

= Trans @-@ Europe Express (album) =

Trans @-@ Europe Express (German : Trans Europa Express) is the sixth studio album by German electronic music band Kraftwerk . Recorded in mid @-@ 1976 in Düsseldorf , Germany , the album was released in March 1977 on Kling Klang Records . The album 's themes were influenced by friends who suggested writing songs about the Trans Europ Express to reflect Kraftwerk 's electronic music style . Critics have described the album as having two specific themes : celebration of Europe and the disparities between reality and image . Musically , the songs on this album differ from the group 's earlier Krautrock style with a focus on electronic mechanized rhythms , minimalism , and occasional manipulated vocals .

Trans @-@ Europe Express charted at 119 on the American charts and was placed number 30 on the Village Voice 's 1977 Pazz & Jop critics poll . Two singles were released from Trans @-@ Europe Express : " Trans @-@ Europe Express " and " Showroom Dummies " . The album has been re @-@ released in several formats and continued to receive acclaim from modern critics .

= = Background = =

After the release and tour for the album Radio @-@ Activity , Kraftwerk continued to move further away from their earlier Krautrock style of improvised instrumental music , refining their work more into the format of melodic electronic songs . During the tour for Radio @-@ Activity the band began to make performance rules such as not to be drunk on stage or at parties . Karl Bartos wrote that about these rules , stating that " it 's not easy to turn knobs on a synthesizer if you are drunk or full of drugs We always tried to keep very aware of what we were doing while acting in public . " During this tour , early melodies that would later evolve into the song " Showroom Dummies " were being performed .

In mid @-@ 1976 , Kraftwerk began to work on the album which was then called Europe Endless . Paul Alessandrini suggested that Kraftwerk write a song about the Trans @-@ Europ Express to reflect their electronic music style . Hütter and Schneider met with musicians David Bowie and Iggy Pop prior to recording which influenced song lyrics . Maxime Schmitt encouraged the group to record a French language version of the song " Showroom Dummies " which led the group to later record several songs in French . The album was recorded at Kling Klang Studio in Düsseldorf . Artistic control over the songs was strictly in the hands of members Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider with Bartos and Wolfgang Flür contributing sequenced electronic percussion . Kraftwerk went to railway bridges to listen to the sounds the train would actually produce . The group found the sound the train made was not danceable and changed it slightly .

= = Recording = =

An important piece of new equipment used on the album was the Synthanorma Sequenzer , a customized 32 @-@ step 16 @-@ channel analogue sequencer made for the band by Matten & Wiechers . This allowed the construction of more elaborate sequenced synthesizer lines , which are featured prominently in the tracks " Europe Endless " , " Franz Schubert " and " Endless Endless " , and liberated the player from the chore of playing repetitive keyboard patterns .

Whereas Radio @-@ Activity had featured a mixture of German and English lyrics throughout the album , Trans @-@ Europe Express went further and was mixed as two entirely separate versions , one sung in English , the other in German . At the recommendation of Maxime Schmitt , a French version of the song " Showroom Dummies " , titled " Les Mannequins " , was also recorded . " Les Mannequins " was the group 's first song in French and would influence decisions to record songs in French on later albums . After recording the album in Düsseldorf , Hütter and Schneider visited Los Angeles to mix the tracks at the Record Plant Studio . Elements of the mixing sessions that were done in Los Angeles were dropped from the album , including the use of more upfront vocals in order to do more mixing in Düsseldorf and Hamburg later .

The artwork for the album cover of Trans @-@ Europe Express was originally going to be a

monochrome picture of the group reflected in a series of mirrors . This idea was dropped for a photo by New York @-@ based celebrity photographer Maurice Seymour , with the group dressed in suits to resemble mannequins . J. Stara 's image of the group was taken in Paris and is a highly retouched photo @-@ montage of Kraftwerk from their shoulders up again posed as mannequins which is shown on the cover of the English version of the album . On the inside sleeve , a color collage of the group sitting at a small cafe table designed by Emil Schult was used . The photo for this scene was from the session by Maurice Seymour , taken on the group 's American tour . Other photos were taken by Schult that show the group laughing and smiling . These were not used for the album 's release .

= = Composition = =

Wolfgang Flür has stated Kraftwerk were influenced by music of the Weimar Germany era : " we were children who were born straight after World War Two ... we had no musical or pop culture of our own ... there was the war , and before the war we had only the German folk music . In the 1920s or 1930s melodies were developed and these became culture that we worked from " . Karl Bartos also spoke of post @-@ war influence as the group thought that they " had this development in the 1920s which was very , very strong and was audio visual . We had the Bauhaus school before the war and then after the war we had tremendous people like Karlheinz Stockhausen and the development of the classical and the electronic classical . This was very strong and it all happened very close to Düsseldorf in Cologne and all the great composers at that time came there . " Paul Alessandrini is credited for helping contribute to the album 's concept . Alessandrini told Hütter and Schneider that " with the kind of music you do , which is kind of like an electronic blues , railway stations and trains are very important in your universe , you should do a song about the Trans Europe Express " . Kraftwerk believed critics in the United Kingdom and United States associated them with Nazi Germany , with tracks such as " Autobahn " inextricably linked with the Nazis who built the high @-@ speed roads in the 1930s and 1940s . At the same time the band were keen to move away from their German heritage towards a new sense of European identity and felt that the Trans Europ Express could be used to symbolize this . Allmusic referred to Trans @-@ Europe Express as a concept album with two different themes . The first being the disparities between reality and image , represented by the songs " Hall of Mirrors " and " Showroom Dummies " , and the others about the glorification of Europe . Slant Magazine described the album as " a sonic poem to Europe " .

The musical style of Trans @-@ Europe Express was described by AllMusic as melodic themes which are " repeated often and occasionally interwoven over deliberate , chugging beats , sometimes with manipulated vocals " and " minimalism , mechanized rhythms , and crafted , catchy melodies " . Hütter has commented on the minimalist nature of the album , stating that " If we can convey an idea with one or two notes , it is better than to play a hundred or so notes " . The first side of Trans @-@ Europe Express has three songs . The song " Hall of Mirrors " has been described as containing deadpan vocals with lyrics that speculate how stars look at themselves in a looking glass . Hütter and Schneider have described the song as auto @-@ biographical . The third track " Showroom Dummies " was described by Allmusic as " bouncily melodic in a way that most of Trans @-@ Europe Express isn 't " and with lyrics which are " slightly paranoid " . The idea for the song came from Flür and Bartos being compared to showroom dummies in a British concert review . Some versions of the song contain a spoken introduction starting with a count @-@ in of " eins zwei drei vier " as a parody of the band Ramones who started some songs with a quick count @-@ in of " one two three four " . The second side of Trans @-@ Europe Express is a suite with " Trans @-@ Europe Express " continuing through to " Metal on Metal " and " Franz Schubert " before closing with a brief reiteration of the main theme from " Europe Endless " . Allmusic described the musical elements of the suite as having a haunting theme with " deadpan chanting of the title phrase " which is " slowly layered over that rhythmic base in much the same way that the earlier " Autobahn " was constructed " . The song 's lyrics reference the album Station to Station and meeting with musicians Iggy Pop and David Bowie . Hütter and Schneider had previously met up with Bowie in Germany

and were flattered with the attention they received from him . Ralf Hütter was interested in Bowie 's work as he had been working with Iggy Pop , who was the former lead singer of The Stooges ; one of Hütter 's favorite groups .

= = Release = =

Trans @-@ Europe Express was originally released in March 1977 . With the help of Günther Fröhling , Kraftwerk made a promotional music video for the song " Trans @-@ Europe Express " . The video features the group wearing long coats on a train trip from Düsseldorf to nearby Duisburg . Photo stills from this video were later used on the single sleeve for " Showroom Dummies " . Fröhling would work with Kraftwerk again on their album The Man @-@ Machine doing the photography for the album cover . To promote the album to the press in France , EMI Records hired a train with old fashioned carriages from the 1930s to travel from Paris to Rheims while the songs from the album were played over the train 's announcement system for the critics .

In October 2009 , a remastered edition of the album was released by EMI Records in Germany , Mute Records in the European Union and Astralwerks Records in the United States . This re @-@ release was available on compact disc , digital download and vinyl and features a different album cover from previous versions of the album . This new version features a black background with white Trans Europ Express train in the center . The track listing on the 2009 re @-@ release amends the titles of the songs to match the original German release . This change has " Metal on Metal " being credited for two minutes of the music with the remainder being a track titled " Abzug " (English : " Departure ") .

= = Commercial performance = =

Trans @-@ Europe Express charted higher in the United States than Kraftwerk 's previous album Radio @-@ Activity by peaking at number 117 on the Billboard Top LPs & Tapes chart . " Trans @-@ Europe Express " and " Showroom Dummies " were released as singles from the album . " Trans @-@ Europe Express " charted in the Billboard Hot 100 in 1977 where it peaked at number 67 . Trans @-@ Europe Express began charting in the United Kingdom in the 1980s . The album entered the charts on February 6 , 1982 , staying in the charts for seven weeks and peaking at number 49 . The single for " Showroom Dummies " entered the charts on February 20 , 1982 , staying in the charts for five weeks and peaking at number 25 .

= = Critical reception = =

Initial reviews for the Trans @-@ Europe Express were positive . Music critic Robert Christgau gave the album an A- rating , stating that the album 's " textural effects sound like parodies by some cosmic schoolboy of every lush synthesizer surge that 's ever stuck in your gullet ? yet also work the way those surges are supposed to work " . Trans @-@ Europe Express charted in the Village Voice 's 1977 Pazz & Jop critics poll , placing at number 30 .

Modern reception has been very favorable . Trans @-@ Europe Express has the highest possible ratings from publications including AllMusic , Mojo , Rolling Stone and Slant Magazine . Steve Huey of Allmusic wrote that the album " is often cited as perhaps the archetypal (and most accessible) Kraftwerk album ... Overall , Trans @-@ Europe Express offers the best blend of minimalism , mechanized rhythms , and crafted , catchy melodies in the group 's catalog " . The British press also looked favorably on the album . Q gave the album four stars out of five , stating that the album " changed the face of American dance music " and that it was one of the most compelling beats of this or any other era " . In 2009 Drowned in Sound gave the album a perfect rating of 10 out of 10 , stating that " Trans @-@ Europe Express is all at once antique , timeless , retro and contemporary . Its status as modern electronic music 's birth certificate is well @-@ earned , but its hallowed reputation should never be allowed to disguise its true value and power as a work of art . Nor should it obscure a longevity that , 32 years on , we might as well start calling by its real name : immortality

" .

Trans @-@ Europe Express has also appeared on top album lists from a variety of sources . In 2001 , TV network VH1 placed Trans @-@ Europe Express at number 56 on their list of " 100 Greatest Albums (of Rock & Roll) of All Time " . In 2002 , Slant Magazine placed the album at number one on their list of the greatest electronic albums of the 20th century . In 2003 , Rolling Stone placed the album at number 253 on their list of The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time . Channel 4 placed the album at number 71 on their list of top 100 Greatest albums . In 2004 , the online music website Pitchfork Media listed Trans @-@ Europe Express as 6th best album of the 1970s , stating that " the day will soon come , if it hasn 't already , that Trans @-@ Europe Express joins the ranks of Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band and Exile on Main Street as a record that simply cannot be written about " .

= = = Legacy = = =

Sal Cinquemani of Slant Magazine described the album 's influence as " unprecedented , reaching as wide as rock (Radiohead 's Kid A) , hip @-@ hop (Afrika Bambaataa 's classic " Planet Rock " , Jay Dee 's recent " Big Booty Express ") and pop (Madonna 's Drowned World Tour , which incorporated samples of " Metal on Metal ") " .

In the late 1970s , the album had an impact on post @-@ punk band Joy Division as bassist Peter Hook related it : " We were introduced to Kraftwerk by [singer] Ian Curtis , who insisted we play Trans Europe Express before we went on stage every time . The tape was played in the venue over the PA system , to be heard by everyone . The first time was Pips [a Manchester club well known for its ? Bowie Room ?] . Ian got thrown out for kicking glass around the dance floor in time to the track . It took us ages of pleading to get him back in . " Drummer Stephen Morris also confirmed that Joy Division " used to play Trans @-@ Europe Express before we went on stage , to get us into the zone . It worked because it gets up a lot of momentum . Trans @-@ Europe Express just seemed to express an optimism - even if people see it as machine music " . Morris also said : " It reminds me of Cabaret , the film , with all of the 1920s singing . [...] When you get that marriage between humans and machines , and you get it right , it 's fantastic . I have to say it 's my favourite Kraftwerk album . "

= = = Accolades = = =

The information regarding accolades attributed to Trans @-@ Europe Express is adapted from Acclaimed Music , except where otherwise noted .

= = Track listing = =

Notes

^ [a] While " Abzug " (English meaning " trigger " or " departure ") appeared originally as a separate track on all pressings of Trans Europa Express , later releases of Trans @-@ Europe Express combined " Abzug " and " Metal on Metal " together under the latter track 's title , at a running time of 6 : 52 . On both 2009 reissues of Trans Europa Express and Trans @-@ Europe Express , however , " Abzug " is presented as a separate track .

= = Personnel = =

Adapted from Trans @-@ Europe Express liner notes .

= = Charts positions = =