

KREIDLER
MUSIK FÜR METROPOLIS

January 29th, 2027

CD / LP / Digital

Fritz Lang's 1927 silent film Metropolis celebrates its 100th anniversary. Kreidler – formed in Düsseldorf in 1994 – created a new soundtrack for the centenary. The band's 22nd LP features highlights, rearranged to work as a standalone Kreidler album. Numerous screening performances are scheduled.

When the idea was first raised for Kreidler to compose and perform music for Fritz Lang's Metropolis, the band was excited. The opportunity to engage with a film widely regarded as a landmark of cinema for its centenary was enticing. Yet the endeavour is problematic on a number of levels.

First of all, Gottfried Huppertz wrote the original score for orchestra, which was performed just once in its full splendour for the premiere of Metropolis in 1927. Much of it remained lost and only partially reconstructed until it was rediscovered in 2008. The film itself was technically and conceptually well ahead of its time – the music Huppertz composed was not. It draws heavily on Wagner and Mahler, yet there was far more exciting and forward-looking music in 1927. Nevertheless, it is the official score as Lang intended.

Metropolis has been musically revisited on multiple occasions, e.g. by Giorgio Moroder in 1984, who turned it into an extended pop music video, but also made the film available for a whole new generation. There is the IRCAM-commissioned orchestral approach by Martin Matalon from 1995. Techno pioneer Jeff Mills made an album inspired by the film in 2000. And of course, another rather well known group from Düsseldorf famously appropriated the Metropolis theme of a Mensch-Maschine back in 1978.

Kreidler resolved to accept the challenge with a healthy dose of ambivalence regarding this musical history, and the undeniable baggage inherent in Metropolis.

Fritz Lang went into exile in 1933 when the Nazis came to power. Despite having banned his most recent 'Mabuse' film (though Goebbels noted "very exciting" in his diaries), the new regime was keen to persuade the director to make works supporting fascist ideology. Turning down such an offer put Lang at personal and professional risk – and he absconded to Hollywood with his reputation intact.

Yet Thea von Harbou – author of the novel Metropolis and also the screenplay – immediately cooperated with the Nazis. In 1933 she became head of Verband Deutscher Tonfilmautoren, finally joining the Nazi party in 1940. So it's hardly surprising that there are overt antisemitic connotations and proto-fascist imagery in Metropolis. Composer Gottfried Huppertz had promptly joined the party in 1932. And although the core message of Metropolis can be seen through a rose-tinted lens of social democratic progress, the grand compromise at the end of the film is still authoritarian at heart. Lang himself reflected many years later in an interview: "You cannot make a social-conscious picture in which you say that the intermediary between the hand and the brain is the heart."

The various themes addressed in the film, however, are all the more relevant 100 years later: the promise and threat of artificial intelligence, scapegoating and the manipulation of public anger, technofeudalism, plutocracy and the widening gap between a super rich oligarchy and the rest of us. There, the film was prescient, and remains so. It is in that sense that Kreidler encourage viewers to appreciate Metropolis with a critical eye.

The silent film is two and a half hours long – a lot of music for Kreidler to come up with.

"Our aim is to create a functional score for Metropolis in our own style. The music supports the dramaturgical arch of the storyline – while allowing room to question the premise of the screenplay. It is music for film, rather than film-music."

The LP features 40 minutes of music that is unmistakably Kreidler:

The opener ‘Herzmaschine’ – the name of the underground machine that powers Metropolis – is heavy and rhythmic, an unrelenting backdrop of metallic clang and dreary drone for the workers.

On the other hand, ‘Bureau’ is the music for an office scene – and the world up above, run by the corporate technocrat Joh Fredersen. It is light, clean and efficient.

‘Yoshiwara’ is a nightclub for the Metropolis elite. A place of debauchery, its name is taken from the red light district in Tokyo that dates back to early 17th century. The club is where Maria’s cyborg doppelgänger performs a seductive dance for the male gaze of the rich and powerful. Kreidler accompany with propulsive machine funk.

‘Maria’ is the central figure of the film. Her prophecy that a “Mittler” (a mediator) will miraculously appear, offering a touch of kindness toward the exploited workers of the underworld, is destined to come true – in the form of freshly enlightened Metropolis scion Freder Fredersen. Kreidler portray Maria with a layer of divergent harmonic structures based on a range of contradictory scales.

‘Lab’ refers to the laboratory of Rotwang, inventor of the Mensch-Maschine. Kreidler take a microtonal approach for the dazzling science-fiction topos, while indicating the many layers and in-between notes of the film’s most conflicted character.

Comprising the entire second album side is ‘Furioso’: The film’s third and final act depicts the rioting workers destroying the Herzmaschine, flooding their subterranean quarters, then an exuberantly romping party in the upper world, coalescing in a witch-burning. Kreidler joins the frenzy with galloping drums, dashing sequencers and stern synths.

Musik für Metropolis will be released for the premiere at the Düsseldorf opera Deutsche Oper am Rhein on 28 January 2027. Kreidler – Thomas Klein, Alexander Paulick, Andreas Reihse – will perform their new music with the screening of Metropolis. Further performances will follow throughout the year.

KREIDLER is a Düsseldorf/Berlin based band consisting of Thomas Klein, Alexander Paulick and Andreas Reihse. Active since 1994, KREIDLER play a primarily electronic form of popular music that has been variously categorised as electronic music, avant-garde, post rock, IDM, ambient, neoclassical, krautrock, or electronica. Mostly instrumental, always rhythmic, with a pop-appeal. KREIDLER has played over a thousand concerts throughout Europe, as well as in Asia and America – in techno clubs, in rock venues, in concert halls, at festivals like Sonar, Roskilde, Nrmal, SXSW, Cervantino. KREIDLER has performed in museums and art galleries: at the Van Dyck retrospective in Antwerp, for Rosemarie Trockel, Thea Djordjadze, Mike Kelley, or at MoMA NYC and the Centre Pompidou Paris for Andreas Gursky. KREIDLER music has graced the catwalks of Lagerfeld, Chanel, Lacoste, 22/4_Hommes_Femmes, Giles Deacon, and is featured in films, plays and modern-dance. Musik für Metropolis is now the band’s 10th album to be released on Hamburg label Bureau B since 2011.

Tracklisting:

A1 Herzmaschine
A2 Bureau
A3 Yoshiwara
A4 Maria
A5 Lab

B1 Furioso

BB515
CD 294082
4015698096293
LP 294081
4015698169805

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Metropolis (1927)

Directed by Fritz Lang.

A film from the holdings of the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau Foundation.

Pictures - Source: Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Foundation.