



FRIEDRICH SUNLIGHT

Sag es erst morgen

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A balmy autumn evening in London: I'm nestled in the crowd of a sold out show at The Lexington to witness one of Louis Philippe's rare performances. The opening act, Friedrich Sunlight, hits the stage. Right from the first notes of the opening song, I listen spellbound. Catchy "Ba-ba-bas" and unbelievable arrangements pull me and the others closer to the front: Who is that? I'm amazed but yet, can't understand a single word being sung: The singer, gifted with a soft, distinctive voice, sings everything in German.

Later in the evening, I bump into him again. He's involved in a lively conversation with a distinguished gentleman. I step in, we introduce each other: His name is Kenji and he is telling Robert Forster of The Go-Betweens the story of his life, how he, a child of Japanese immigrants, moved from San Francisco to Germany. And finally how he ended up in Augsburg to join like-minded musicians to make music influenced by Sunshine Pop of the 60s and British Pop of the early 80s under the name Friedrich Sunlight. But why, I wonder to myself, does their sound conjure up warm Californian summers rather than quaint Bavarian provinces? And why German lyrics? We exchange email addresses and promise to stay in touch.

The following summer, I'm standing on the concrete roof of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. It's already early evening, but it's still brutally hot, and much to my surprise, I see Kenji again: Friedrich Sunlight is the opening act for The Zombies, which somehow suits the motto of this evening's event: "Goodbye UK – and Thank You for the Music".

After their two intoxicating performances, I get the chance to meet the other band members – pianist Bernd, guitarist Florian, bassist Thomas and drummer Marc. We talk about the recordings for their second album and about the new songs, including the Northern Soul-tinged "Sag es erst morgen", likely the first single, and "Kleines Haus", a tune reminiscent of The Velvet Underground and a cheerfully sharp reckoning with Donald Trump. "Don't forget "Was will man noch mehr", Timo Blunck shouts to us in passing – a quiet piece, with the light-hearted one-liner, summing up the political upheavals of our time: "They've brought out small things and made them big again".

Months later I hear from Friedrich Sunlight, along with some sad news they send me an advance copy of their album: The energetic, string-laden opener "Sag es erst morgen" kicks off the LP of the same name, as well as eleven other highlights of contemporary pop music. The album, masterfully mixed in London by a friend of the band, Ian Button, immediately seems airier, pleasantly more accessible and more varied than the first album.

Sunshine pop numbers (Mit dir) are followed by bossa nova-like pieces (Fernweh) and 60s persiflages (Radikal and chic). The endless search for harmony, the polyphonic vocal arrangements and the band's very own lyrical world harken back to their debut. But whoever hasn't lifted off the ground by now, just listen to those horns on the second track: "Was will man noch mehr".

Unfortunately, Kenji has left Augsburg for Glasgow to follow the great love of his life. What will become of the band? Quoting from the track "Nachtbus nach Wien" off the new record: "Who knows what tomorrow will bring?"

Rikard Gustavson

Tracklisting

1. Sag es erst morgen
2. Was will man noch mehr?
3. Kleines Haus
4. Fernweh
5. Neujahr
6. Nachtbus nach Wien
7. Mit dir
8. Kommen und Gehen
9. Wirf dein Geld aus dem Fenster
10. Radikal und chic
11. Supermarkt
12. Wenn du mich suchst...



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