



# CEL (Felix Kubin & Hubert Zemler) Gegenwelt



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CD / LP / digital

Felix Kubin is one of Hamburg's most busy and varied electronics lunatics. He began recording and performing while still in his teens, and has amassed a vast and crazy discography consisting of all manner of weird sounds. Felix has done music for radio plays, film soundtracks, festival installations and orchestras, in addition to the whacked-out solo performances for which he became well known.

Warsaw-based percussionist Hubert Zemler is a decade younger than Kubin, but has kept himself equally busy. Initially focused on mastering his New Music chops, Zemler's collaborators include John Tilbury, Gyan Riley and Jon Gibson. But Hubert has also been involved with various left field rock bands, and is especially well known for his free jazz playing.

*Gegenwelt (Parallel World)* is the second LP by CEL, a duo Kubin and Zemler formed. More melodically-evolved than their eponymous 2020 debut, it is an even more explicit example of the syncretic impulse that impelled these guys to form the band. Their basic notion was to explore the juncture between two streams of German underground sounds -- the Motorik 4/4 rhythms first posited by Can's Jaki Liebezeit and Kraftwerk's Klaus Dinger, and the sequencer-driven brain loops of early, experimental pioneers of the NDW, such as der Plan.

The opening track, "Tokamak", begins like the sequenced soundtrack to a brightly-colored animated nightmare before transmuting into a marimba fusillade that unspools like Steve Reich on steroids. The last track is "Transformator Matki Polki", which sounds like a radical Viennese remix of random snippets from Wolfgang Dauner's *Output*. In between these poles are an array of wild and varied rides through cartoon landscapes, with side trips to the spy movie vibe of "Gegenwelt", the thug/art rock hybrid of "Eiweißangriff" and beyond.

*Gegenwelt* is also a showcase for Kubin's latest invented instrument, the Mechatronikon. Built for him by engineer Lars Vaupel, the Mechatronikon receives CV or MIDI signals and translates them into commands for electromagnetic mini motors. In Felix's words, this allows "sequencers to trigger kitchen gear or whatever we'd like to resonate. With this machine we can also create rhythms that a human drummer would hardly be able to reproduce in this precision." The mechanical sound effect of this device can be heard, for example, in the piece "Trippeltanz".

But the precision of the pure Motorik impulse is not something Zemler is afraid to ignore at times. His grounding in free jazz emerges regularly (if subtly), displaying lateral moves that add another layer of complexity to music that's often moving in several directions at once. Even when the surface of CEL's melodies sound simple, a closer listening often reveals a wealth of subterranean activity. Mixed and co-produced by Hamburg's post-punk luminary Mense Reents, the music on *Gegenwelt* is a fine example of CEL's ability to compose pieces with a multivalent architecture listeners can appreciate in a variety of ways. Their music is partially shaped by whatever preconceptions you bring to it.

So think good thoughts about *Gegenwelt* and your rewards will be bountiful.

– Byron Coley

## Tracklist

01. Tokamak
02. Rompecristales
03. Eiweißangriff
04. Gegenwelt
05. Trippeltanz
06. Flucht zum Mars
07. Geometrischer Glanz
08. Transformator Matki Polki

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