in front of 25,000 people. In your bedroom when you were a kid. It just always sounds different - quieter, louder, fiercer, ordinary. Sometimes the sound is distorted beyond recognition, sometimes it hits you like lightning. And sometimes it's yours alone and you don't have to share it, like when Robert Lippok says that the greatest moment in his time in to rococo rot was when John Peel invited them to Liverpool to record the third of three Peel Sessions and they met him in person: "I felt like I was in a dream; I'm still very happy he invited us." And Ronald Lippok adds, almost tenderly, "When we listened to the show back home in the East, we fantasized about Peel announcing one of our band's tracks, even tried to imitate his voice: This is John Peel's radio show on BFBS..." Just when you're still some teenager in East Berlin, you blink twice and you're face to face with the person who's been sending you a message in a bottle from another life, from real life, over and over again for years via medium wave (or was it FM?).

And isn't it strange anyway to imagine these ultra-short waves taking on the contours of a Roxy Music song, and actually and physically and somehow analogously pulsing through our bodies? Through Stefan Schneider's body as well, who then called Düsseldorf home and who also happened to live in the British zone of the Federal Republic, where every Thursday late at night John Peel played records at the wrong speed and yet all was right in the world. For a hundred years now, radio has been broadening our perception. Stefan Schneider: "I remember how the city names of the stations on the front of old radios magically teleported me to Belgrad, Strasbourg or London." Bill Burroughs grouses that language is a virus from outer space. Well, pop is definitely a mutation of this virus, complemented by rhythm and melody. And some people were infected very early on, like Robert Lippok: "Even when we were kids our radio had a tape recorder, so from the beginning we weren't just listening but actively recording, arranging, categorizing music, creating order. Also fixing tangled cassette tapes." Pop on the radio actively invited the listener in; it was access to otherwise hidden treasure troves; a fragment of reality that was actually utopian.

Of course, 99% of what was broadcast was crap, but like digging for gold, all the detritus doesn't dampen the joy of finding the nugget. Stefan Schneider: "When I first heard Bowie's Sound and Vision, it was certainly no accident that such futuristic-sounding music didn't seem to come from an earthly place, but found the human ear floating through the air, settling and changing in the body, sometimes disappearing from memory and suddenly reappearing, accompanied by the worry of not knowing if and when you would hear it again." But the conviction wormed its way into many a listener that it would be a damn good idea to try their hand at pop. Kreidler originated in the west, Ornament & Verbrechen in the east. Robert Lippok describes the moment when things did a 180: "When we first started releasing records it was almost a shock to hear our own music on the radio." You walk through an invisible wall. You cause a membrane to pulsate. And finally in 1995, to rococo rot was the band whose music, in a kind of aesthetic feedback loop, also made a certain John Peel at the BBC and Daniel Miller at Mute Records sit up and take notice: "It was something new, something that sounded like it could only be done in Germany; and, as I discovered later, could only be done by guys who were born in the east of Germany in the days before the wall came down." And so, the three to rococo rot sessions united here with their to some extent exclusive Peel tracks (Glück, Esther, Glass), some recorded under intense time pressure, are testimonies to the intimate connection of three German musicians with the whole world, with pop, with the happiness that one possesses and that one shares. Pop without its means of production is inconceivable. And even in times when digital is king, we should consider ourselves lucky that this analog reality of sound, like radio waves, continues to pulsate through us.

Karl Bruckmaier

**Tracklisting:**

1. Intro
2. Thomson Colour
3. Tour De Repechage
4. Glück
5. This Sandy Piece
6. Prado
7. A little Asphalt Here  
And There
8. Rocket Fuel
9. Telema
10. Esther
11. Glas

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