

## De-Phazz pres. Pit Sounds

(CD: PHAZZ168; Vinyl: PHAZZ169)

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To write about the importance of De-Phazz for sophisticated electronic music since the turn of the millennium would be comparable to carrying surfboards into California; seeing as everybody who has had a cocktail in a lounge in Berlin, Miami, or Ibiza since the year 1997 is familiar with this band from Heidelberg - be it for hits such as 'The Mambo Craze' or 'No Jive' (with over 11 million streams on Spotify thus far), for movies, advertisements and television, or countless concerts that the band has played worldwide in the past quarter of a century.

Lesser known is, however, who the conceptual mastermind behind Germanies most important organic electronic music export is. This is most likely to change soon, because De-Phazz' gifted collage artist, sample juggler and sound designer is presenting his magnum opus with 'Pit Sounds'. Even though the title is, of course, meant as an expression of pure self-irony, the album does stand up to the cheeky reference to the Beach Boys classic 'Pet Sounds'. In its very own unique way, 'Pit Sounds' is a masterpiece in the truest sense of the word-craftmanship developed to the highest form of perfection. 'There is this well-known sentence by Matthew Herbert saying that he created every single note on his album', Baumgartner quotes a famous British colleague in production, 'whereas I say: Not a single note is created by me!' A clear description of Peter Scissorhands', as he presents himself in a black and white photo collage on the back of the album 'Pit Sounds', process. Like a miner, Baumgartner makes his way through the complex tunnel system of his seemingly endless collection of sounds from old soul, explanations of the economic miracle of the 50's and obscure song material from all over the world searching for precious metals. After striking gold, he carefully removes it from its previous context, mills, forges, turns and polishes it until he has placed it in a completely unexpected new context with a cryptic smile. 'I am best at putting things together that don't belong together. And I do this joyously, sometimes it works, sometimes it goes spectacularly wrong' the trained mechanic and proven advocate of Dadaism states.

In accordance, 'Pit Sounds' is filled with quirky acquaintances of chance, which then turn out to be sincere love stories with an abundance of devious humour. Homely 60s choirs meet classy jazz guitar licks, syrupy retro strings à la Bert Kaempfert, singing cowboys, Latin American standard dances, multilingual language snippets and even football horns. And yet it sounds as though the elements were always meant to be together in effortless unity. The process couldn't be more sustainable: Baumgartner breathes new life into worn and carelessly discarded notes, upcycling for the ears, as it were. While listening, a deep feeling of relaxation settles in, a feeling reminiscent of Harald Juhnke's famous definition of happiness: 'A clear schedule while being slightly tipsy.'

One could say that 'Pit Sounds', which also features musicians who were physically present in the studio such as trumpeter Joo Kraus and soprano Constanze Backes, is somewhat of a sonorous biography Baumgartner's. This kind of music can only be made by someone who followed somewhat of an unorthodox path into the business of pop music: A person who, thanks to the GIs stationed in Heidelberg, developed a taste for very 'ungerman' funky grooves very early in life, who worked as a clown as well as a DJ, created audio plays for Ikea or 'Die Sendung mit der Maus' (a popular TV-show for children in Germany) and always kept his inner child alive, even while working as a remixer for Kool & the Gang, Kurtis Blow or Ennio Morricone. That 'Pit Sounds' ends with a ludicrously re-arranged version of a piece by classical composer John Dowland works perfectly. As the album shows, the brilliant sound tailor Pit Baumgartner is now a classic himself.