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The proverbial feline is officially out of the bag – the purveyors of light entertainment in the German speaking world were – for the most part – cool cats and dogs. Thoroughly educated musicians whose love of jazz could not feed the hungry mouths gathered around their respective tables, they had to search for more lucrative opportunities, for audiences larger than jazz could muster. Hence the late sixties saw them drawn towards the slickly sweet sphere of popular entertainment. When England and the USA across the pond began dancing to a different beat, soul, funk and so forth, the Teutonic bandleaders found their reputations weighed down in blocks of staid cement. There was no way back for the majority of them. Success spelled luxury, of course, making it none the easier to walk away, to U-turn back to jazz, to music which the decently dull general public feared with existential ferocity.

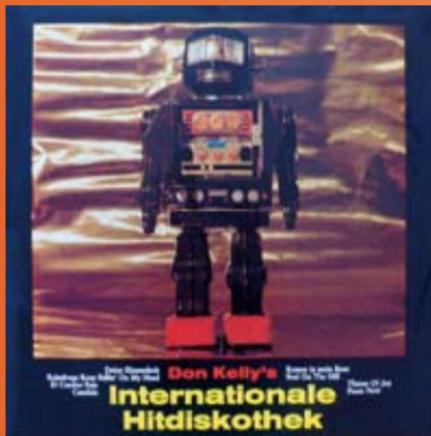
Nevertheless, each and every one of them managed to nibble at the “sweet fruit” at one time or another. Some laid down entire albums of glittering Blaxploitation Funk, others slipped a killer groove into the midst of benign hit medleys or let their imaginations run riot in film soundtracks. Or filled music libraries with ad agency fodder for “young folk”.

We set out on a journey to track down such hidden pearls of German popular music. Thanks to the treasures we unearthed, we made our peace with many of the bandleaders we had to endure in childhood as they led a merry dance on the blandest of light entertainment TV shows. Wow, we thought. German Grooves – Achtung, baby!



**1 Ambros Seelos: Mabusso.** Mister Big Band Funk himself, Ambros Seelos, opens proceedings. Of all the established bandleaders, the Bavarian sax player was the most prolific provider of killer grooves and funk workouts. He may have spent most of his time in the service of gentle, family entertainment, but he also recorded a host of tracks like this one for the Black Forest jazz label MPS. On “Mabusso” he flaunts the Seelos slickness which has seen his music return to the coolest clubs of today. Listen to the far-out wah wah guitar. Just how fab is that? **2 Don Kelly Band: Guitar’ Shower.** Straight outta Switzerland: the Don Kelly Band. Don Kelly was Grischa Batanoff’s alter ego, whose real name was Otto B. Hartmann. The Don Kelly Band recorded four LPs entitled “Internationale Hitdiskothek”, the idea being “to have top jazz musicians play groovy versions of familiar tunes” (Batanoff). The cream of the jazz crop included Ack van Royen (on trumpet), Lothar Meid (bass) and Klaus Weiss (drums). Some of the tunes were Batanoff’s own compositions, such as the fantastic “Guitar’ Shower” with its driving beat and irresistible wah wah solo. **3 Gerhard Narholz: Ufo-Invasion.** If you are familiar with the sound of the Norman

This friendly fellow and his band played the slickest funk in the whole of Bavaria: Ambros Seelos (Track 1)



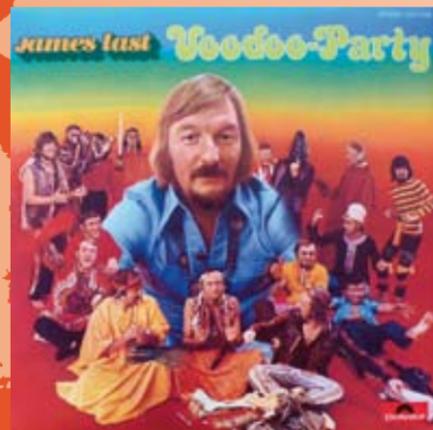
Hit compilation designers didn't have an easy time of it back then. Here's one bright spark's solution. Whatever that might be (Track 2)



Candler Magic Strings, you might find it hard to believe that the man behind the project, Gerhard Narholz (otherwise known as Otto Sieben), was also capable of dropping such deep grooves. Narholz wrote numerous pop hits for the likes of Petula Clark, Bill Ramsey and Heidi Brühl, using the Candler nom-de-plume, as well as compositions for film. The latter were usually for his publishing company, Sonoton, which he founded in 1965. It has since grown into one of Germany's largest music libraries for film and advertising. Sadly, the visual context of "Ufo-Invasion" has been lost...but one can imagine what it must have been like! **4 James Last: U-Humbah.** Did someone say Santana? Wrong! This is none other than James Last, the king of the homogeneous Happy Sound, Germany's most successful musician with a list of releases to his name far too long to count. His "Voodoo Party" LP is a particular favourite with DJs, featuring the track "U Humbah" which reveals which direction the album takes. Latin-American, Caribbean and African sounds fuse with rock in true Santana- no, make that James Last-style. As the sleeve notes so accurately state (this in an era before budget air travel had arrived) "Most Europeans will never get a chance to experience Voodoo in the place of its origin. But listening to this record will make up for this loss." To which we can only add: U-Humbah! **5 Kai Warner. On The Way To Philadelphia.** Keeping it in the family, Werner.

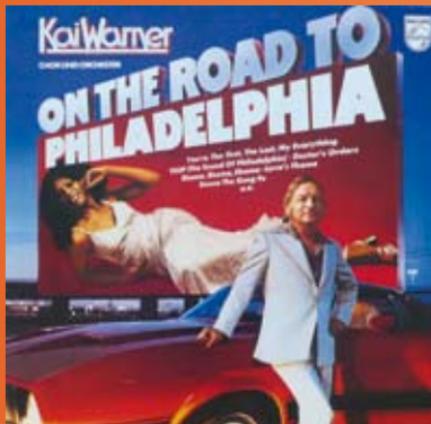


two and a half years older than James "call me Hansi" Last, and eldest brother, Robert, had already alerted the German jazz scene to the Last name. Like Hans, Werner went on to become a bandleader at Polydor, going under the name of Kai Warner. By 1975 he had had enough of facing such imposing competition in the form of his brother and switched allegiance to Philips where his "On the Way to Philadelphia" LP reflected his love of the Philly Sound. The title track has it all: opulent waves of violin, majestically crisp horns, sublime choral singing, wild bass lines and a funky Fender Rhodes to boot. Overloaded? Not on your life! **6 Theo Schumann Combo: Hackepeter.** "The Iron Curtain does not only protect us



Voodoo priests party on down.

One of the few good LPs to be found on the James Last mountain of albums (Track 4)



All the pseudonyms and Philly flashes on the block cannot disguise the fact that Kai Warner is a Last through and through (Track 5)



The Theo Schumann Combo didn't give a monkey's about copyright. Safely hidden behind the Iron Curtain (Track 6)

from the Imperialists, but from copyright law as well." That is probably what was running through the mind of Theo Schumann in the GDR when he covered "Hip Hug-Her" by Booker T. & the MGs note for note, credited himself as composer and christened the piece "Hackepeter" (and he certainly did make "mincemeat" of intellectual property!). Whilst it remains a matter of conjecture whether or not Theo Schumann's version ever reached the ears of Booker T., there can be little disputing the fact that the TS Combo facsimile is unrelenting, wilder and better than the original. Gerd Schönfelder thrashes his drum kit with such intensity, one expects the skins to surrender at any moment. The beat is furious and Schumann is a man possessed on the organ, leaving Booker T. looking like a choir boy by comparison.

**7 Henry Arland: Mamy Blue.** The jury is out on this Gospel song popularised by the Spanish group Los Pop Tops. Those unlucky enough to remember the drippy German version by Franco-Italian light entertainer Ricky Shayne in 1971, may have difficulty in acknowledging the class of the composition by French songsmith Hubert Giraud. Clarinetist Henry Arland and his orchestra transform it into a fantastic groove delight. Watch out for those adventurous bass lines running through the verses. **8 Peter Thomas Sound Orchestra: Chariot Of The Gods.** Without doubt the most willing to experiment of any of Germany's bandleaders. Peter Thomas has a peerless



record as a composer for the screen (most famously for "Raumpatrouille"/"Space Patrol"). So it comes as no surprise that the eccentric Swiss U.F.O. researcher Erich von Däniken sought him out to add the music to the documentary film extrapolations of his wild conspiracy theories about the influence of "ancient astronauts" in mankind's history. The 1976 film "Chariot of the Gods" was narrated by no lesser mortal than William Shatner, better known as Captain Kirk. Peter Thomas provided a theme tune not only rich in melody but destined for the stellar light shows of the discotheque. **9 Heinz Kiessling: Orbiter.** Heinz Kiessling is one of the all time greats in Germany's easy listening history. He penned over 1000 songs including one for Frank Sinatra and he also worked for Chet Baker. Countless TV themes ("AktENZEICHEN xy" and "Klimbim" to name just a couple) crop up on his C.V. There was a whole different side to Kiessling, however, as this wild beat reveals. Hammond harmonies preside over solo guitar frenzies and visceral drums. "Orbiter" was released through Kiessling's own music library publisher Quadriga on a nondescript LP sampler entitled Q3. For safety's sake, Kiessling used his Lanzerot pseudonym in the credits. **10 Ady Zehnpfennig: Easter Afternoon.** The

No, this isn't Alfred Hitchcock's brother, this is the unique soundsmith Peter Thomas (Track 8)



Organ builder Dr. Böhm promoted his products with LPs like this. On the keys and pedals: Ady Zehnpfennig (Track 10)

Minden organ builder Dr. Böhm engaged the virtuoso services of Ady Zehnpfennig to pull out all the stops in showing off the particularly fine qualities of the Dr. Böhm instrument. Playing his own compositions, Zehnpfennig let the soul in his music shine on through. “Easter Afternoon” is a hidden gem from the obscure promotional album “Dr. Böhm Panorama-Sound”, on which Zehnpfennig presents the Doc’s CnT/L model. This generation preceded the introduction of the ingenious Dr. Böhm automatic – BÖHMAT system, which is a shame, or possibly a godsend. **11 Max Greger and his Orchestra: Soul Breeze.** “He looks like a movie star and blows his sax the way they do it in Harlem” – Thus begin the liner notes to Max Greger’s best LP by some distance, “Sunshine Starshine”. Emphatically leaving the “strictly swinging music” of the dance class behind him, he dives head into a pool of soul grooves. Not sure about the film star looks, but the



Harlem reference certainly rings true! Sax with this much body and soul is a rarity in the German speaking territories. As on other unconventional productions of this era, the lush sound came courtesy of the notorious Les Humphries (also responsible for Hildegard Knef’s legendary groove LP “Worum geht’s hier eigentlich” a few years later). **12 Günter Gollasch: Es steht ein Haus in New Orleans.** Backwards guitar tracks and echoing Morricone piano signatures crank up the tension as Günter Gollasch’s version of the classic “House Of The Rising Sun” commences. Nice to see how he dutifully came up with a German title for the song – English being the language of capitalism and frowned upon in the GDR. (Although he could have gone further and moved the story from New Orleans to Karl Marx Stadt.) The introduction runs to almost a minute before a mean trombone kicks in and the drums let loose. The Gollasch sound went down so well with the powers that be that its creator was promoted to the top job as conductor

Munich sax player Max Greger’s finest album. Produced by Les Humphries (Track 11)

for the RundfunkTanzorchester Berlin (Berlin Radio Dance Orchestra). **13 Pete Jacques: Hard Work.** "Hard Work" – an apt title for this heavy, dragging groove. The fuzz guitar at the outset sends out an immediate warning to the listener that we are not here for fun. The Swiss wizard of the keys, composer and arranger Pete Jacques was well known in both the European and Brazilian Easy Jazz circles. He wrote many tunes for music libraries including some for Heinz Kiessling's Brilliant publishing house (see track 9) under the moniker The Rainbow Orchestra. Jacques's main love was Latin but, as can be heard here, when the mission was to get



One man and his trombone. Listen to him work wonders with the instrument on track 14

down and dirty, he was more than equal to the task. **14 Hans Ehrlinger and his Orchestra: One For You – One For Me.** Nuremberg trombonist Hans Ehrlinger displayed his talent for many years as a member of Hugo Strasser's orchestra. He also led a second life as Latin bandleader Juan Erlando (like Horst Wende/Roberto Delgado on track 17). On "Take A Chance For A Dance", one of the rare longplayers to carry his own name, he proves himself an expert in the art of playing the trombone. "One For You – One For Me" is a remarkable cocktail of trombone at sauna temperature and coy Disco funk. **15 Catch Up: Catch Up.** Max Greger Junior got to know Charly Antolini and Milan Pilar whilst playing in his father's big band (see track 11). Jazz musicians through and through, Charly (on drums) and Milan (bass) shared Greger Jr.'s desire to take a hike from monotonous dance music and explore their preferred field of jazz. In 1975 they founded Catch Up and produced the succinctly titled "Vol. 1" LP, a slice of German jazz history still much sought after today. Listening to Greger's imaginative, dextrous organ skills, Antolini's masterful breaks and Pilar's exact, yet groovy bass leaves one in little doubt as to why. **16 Helmut Zacharias: The House That Jack Built.** Yes, even the man with the permanent smile, the "Merlin on the violin", Helmut Zacharias, went through a phase of flirting with what then fell into the jazz category. It may have been light entertainment but it was definitely



Did anyone seek approval from Mr Zacharias for this cover of the UK release? Probably not (Track 16)

Horst Wende dons sombrero, poncho and heavy shell-rimmed spectacles – it can only be Roberto Delgado (Track 17)



heavy on spice. In 1969 he signed on the dotted line for the British EMI label and shortly thereafter was snapped up by US sister company Capitol to rearrange current chart hits in such a way that the slightly older generation could grasp the concept of pop. The resulting LP (re-released on CD by bureau b in 2006) is his finest achievement, with swinging, groovy arrangements as light as feathers. A violin can be one cool instrument in the right hands. Zacharias weaves his way majestically through this Aretha Franklin hit but still leaves the band plenty of space to cook up a dance beat. **17 Roberto Delgado: Mocoto.** Popular musician and arranger Horst Wende dons a sombrero and poncho to resurface as Roberto Delgado, Germany's hardest working Latin bandleader. He fed the party people of the 50s and 60s with easily digestible, internationally flavoured dance music, ideally laced with a little something from Central or South America. With such expertise on display, it is hard to fathom that Delgado himself never crossed the Atlantic. "Mocoto" is a lesser known tune written by samba pop rocker Jorge Ben. The mood is cheerful and summer-like but Delgado gives his all as flute and organ rev up the grooves. **18 Berry Lipman: "BL"-Special.** Berry Lipman, the big man of German upmarket easy listening, born Friedel Berlipp 1921, composed scores of popular hits in the 1960s, such as the debatable "Keep

That's how the international jet-set are supposed to look. Berry Lipman at the peak of his powers (Track 18)



On Smiling" for James Lloyd. He began using the pseudonym when his production work expanded to include international stars such as Dionne Warwick and Petula Clark. The Berry Lipman Orchestra concentrated on delivering easy Latin Disco sounds to the contemporary party jetset. Hey, even Lipman liked to let his hair down once in a while. And when he did, beat feasts like "BL'-Special" were the result. **19 Hans Haider: Sport Extra.** The "Sport Extra" melody was penned by the soundtrack composer Hans Haider. Many a fresh-faced, tracksuited youngster has bent and stretched to "the rhythm you just can't ignore". A rock intro is followed by viscid saxophone disco boogie. An invitation to the laziest of couch potatoes to dig his or her plimsoles out of the cupboard and one, two, three, stretch... **20 Walter Kubiczek: Tigerauge.** Last but not least, elegant easy funk from the GDR. Walter Kubiczek was the most revered supplier of soundtracks to Defa (East German Film Institute) and developed a unique sound in 1972 when he mixed in barely audible male vocals which exactly followed the bass line. Add in the frequent use of congas and various other percussion elements and you have something rather exotic and mysterious. On this song, "Tigerauge" (not to be confused with "Eye Of The Tiger"), the bass is even accompanied by a trombone. Kubiczek's very special sound played no small part in the success of the East German TV series "Das unsichtbare Visier".



A man as elegant as his music. GDR soundtrack legend Walter Kubiczek (Track 20)

**1 Ambros Seelos: Mabusso 2:46** (Seelos, Michalke), published by Agil, © 1974 Agil Musik und Theater GmbH, admin. by State One Musikverlag GmbH, Berlin, courtesy of Shams Records

**2 Don Kelly Band: Guitar' Shower 2:34** (Batanoff), published by OBH Musikverlag, ISRC CH-106-99-00160, © 1974, courtesy of OBH Musikverlag

**3 Gerhard Narholz: Ufo-Invasion 3:01** (Narholz), published by Figurata, © 1972 Sonoton, courtesy of Sonoton/Gerhard Narholz

**4 James Last: U-Humbah 2:30** (Traditional), published by Happy Musikverlag, ISRC DE-F06-71-04670, © 1971 Polydor

**5 Kai Warner and his Orchestra: On The Way To Philadelphia 3:47** (Warner), published by Roba, ISRC: DE-F07-75-05940, © 1975 Philips, courtesy of Universal Music Domestic Division, a division of Universal Music GmbH

**6 Theo Schumann Combo: Hackepeter 2:45** (Schumann), published by Copyright Control, ISRC DE-C73-06-00081, © 1969 Amiga/BMG Berlin Musik GmbH, courtesy of SonyBMG Music Entertainment (Germany) GmbH

**7 Henry Arland: Mamy Blue 3:36** (Giraud, Trim), published by Ed. Hubert Giraud, ISRC DE-F06-71-04070, © 1972 Polydor, courtesy of Universal Music Domestic Division, a division of Universal Music GmbH

**8 Peter Thomas Sound Orchester: Chariots Of The Gods 2:50** (Thomas, Francoupolus), published by Peter Thomas Verlags KG, © 1974 Polydor, courtesy of Universal Music Domestic Division, a division of Universal Music GmbH

**9 Heinz Kiessling: Orbiter 3:39** (Lanzerot), published by Brillant-Musik, recorded 1971, courtesy of Brillant Musikverlag

**10 Ady Zehnpfennig: Easter Afternoon 3:29** (Zehnpfennig), published by Europaton, © 1974 Europaton, courtesy of Europaton

**11 Max Greger and his Orchestra: Soul Breeze 2:50** (Philipp), published by Intersong, ISRC DE-F06-70-05670, © 1970 Polydor, courtesy of Koch Universal Music, a division of Universal Music GmbH

**12 Orchester Günter Gollasch: Es steht ein Haus in New Orleans 3:27** (Traditional), published by Lied der Zeit, ISRC DE-C73-69-00006, © 1969 Amiga/BMG



**Berlin Musik GmbH, courtesy of SonyBMG Music Entertainment (Germany) GmbH**

**13 Pete Jacques: Hard Work 3:07**  
(Ullrich), published by Brillant Musik,  
recorded 1970, courtesy of Brillant  
Musikverlag

**14 Hans Ehrlinger and his Orchestra:  
One For You – One For Me 3:05**  
(Kaltenbach), published by Edition Dezime,  
© 1976 Intersound, courtesy of Intersound

**15 Catch Up: Catch Up 2:58**  
(Greger jr./Pilar/Antolini), published by OBH  
Musikverlag, ISRC CH-106-00-00235, © 1975,  
courtesy of OBH Musikverlag

**16 Helmut Zacharias:  
The House That Jack Built 2:27**  
(Lance/Robbins), published by Cotillion,  
© 1969 Capitol, courtesy of EMI Electrola

**17 Roberto Delgado: Mocoto 3:08**  
(Ben), published by Musisom Editora  
Musical, ISRC DE-F06-71-03160,  
© 1971 Polydor, courtesy of Universal Music  
Domestic Division, a division of Universal  
Music GmbH

**18 Berry Lipman: "BL"-Special 2:59**  
(B. Lipman), published by Selected Sound,  
recorded 1973, courtesy of Berry Lipman

**19 Hans Haider: Sport Extra 3:06**  
(Haider), published by Selected Sound,  
recorded 1976, courtesy of Selected Sound

**20 Orchester Walter Kubiczek:  
Tigerauge 3:29**  
(Kubiczek), published by Edition Barbarossa,  
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Music Entertainment (Germany) GmbH

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**This compilation wouldn't have been  
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people:**

**Sören Bauermeister, Friedel Berlipp,  
Matthias Bosch, Gareth Davies, Christian  
Domke, Otto B. Hartmann, Marco John,  
Andrea Kossin, Gerhard Narholz, Gudrun  
Manneck, Margit Seelos, Joachim Tautz,  
Stephan Zacharias**