



Supersempfft Roboterwerke



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CD / LP / digital

After introducing us to the techno-tropical pop of Supersempfft via an essential reissue of their stargazing sophomore LP 'Metaluna', those surefooted folks at Hamburg's Bureau B beam back a couple of years to bring us the Hessen outfit's outrageous debut. The collaborative vehicle careers through the cosmos like a high performance clown car, disguising daring chord progressions, technical innovation and a heap of hooks behind its cartoon chassis, and taking us lucky listeners along for the joyride.

Operating at the unlikely nexus between creative studio and sixth form common room, and fusing all the expertise of the former with commercial disinterest of the latter, Supersempfft served as the multidisciplinary moniker for a trio of childhood friends whose separate skills combined perfectly for their high-concept high jinks. The prodigious musical talent of Dieter Kolb, augmented and elevated by Franz Knüttel's electronic innovation, provided the ideal medium for Franz Aumüller's wacky world building, which made up the lyrical thrust and visual flair of the project. 'Roboterwerke', both the name of this 1979 LP and the revolutionary drum machine created by Knüttel, tells the story of a mellow tuba-toting frog (apparently an avatar of Kolb), who is technologically transformed by a mad scientist (a Professor Knüttels, as it happens) into a star surfing superhero. So far, so far out - especially considering the lurid, lysergic lunacy of the comic book cover art – but this slapstick silliness also serves as sleight of hand, a daft disguise to keep these sublime sounds away from the squares.

The titular opener offers an astral ascent, its cinematic sequences sweeping between Berlin School technique and an electronic apache, setting the scene in a galaxy far far away. It's always cocktail hour somewhere in the cosmos, and "We Found Out" finds our heroes lounging on a Venusian beach, tapping their toes to a bobbing bassline and indulging in interplanetary exotica ideally zoot-suited for the YMO crowd. Supersempfft serve their third style in as many songs with two-part tone poem "Fantasia & Pipedreams On A Lily pad", a pastoral idyll which echoes gently across a lake. Anchored by Ali Schadeberg's lyrical acoustic fretwork, the piece drifts between the softer fringes of prog and the psychedelic folk of Shuggie Otis, celebrating amphibian autonomy on a sunny day. This calm comes to an abrupt end via the hydraulic funk of "Let's Beam Him Up", an oddball pop masterpiece turbo-powered by the wild and wonky rhythms of Roboterwerke. Frazzled circuitry fizzles and pops beneath an exuberant vocoder before the pitch shifted soul vocals push the big red button marked anthem.

The B-side opens with the widescreen synth-pop of "I'm Gonna Make You Big", a sky-scraping combination of rubberised bass, electronic gurgle, and open-hearted croon which makes the following year's 'McCartney II' sound ordinary. Its modulating vocals soon segue into the seesawing sequences and rolling robo-funk of "Be A Man You Frog", a digital dreamscape that gradually unspools into the heart of a wormhole. Giddy and glorious, space age calypso "Supersempfft" foreshadows the group's follow-up LP, while "Out Of Time" is a delirious disco hustle about intergalactic flight on a giant butterfly. All of which leads to the tuba-infused "The Best Thing Is To Get High", an impish ode to altered states that brings this journey to a perfectly playful close. Don't be misled, there's no amount of sensory boosts, terrestrial or otherwise, which can compete with the creative talent oozing through these grooves.

- Patrick Ryder

Tracklisting

- A1 Roboterwerke
- A2 We Found It Out
- A3 Fantasia
- A4 Pipedreams On A Lily pad
- A5 Let's Beam Him Up
- A6 I'm Gonna Make You Big

- B1 Be A Man You Frog
- B2 Supersempfft
- B3 Out Of Time
- B4 The Best Thing Is To Get High

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