



Das Kinn Ruinenkampf

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CD / LP / digital



With his first full-length album „Ruinenkampf“, to be released via Hamburg based label Bureau B, Das Kinn embarks on a musical tour de force through the ruins of our time. An electronic armada and kickbox phonetics lead us through haunting soundscapes somewhere between DAF, Kosmische Kuriere and Frankfurt Bahnhofsviertel. Beats on full blast. Bones rattle. Warm synthlines played by cold hands. A saxophone ponders the after. Hymns for the demolition. Sonic meditations on decay. Music for the solemn decline.

Toben Piel likes to visit cemeteries. In those places of peace and idyll he finds the distance to contemplate transience and consider the hereafter as a concrete location. His debut album „Ruinenkampf“ comes from the same mindset – distancing himself just enough to get straight to the point with a running start.

It certainly doesn't sound anything like peace and idyll. It has more to do with the cassette scene, the 1980s, with staccato vocals, and synths somewhere between DAF and Kosmische Kuriere. Underground aesthetics. Torrents of melody, sophistication, constantly oscillating between anthem and demolition. And the crass power of that voice! These are eight pieces of intensive listening, always right on the mark. So how does it work? How can anybody create something like that? Well, this man in his forties from Frankfurt, still young at heart and ever hungry, has substantial experience: first with Antitainment (2005-2010), then together with the magnificent Charlotte Simon in Les Trucs, through his cassette label MMODEMM, and also as a musician on various theatre stages. Yet with DAS KINN he feels that he has now finally created music with a true sense of self-liberation. Maybe it's simply down to age? Where perhaps he once used to think too much, to control things and strangle ideas in the pursuit of perfectionism, this time he has devised a broader concept as an antidote. Speed. Focus. Conclusion. Not to devalue his previous work – but here there is a presence of mind that allows all that prior experience to prevail without being overly aware of it.

Jaamis-vu, the first track, is well chosen in its opening position: the only cover, originally by the band Teurer denn je, from East Berlin's avant-garde in the late 1980s, before the wall came down, and sounding like Kurt Weill going for a walk with Einstürzende Neubauten. It serves as a prelude, rising directly to the highest heights: hymnal, deliberate, right at the peak of Piel's craft. And even though the words are not Toben Piel's own, they already seem self-descriptive, proclaiming in German: *I am a mannequin / Who doesn't like shop windows*. That is the aesthetic tension in which we first find ourselves. *Oneironaut sei wachsam* then takes off with Piel's staccato voice, his surreal artificial language already fully developed. It works exceedingly well. *Ruinenkampf* follows from there, gives the artificial word a hectic space, takes you into the fallow wastelands through which Das Kinn moves. The fierce *Alle rüsten auf*, which in its aggression somehow evokes associations with Frankfurt street rap, addresses the contradiction between the self-optimization and world destruction that we find ourselves exposed to, or expose ourselves to: What is it you are preparing for? The last days? *Souterrain*, in the middle of the album, brings a welcome moment of respite. But it is more than just an interlude. Das Kinn walks us through a wide hollow. The drones and fighter jets up in the sky are far away and harmless. We have a moment for tender reflection.

Even if we soon have to climb out of that hollow, back into the conscious ruins, here we feel detached, as if floating above the clouds. It is a beautiful moment, especially in contrast to the violence of the seven other pieces: instrumental, without a beat, but with a saxophone in the mood of a bluesy neo-noir. Back above ground, we encounter *Die Ratten*, expressive and aggressive: *The rats seek their captor / They seek and find salvation in the Volksempfänger*. This swan-song can also be read politically, about the current idiocy that spews from everything, unfathomable in its boundless stupidity. *Tempel des Todes* dramatically sets us up for the grand finale and manages the balancing act of powerfully dragging itself onwards. Reflection takes place: I, a human being in all this madness, am a body, a temple. I will disintegrate within it over time. That's pretty heavy. Then almost conciliatory at the very end is *Nichts*, with its pseudo-therapeutic speech samples, offering self-help for the performative life on the brink. Yet Das Kinn responds with cynicism. No matter what is raised in these observations of everyday life, Toben Piel throws his *Nichts* at every phrase. It is existentialism to the point of despair, artfully captured in the sardonic lecture: *You are right here and you feel nothing / It's okay*. Music is the only artform that can simultaneously tear down AND build. We find ourselves present at this event of simultaneity. When the dust finally clears from the jagged debris, standing amidst the ruins is Das Kinn: prophet, witness, mercenary.

In a basement studio, bunker-like beneath the filthy sidewalks of Frankfurt, completely shielded from the outside world, a captivating narrative has emerged with these eight pieces. An album that drives and absorbs, setting escapism to music and focusing on the present. „Ruinenkampf“ raises a question that even Toben Piel does not answer, does not need to answer: Is this the story of a post-apocalypse – or are we in an echo chamber of the present? We all know that this boundary has now become blurred – and that can be heard here. In the musical battle amongst the ruins, the horror, the absurd, the mockery and the rage all come together through Piel's stony gaze, forcefully sung in his kickboxer phonetics. Yet he retains a sense of beauty in the accompanying brutality. There is something very positive to be found in this music. It is all the more compelling because the concession to pathos and dramaturgy, which are abundant here, is inherently life-affirming. In the ruins of civilization, something is being fought for that should endure. The fact is, anyone who tells a story with such vehemence wants it to continue. So no need to be glum. Chin up, and on we go in a crazy goose-step over the ruins of our times. These days, Don Quixote comes from Frankfurt and sings in Dada! He is well prepared.

– Hendrik Otremba

Tracklist

- A1** Jamais vu
- A2** Oneironaut sei wachsam
- A3** Ruinenkampf
- A4** Alle rüsten auf

- B1** Souterrain
- B2** Die Ratten
- B3** Tempel des Todes
- B4** Nichts

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