

Table of Contents

Not-Wistful 1

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By Anja Büchele

Spending their prime in a small village in Bavaria, The Notwist have been producing one record after another since the early '90s. All of them have appeared on Hausmusik, a label famous (in Bavaria) for the high quality of its output, the cheapness of its vinyl and the beauty of its sleeves.

With The Notwist's sixth album, *Neon Golden*, things have changed. Now they are the pride of City Slang, having developed their music from early '90s high-energy, anti-boredom hardcore to early '00s high-spec electronic indie pop made for the Bavarian intelligentsia. *Neon Golden* is an incredibly careful and thoughtful record with its Talk Talk production, the Jim O'Rourke subtlety of its arrangements and its New Order pop-melancholy (end of obligatory comparisons).

Dynamic yet brittle drumming merges with tricky sound-wizardry at the deep-dub bottom of this record. Occasional sparse strings, brass and woodwind arrangements together with a guitar, bass and forlorn vocals make up the sweet, fragmented, melodic surface. *Neon Golden* sounds beautifully warm, yet totally unsentimental. Each song consists of about 20 layers of sound, yet comes across like the simplest three minute pop-pearl (and none of the songs is longer – an achievement not to be sneezed at).

But there is a problem with this album: it lacks a sense of humour whilst being too understated to blast serious post-Kraut moralistic dystopia. When you listen to *Neon Golden* eating cereal you might not even notice it, so much more exciting is the internal crunching sound of your own making. At the same time, you'll find yourself humming its tunes on one of those sentimental autumn walks and immediately wanting to throw stones at passers-by as an antidote. Ultimately, though, this album does grow wider and deeper with each listening and its sweet melancholia is very seductive.

I am at bourgeois peace with myself. Thank you, Bavaria! Thank you, The Notwist! This is my twist!

Anja Büchele <anja AT tlank.fsnet.co.uk> is 1/4th of The Surp!u\$, 1/5th of Mechanical Beetles, Never Quite Warm, 1/2 of Club Surp!u\$ and fully looking for work

Neon Golden // The Notwist // City Slang // ASIN B00005NY9B

Hausmusik [<http://www.hausmusik.com>]

The Notwist [<http://www.notwist.com>]