

Pressrelease

Radio Osaka CD BOY 18

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A life in the provinces can be a fertile breeding ground for fresh ideas. The more idiosyncratic the more promising. Unfettered by a sense of debt or duty towards the fashion dictate of a metropole they can flourish free from the pressures of the centralised music industry. Finally, they are mature enough to confront, surprise and convince the 'outside world'. For instance Switzerland: Here, *The Young Gods* and *Yello* are a typical case in point.

The Zurich based *Radio Osaka* are an extraordinary assemblage of musical minds. *Andi Czech* began to astound his friends with powerful parodies of the Blues and Leonard Cohen, just when everyone else discovered Punk - even in Zurich. Eventually, Andi fetched up in *City Vibes*, a now legendary outfit that managed to combine punky attitude with bouncy pop tunes, including a terrific should-have-been-a-hit called 'Madaga Ska'. *City Vibes* were the first Swiss band who were fans of the *Ramones* AND included an accordion in the line-up (now absolutely indispensable for bands who value their street credibility in Lucerne). Being rather lazy and shy, *City Vibes* failed to fulfill their potential. They turned into Krawallband (recording a film soundtrack), then Konsumboom (another soundtrack resulted).

During all this time, however, *Andi Czech* also worked on the apparently foolhardy idea to give artistic expression to his love for the works of Tim Buckley. About Buckley (he died in 1975 of a drugs overdose) the American journalist Lee Underwood wrote: 'Buckley did for the human voice what Miles Davis did for the trumpet...' Amazingly, Andi's dream came to pass: In 1987 the album 'Comebuckley' was released. It contained six re-interpretations of songs by *Tim Buckley* which Andi sang with a voice strong and flexible enough to do them justice, but in a style all of his own. The album was praised very highly by all who heard and reviewed it, but distribution problems prevented wider recognition.

For several years afterwards, Andi gigged only very sporadically, usually presenting a varying range of Buckley songs. In 1992, however, *Radio Osaka* was formed as a vehicle for the songs Andi now wrote with guitarist *Stephan Thelen*.

Stephan Thelen played guitar, violin and piano from his primary school days. As a fourteen year old he joined his first rock band, whence he drifted towards the more esoteric branches of modern music making, embodied in Switzerland by the label and record shop 'RecRec' (RecRec was closely connected to London's Recommended Records). Between 1986 and 1990 Stephan took part in several of *Robert Fripp's* 'Guitar Craft' workshops leading to performances with Fripp's 'League Of Crafty Guitarists'. Apart from his involvement with *Radio Osaka* Stephan - a fan of Bela Bartok - is leader and guitarist of Dolphin Ethics, a group that plays chamber music and string quartets.

Radio Osaka is completed by *Tommy Meier* (sax and clarinet), *Christian Kuntner* (bass) and *Fredi Flükiger* (drums). In the early 80s *Meier* was a member of *Brom* as well as *Whaam*, outfits playing what they called Punk Jazz'. He then started Bar 'n' Bop whose music he slyly describes as 'background and bar music' Later on he played on 'Comebuckley' and joined the Federlosband - a group that accompanies Circus Federlos (an 'alternative' circus very popular in Switzerland as well as Nigeria and Zimbabwe). *Christian Kuntner* is a veteran of innumerable Jazz and Rock groups, including the *John Tchicai Group*; at present he is also a member of *Brom*, *Fahrt Art Trio*, *Kadash*, *Tobende Ordnung* and *Federlos*. *Fredi Flükiger* is particularly well-known within the Free Jazz community (very lively in Switzerland). He has played with many notable groups, including *Brom*, *Kadash*, *Tobende Ordnung* and *Federlosband*.

Together, *Radio Osaka* produce a blend of rock music which is thoroughly their own. It is dominated by *Andy Czech's* singing - stronger than ever - and *Stephan Thelen's* guitar, which at times reminds of Fripp circa Discipline'. They can totally rely on a rhythm section revelling in tight yet powerful groove patterns informed by the sense of dynamics of Jazz. Sax and clarinet add further depth to a texture which carries echoes from as

far afield as *Slapp Happy* and *Talking Heads*, *Free Jazz*, *Tim Buckley*, *King Crimson*, *PIL*, *Nick Cave*, *Moonshake*... However, these are but echoes and should not be seen as blueprints. *Radio Osaka* sound like nothing else.

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