



Von Sudenfed Tromatic Reflexxions

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'I feel like now it doesn't matter, it's not important, which decade you're referencing or whether you've got the coolest break or electronic trick. It's just the energy that counts.' – Jan St Werner

Tromatic Reflexxions is the debut album by Von Sudenfed. And who are Von Sudenfed? For starters they're a trio formed by Andi Toma, Mark E Smith and Jan St Werner. But depending who you ask and how, they're a sound-system, a family, a band. They're all these things and more, as Jan himself explains: 'We wanted the album to have the energy we would imagine a hybrid band – a futuristic band playing grime or ska or soca like a pirate radio station – to have.'

Not to mention the electro, dubstep and disco thrown into the mix. But Von Sudenfed does more than take a spin, via Düsseldorf and Salford, through the terrain of London pirates. It combines the genre-smashing attack of early-millennia club music with Mark E Smith's free-associating visionary wordplay. To adapt the Situationists, under the dancefloor, the beach. Or in the case of a track like 'Flooded', over the dancefloor, a sea – Mark's lyric retells a dream of Jan's in which he booked a club to DJ at, only for an interloping DJ to turn up and commandeer the decks. The Von Sudenfed response? Carnavalesque anarchist sabotage: flood the club. This is unmistakably club music, but it's club music that's liable to spark off outbreaks of lucid dreaming, mid-move.

On 'Flooded' the stuttering, garage-inflected beats and the sub-bass that comes warping out of them fit Mark's furious/triumphant vocal like they grew up together. It's typical of the way *Tromatic Reflexxions* sounds like the work of a group – unlike the results of all too many producer-singer collaborations, where the vocals sound like phoned-in afterthoughts to fill a voice-shaped blank. And in a sense this album is the work of a group. The trio got together in Düsseldorf and jammed out ideas for days before refining down the material into tracks, and Mark was integral to the shape they took, getting involved with their arrangements and insisting they were kept as direct and focussed as possible.

But as *Tromatic Reflexxions* unfolds, the word 'group' becomes inadequate. This isn't a standard set-up with Musician A on Instrument A and Musician B on Instrument B. The riffs and rhythms come together from so many different places, with synths, samplers and sequencers all firing off. It's not a

band: it's a free-flowing collectivist dance generator – a futurist sound system.

Mark E Smith on the other hand sees Von Sudenfed as a family affair. The name picks up on the region of Germany where Jan grew up (*von süden*) with perhaps a nod to a certain cough remedy (Nation of Ulysses fans take note). Families have stories: half-brothers, half-sisters, secrets, births, deaths (check the JuJu guitars on 'Dear Dead Friends'). And of course arguments – hence a track like 'Family Feud', where Mark adopts the characters of different members of the 'family' and arbitrates between them.

The offspring of this House of Von Sudenfed are more direct and upfront than anything Mouse on Mars fans might expect, from the second that 'Fledermaus Can't Get Enough' blasts off. Although equally, for those who think they've got irascible-Mark-E-Smith-of-The-Fall pegged, on the sweet shortwave stomp of 'The Rhinohead', the family have got a vocal from him as wistful, as tender even, as any of his beloved Northern Soul cuts.

'That Sound Wiped' stands out on the album in the way it builds more slowly from basic disco building blocks into a r'n'bleeping electro monster. But it's a track that leads back to Von Sudenfed's origins in a London gig by Mouse on Mars where they first struck up with Mark. This meeting led in 2005 to Mark providing vocals for a 12-inch release of Mouse on Mars' 'Wipe That Sound'. (Unused material from this initial collaboration became 'That Sound Wiped'.) All parties agreed there was more work to be done, and Von Sudenfed was born.

Mark has already been discussing with Jan and Andi how to fit sessions for the second album into their schedules. But before that, summer 2007 will see Von Sudenfed in live action – ideally in a festival, carnival or club context where they can roll out their sound-system strategy in the places it makes most sense – and some remixes to watch out for.

Mark E Smith has led The Fall through more than 25 studio albums since their formation in Manchester 31 years ago. His lyrics, delivery, song-writing and attitude have had an incalculable influence on punk, post-punk and as many of their close relations and off-shoots as you care to think of, with artists from Wu Tang's RZA, to LCD Soundsystem, DJ Shadow, and Pavement all acknowledged fans.

Jan St Werner and Andi Toma are best known for their work together as Mouse on Mars, debuting in 1994 with *Vulvaland*. On albums like *Niun Niggung* (their first for Domino), *Idiology* and *Radical Connector* they've gone on to perfect a signature sound which blends the lateral improvisational moves of jazz with the abstract complexities of electronica and the directness of acoustic instrumentation.

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