

Heartbeat of the machine city

15.04.2008 - by our editorial journalist Roman Steiner



Fritz Lang's silent film "Metropolis" from 1927 is without doubt a powerful visual work of art. At his live DJ performance at the Sindelfinger Pavillon, Toni Bras demonstrated that the film also works exceptionally well with an electronic club sound score. And he proved the film's timeless relevance.

Even today, cinema audiences are fascinated by the film images, the monumental settings, the ingenious special effects. The reconciliatory outcome of the love story set against the class struggle is both visionary and utopian.

The film has influenced and inspired many other genre films, from Ridley Scott's "Blade Runner" from 1982 and Luc Besson's "The Fifth Element" from 1997 to George Romero's "Land of the Dead" from 2005.

The former chairman of a cultural centre in Sindelfingen and DJ Toni Bras has been working on a new music score for "Metropolis" since 2001, and the provisional results have already been presented. Now he has premiered his final version. "I wanted to give the music greater depth. And more quality," he says.

From his bag of electronic treats, Bras creates alternating sounds and rhythms, most from the electronic alternative club genre. From Techno via Trance to Industrial, he composes rhythmically structured material with as many references and quotes as the film itself has inspired.

Layered like lasagne

Sounds, or sound quotations, from 1950s sci-fi films alternate with rhythmic club music, powerful yet laid-back. At times almost meditative ambient sounds that never lose their rhythm, the heartbeat of the machine city. At times, the rhythms overlap, they are layered like lasagne without losing their own beat.

We catch snatches of spaghetti Westerns or funky 70s detective films. Guitar riffs, harmonica, concert piano, drums, heavy rock passages - Bras brings them all together in the electronic sound tapestry of his digital music. For all its club character, the story never drifts towards superficial disco beats, it's always serious electronic pop.

Bras succeeds in underlining the atmosphere of the film, expressing suspense, threat and momentum in his music. Although the breakbeats resound and pulsate in some way or other constantly throughout the film, they never become irritating. Unlike Philipp Glass' new score for the old 1931 Dracula film, which really does grate on the audience's nerves.

But why live? Toni Bras could have recorded his music and played it to the film instead of performing live. "Silent films had live piano accompaniment, too," says Bras, grinning. And if the applause in the well-filled Pavillon is anything to go by, everyone seems to agree with him.

Toni Bras will soon be touring Germany with his version of "Metropolis". Details will be announced on www.metropolis-live.de in the next few days.

SOURCE: Sindelfinger Zeitung / copyright 2008 / www.szbz.de

PHOTO: Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung