



# Zeus B. Held Attack Time

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With *'Attack Time'* by sound tinkerer Zeus B. Held, Bureau B is re-releasing one of the most exciting records of the original experimental Kraut-pop period. After various stints, including prog band Birth Control and underground dance tippie Gina X Performance, he also put out a string of solo releases. *'Attack Time'*, originally released on Aladin in 1981, gave Zeus B. Held the opportunity to experiment sonically outside the mainstream and subversively undermine the hegemonic MTV sound of the early 1980s. Unfortunately, the album was a commercial failure at the time. So it's all the nicer that it's now being brought out into the world again with all its supposed contradictions between enraptured New Wave, cosmic electronics and weird rock grooves.

Zeus B. Held's origin story begins behind the keyboards of progressive powerhouse Birth Control, a six-year stint which saw his technique toughened in the crucible of hundreds of all night performances. After a brief pause in Paris to session for those space-age cyborgs Rockets, he came back to Köln in '78 and swapped commune living for a spot in the city. Soon he was picking up session work at the local Sound Experience studio and indulging his electronic obsession on a couple of solo LPs, *'Zeus' Amusement'* and *'Europium'*. In league with like-minded studio owner Martin Hömberg and art scene savant Gina Kikoine, Zeus took his new sound even further with a trio of icy electropop LPs as Gina X Performance. Their combination of queer culture, disco rhythms and synthesiser sleaze captured the underground dance floor, influencing Human League and Martin Gore, and making a splash at Arista, who were looking for someone to handle production duties on Fashion's sophomore album. Relocating to London in '82, Zeus spent a decade behind the desk for the likes of John Foxx, Dead Or Alive and Pete Dinklage, cementing his position among the pantheon of studio greats, where he's remained ever since.

So where does this divine disc slot into the maestro's mythology? Recorded in '80 and '81 after the third GXP album wrapped, *'Attack Time'* is Zeus on the loose in Sound Experience, spending late nights alone learning how to play the studio as an instrument. Pre-MIDI and prior to the sampling revolution of the Fairlight, the ten tracks are awash with analogue techniques - snip tapes and Revox time dilation, the pulsing PPG modular, groan tubes and eerie collages from the studio dustbin. Making the most of the multitrack, Zeus could lay down a part and then accompany himself, enjoying the pace and possibility of his new way of working.

Unhindered by A&R expectations or any commercial goal, he was able to follow inspiration in any direction. Held's hypnagogic memory of Glass' opera and a Jon Voigt character coalesced to prompt "Cowboy On The Beach", somehow still discernible amid the deranged funk thanks to the cinematic majesty of that grand piano caress. His friendship with PPG developer Wolfgang Palm inspired electric dreamers "Enfant Terrible" and "Eurode", two kosmische creations which take a detour into industrial anarchy and emotional uplift respectively. The drabness of his day job as a major label session musician sparked a defiant subversion of the mainstream, most notably on a surreal cover of "Drive My Car" and the sugary "Test", which new waves at the MTV generation as it leaves them all behind.

While *'Europium'* and the GXP albums had been a deliberate rejection of rock, the final strand of "Attack Time" saw Zeus letting the licks back in, utilising the talents of power trio Hill Renn Siebert with one eye on an unrealised live tour. Dierk Hill lent muscular guitars to "Raise Your Gun" and the bluesy "Didn't I", as well as co-writing psychedelic standout "Magic Circles", which sees rhythm section Zeebee Siebert and Bernd Renn lock into a wickedly lopsided groove.

No sooner had he finished the record than the phone began to ring, and any promotional push was lost as he departed for London, leaving the LP to fade into undeserved obscurity. Now thanks to Bureau B's reissue mission, *'Attack Time'* has a second life, flying the flag for experimental pop with all its beauty and contradiction.

- Patrick Ryder

## Tracklist

01. Enfant Terrible
02. Cowboy On The Beach
03. Transportable Music
04. Daily News
05. Raise Your Gun
06. Drive My Car
07. Magic Circles
08. Eurode
09. Test
10. Didn't I

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## Promotion

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