

**Hildegard Knef was one of the most important German actresses of the 1940s and 1950s. She was also a serious jazz singer who increasingly wrote poetry. Together with vocalist Sascha Ley, pianist Georg Ruby now dedicates himself to Knef's work in a pleasingly unconventional way.**

Although Ruby and Ley have been working together for several years, *The Laughter of the Red Moon* is the first album they have recorded as a duo. Both are at home in jazz as well as in improvised and new music. Groove, swing, free improvisation and sound design are equally important to them when playing. They also share a soft spot for chansons in general and Hildegard Knef in particular.

"As a versatile actress and vocalist, Sascha knew Hildegard Knef anyway," says Ruby, describing his own connection to the theme of the album: "I grew up with Hilde Knef. When I was twelve or thirteen, she was very famous and filled halls with 20,000 people. She started out doing swing and also wrote books, which I read as a teenager. In this way, she accompanied me in my youth, when it came to finding quality in music, literature and songs. Knef has also helped shape her own German style. Since the UFA years with composers like Theo Mackeben, there have been many songs that can be treated just like American standards. I started interpreting this music relatively early on."

He explains the genesis of the music on the album: "Of course you could also play Hildegard Knef's music like songs at a jam session.

You play the theme, you improvise, then the next improviser comes in and finally the theme again.

I arranged most of the songs and then spun them together with Sascha. For two pieces, Sascha already had a certain idea and structure years ago. But that's the beauty of it: to see that there is a singer or vocalist who wants to work with Knef as a person and with German standards.

German standards. That forges a bond in advance." "I'm into sound," he explains and adds: "I'm a trained clarinetist. When I started studying music, you couldn't study jazz. I then studied classical clarinet in Cologne and got to know all the musicians who founded the Jazzhaus and Stadtgarten in Cologne during this time. I grew up with the feeling of a wind player. The piano, on the other hand, has tonal deficits because you can't modulate the sound." It was precisely these deficits and Ruby's ideas about sound that led him to explore sounds. to explore sounds. Cologne, as a stronghold of so-called new music, was certainly a good place to be at the cutting edge when it came to exploring the sonic possibilities of music.

On *The Laughter of the Red Moon*, the duo plays with sounds and forms. Ruby explores the sonic possibilities of the piano. He prepares it and uses it as a percussion instrument. He also uses his voice by singing and creating percussion and drum sounds in a beatboxing style. "I'm into sound," he explains and adds: "I'm a trained clarinetist. When I started studying music, you couldn't study jazz. I then studied classical clarinet in Cologne and got to know all the musicians who founded the Jazzhaus and Stadtgarten in Cologne during this

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To describe Sascha Ley as a singer who interprets melodies in no way does justice to the sound experience. One would be inclined to describe her as a vocal acrobat, were it not for the fact that the term is somewhat gimmicky. Vocalist might be a better description. It's probably best not to worry about such categories at all and just follow her voice and the music on the album. Despite all the thoughts and sounds, the music sounds pleasantly straightforward. It takes the listener along and surprises. Sometimes because of its energy, sometimes through daring twists and turns or rhythmic finesse.

The only thing you shouldn't expect from the album is to hear familiar pieces in a familiar form. Knef connoisseurs can get to know the pieces from new perspectives, non-Knef connoisseurs can simply listen to good and interesting music. Knef's lyrical strength is perhaps best demonstrated on "Mein Zeitbegriff", whose lyrics Ley recites impressively and with great intensity. Ruby creates a sound backdrop for this, for which he uses the piano with the described sound possibilities to acoustically intensify the emotional depth of the poetry.

When Sascha Ley sings into the open grand piano in the opener "Gern bereit / Love for Sale" and makes the strings of the instrument resonate with her voice, the sound bodies merge into something new. This beginning is perhaps emblematic of the entire release. Based on individual musical experiences and a shared passion, a work of sound art is created with a great deal of knowledge that unfolds its effect quite unscientifically and intuitively.

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