

## Brainwashed - Einstürzende Neubauten, “Alles In Allem”

Written by Eve McGivern

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The German language has words for nearly every complex emotion imaginable. “Weltschmerz” translates to “world-weariness” or, literally, “world pain.” Einstürzende Neubauten have touched on many aspects of it throughout their multiple manifestations, but never quite as deeply and consistently as on their 40th anniversary release *Alles in Allem* (All in All). Formed around insights on their home city of Berlin, the album’s “schwung” expands beyond the German capital city’s borders, achieving weltschmerz twofold: the album was a collaboration for and with worldwide fans, allowing them to contribute lyrically to the album by answering questions posed by Blixa Bargeld, resulting in an album that — while retaining a presence of their home city — maintains no lyrical patriotism to any specific geographic location. Filled with edgy sounds blended with poetry, Bargeld’s rich baritone, and traditional sound elements, *Alles in Allem* showcases their most mature compositions to date whilst maintaining their unique approach to songwriting.

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Regardless of the band’s musical manifestation through the years, Einstürzende Neubauten’s identity has remained central focused on creative yet carefully crafted compositions, regardless of how chaotic things may seem at first listen. The wayfaring listener will recognize multiple geographical districts within West Berlin, with Bargeld paying visitations to the northern district of Wedding to Friedenau in the south, by way of Liechtensteinbrücke, the Landwehr Canal (“Landwehrkanal”) and the Grazer Damm, to ultimately end at the abandoned Tempelhof airfield. With each track sampled at various locations across the city, one can trace Bargeld’s steps on the journey around Berlin, first stopping to visit “Ten Grand Goldie,” an electrifying opener with typical Neubauten custom-made squeaks, booms and clangs merged with funky brass and organ.

The rest of the album is more gentle melodically, though hardly in subject matter. Bargeld meanders around to Landwehr Canal, where we learn about the death of Marxist revolutionary, open space, philosopher and anti-war activist Rosa Luxemburg, shot in the head in 1919 and her body dumped into the canal. “Möbliertes Lied” (Furnished Song) builds on metallic

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percussions (wah-wah spring, metal sheet) while Bargeld’s emotive wafts over farfisa organ, belying the content within: “Den Herrgottswinkel leer geträumt / Offene Weite, nichts von heilig / Um Hummers Willen: Keinen Gott!” (Our Lord’s Corner dreamed away / Vast open spaces, not at all sacred / For Heaven’s sake: No God!!) The aforementioned weltschmerz pierces through every track, but deeply so in “Taschen,” which references the bags used by refugees to pack their only belongings in, serving to inject the reality of an outside world into listening ears: “What are you seeking in your dreams? / We seek nothing / We’re waiting.” Lost and homeless, with no solid future, the divide between refugee and listener is stark. “Between us and you / Surge the waves colossal / A ravenous monstrosity.”

“Seven Screws” is lyrically intriguing, and generated a lot of discussion as to its interpretation amongst supporters. I was struck by the section “I sing and I sing / Until the Hundred-eyes gets sleepy / The strong man now wears a dress / it burns itself deep into his skin.” I was reminded of the hundred-eyed giant Argus from my Latin classes, guardian of Io who had been turned into a heifer to avoid the wanting eyes of the god Zeus. While there is no firm interpretation of the track, the myth birthed the phrase “watched by the eyes of Argus,” which is to be subjected to intense scrutiny, in action, word or deed, often to a distressing degree. The ability to be oneself without the scrutiny of society is surely the greatest weltschmerz in our ever-connected, ever-shrinking modern global village.

Everything being taken into account, Berlin is no longer so very different from that global village — all in all.

[Samples available here.](#)