

Perplexities on Mars | Press-Kit



"The four young musicians (...) already demonstrate an impressive level of technical playing skills and convince through dynamic and group-related music-making full of strength, lyricism and imagination. In the two-year collaboration, the quartet managed to create its own band sound, to which both the original repertoire of own compositions and the interactive musical concept contribute. In the line-up with two saxophonists, double bass and drums, "Perplexities on Mars" ties in with great traditions of modern jazz. They show emotional devotion, great joy in playing and redesigned sound awareness."

- Silke Eberhardt, Günter Baby Sommer and Bert Noglik
(Jury Members of Leipzig Jazz Young Talent Award 2020)



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Mars is the fourth planet in the solar system, counted from the sun, and the outer neighbor of the earth. It is one of the earth-like (terrestrial) planets. Mars is often referred to as the Red Planet. This color is due to iron oxide dust (rust) that has spread over the surface and the thin atmosphere. Its orange/red color and its fluctuations in brightness in the earthly night sky symbolise the colors of the Roman god of war: Mars.

This mythological "superstar" was the most important Roman deity and father of the twins Romulus and Remus, thus progenitor of the "Eternal City". It is probably due to the ironic point of view of the four musicians that the god and planet are in a state of perplexity.

The principle of hope (man's desire to find a second home on Mars) is eminent, just like the restless god of war, who donates fertility and health to people, animals and the fields, but was also responsible for their disaster and devastation. On a metaphorical level, these opposites describe the compositions and improvisations of the four musicians very well: high-energetic to melodically sensitive, complex to instinctive-sensitive.

Kunz, Hirth, Deller and Friedrich met each other in their studies at the Leipzig University of Music and have been playing together in various formations for many years. In the tradition of the jazz quartet with two saxophones (John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, Lee Konitz and Wayne Marsh or Gerry Milligan and Stan Getz), but without a harmony instrument, the four musicians interact on an outstanding level which is rooted in a deep understanding of the common musical language. This also reflects in their compositions, in which every band member contributes its own musical thought. The challenge in this special line-up of a harmonious jazz quartet is the playful freedom. In a certain way, each individual is obliged to take on creative responsibility for the free space. "Perplexities on Mars" succeeds in filling this tense space between individual tones, individual improvisations and energetic rhythms in a refreshingly easy way that consistently follows their own musical instincts and intuitions.

In their long-term collaboration, the musicians have been able to develop their bandsound and present themselves to a greater audience beyond the city limits of Leipzig. Multiple concert tours included residences at the Regensburg Jazz Days, the Potsdam „City for One Night“ Festival and the 1st Berlin Jazz Festival.

Christopher Kunz

(Tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, composition) grew up in Karlsruhe and studied from 2012-2017 at the HfM Nürnberg with Prof. Steffen Schorn, Prof. Klaus Graf, Hubert Winter and Stefan Karl Schmid. Since October 2017 he has been studying for a master's degree with Prof. Johannes Enders at the HMT Leipzig. Christopher is the winner of the HUGO concert dramaturgy competition with the Nuremberg “ensemble fractale”, as well as the winner of the price for re-performance at the D-Bü competition for students of German universities with the Leipzig “Soundtravelers”. He took part in numerous workshops, including with Alexander von Schlippenbach, Scott Robinson, Adrian Mears, John Ruocco, Jerry Bergonzi, Dick Oatts and Frank Gratkowski and played at the NUE Jazz Festival Nuremberg, Peronas Jazz Festival Vilnius, Jazz Festival Burghausen, Emsdettener Jazztage, Jazzrally Düsseldorf, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and International Organ Week Nuremberg.



Maximilian Hirth

(Tenor saxophone, clarinet, composition) was born on August 16, 1995 in Weilheim in Upper Bavaria. Since 2014-2019 he studied jazz saxophone at the University of Music and Theater Leipzig (HMT) with Prof. Johannes Enders. He has been studying at the Jazzcampus Basel since the autumn semester 2019. In summer 2016 he won the Bach Boxing Scholarship from the HMT Leipzig. In autumn 2017 he studied for one semester at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences with Nathanael Su. He has attended several workshops since the beginning of his studies, among others with Micha Acher, Michael Wollny, Jim Snidero, Matthias Spillmann, Roland von Flüe, Chris Speed, Yves Theiler and Rick Margiza. With the big band of the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, he played at the “unheard!” Festival in Zurich and in the Culture and Congress Center Lucerne (KKL) featuring artists such as Mike and Kate Westbrook, Ed Partyka and Jörg Achim Keller. Formations: Perplexities on Mars, WHC-Trio, FPS Big Band, Tom Friedrich Quintett.



Stephan Deller

(Double bass), has been studying at the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy University of Music and Theater since 2015 and is regularly seen on concert tours throughout Germany and abroad. As part of his studies in Leipzig and Katowice, he received lessons from: Marcey Grabowski, Adam Kowalewski, Piotr Woitasik, Gzegorz Nagorski, Heinrich Köbberling, Wolfram Dix and Thomas Stahr. Stephan is part of the Robbi Nakayama Trio, Georg Demel Quartet, Maximilian Breus "Space Shuttle, as well as in the Sammy Lukas Trio.

Tom Friedrich

(Drums) studies since 2013 at the University of Music and Theater Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Leipzig majoring in popular / jazz drums with Prof. Heinrich Köbberling and Prof. Michael Wollny. In 2011 and 2013 Tom was named Talent of the Year by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, he is also a multiple winner of the competitions "Jugend jazzt" and "Jugend musiziert" and has received several German scholarships.

He was a long-time member of the State Youth Jazz Orchestra of Saxony and a scholarship holder of the Federal Jazz Orchestra in 2014/2015. Through his numerous concert activities, he has already played in Switzerland, Canada, Israel, Romania, England, Austria, Italy, Russia and China. Tom worked together with Prof. John Hollenbeck, Prof. Niels Klein, Prof. Jiggs Whigham, Prof. Johannes Enders, Prof. Florian Weber, Florian Ross, Prof. Manfred Schoof, Alexander von Schlippenbach, Prof. Ansgar Striepens, Jean- Paul Brodbeck and the WDR Big Band.



“[...] the quartet 'Perplexities on Mars' [...] in which two tenor saxophonists (Christopher Kunz and Max Hirth) fought energetic battles, - creative jazz competitions that have a long tradition - but here they sounded as modern and bursting as they did rarely otherwise. ”
- Roland Spiegel; BR classic



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„Then there was a really strong concert by the four young men who had actually met at the Leipzig University. With a good sense for dramaturgy, the playing of the two saxophonists Christopher Kunz and Maximilian Hirth interwoven in front of bassist Stephan Deller and drummer Tom Friedrich developed an astonishing intensity. Beyond the mere glimmer of the ancestors from Lester Young / Coleman Hawkins to John Coltrane / Pharoah Sanders, this new music created its own urgency.“ - Ulrich Steinmetzger, LVZ