

# LEFT of the DIAL

# bandwidth



**The Robocop Kraus**  
*They Think They Are The Robocop Kraus*  
(Epitaph Records)

When thinking about German rock, I admittedly fall prey to standard prejudices, and I first listened to the new record from German outfit The Robocop Kraus with visions of Scorpions, synthesizers and David Hasselhoff dancing in my head. Here's the lowdown, fellow Germanophobes, on *They Think They Are The Robocop Kraus*: you'll find no sign of the Scorps and zero 'hoff but will hear a boatload of synths and a dozen frantically beautiful rock and roll tunes. From the opening "After Laughter Comes Tears," it's clear that the Kraus are an energetic bunch with a huge affinity for Reagan-era new wave. Industrial blips meld with jittery, angular guitars and the completely depressing sentiments of lead singer Thomas Lang: "After laughter comes tears/All good things come to an end/No need for medication/It feels like losing a friend." Filled with abrupt dynamic shifts and skillfully layered electronic collages, the track is quite a feat of musicianship and production, and an immediate nod to the band's synth-rock slant. It's like taking the hooks of modern-day new-wave princes Franz Ferdinand and injecting them with a heavy dose of Kraftwerk, a dash of Devo and a pallid worldview. Speaking of which, while Lang is fronting a powerhouse of a band, you wouldn't know it by his lyrics. The fatalistic perspectives of "After Laughter Comes Tears" continue throughout, especially on the songs "Life Amazes Us Despite Our Miserable Future" and "Concerned, Your Secular Friends" (the latter will appeal to anybody who has lost a friend to the evil clutches of born-again Christians). Like recent success stories Franz Ferdinand and The Killers, The Robocop Kraus are loads of fun to listen to. But unlike those bands, whose "sad" songs still manage to be cute as pie, these Germans are thought provoking at the same time. Their music is like a rainstorm in summer, like the sting of a scorpion hidden in an ice cream cone, like a leather-clad hunkasaurus who fights crime and talks to his car. This, my friends, is German rock.

—joe sweeney



**Goldfrapp**  
*Supernature*  
(Mute)

To: Queen Elizabeth II  
CC: Prime Minister Tony Blair  
Re: Goldfrapp embargo

*Dear Your Majesty and The Guy Who Actually Runs Your Kingdom Or Whatever It Is:*

*On behalf of the United States, Artvoice demands to know why you have conspired to keep Goldfrapp's third album from reaching our shores until now, a full eight months after its release in the UK. Perhaps you are still smarting from that whole Declaration of Independence thing, or from how we bring up World War II every time we want a favor. Still, that is no reason to deny us the sonic pleasure of vocalist Alison Goldfrapp, whose trademark purr deftly maneuvers through rafter-shaking dance cuts ("Ooh La La," "Ride a White Horse"), gorgeous balladry ("Let It Take You," "Time Out from the World"), and modern cabaret ("Satin Chic"). We concede that the disc has flaws—its pacing is rather manic-depressive, and please ask her what's up with the creepy "Omen"-style intro to "You Never Know." But Goldfrapp recovers after every false step with memorable melodies, as on the pseudo-house of "Koko" or the oddly sweet "Number 1," in which she assures a distant lover that "You're my favorite moment/You're my Saturday." Supernature is not as consistent as the icy electronica of 2003's Black Cherry or 2000's trip-hop-heavy Felt Mountain, but its risks have numerous rewards. In conclusion, we humbly request that you please not suppress any future kick-ass Eurotrash disco releases. After all, you still owe us big for torching the White House.*

Love,  
—jennifer behrens



**The Sword**  
*Age on Winters*  
(Kemando)

So dig this scenario: you're at a party, and there's some thunderous riffs rumbling out of these massive speakers. The tunes really grab you. You pride yourself on your knowledge of heavy rock, but what you're hearing is unfamiliar riffage. Blue Cheer? No, there's none of the faux blues wanking they so frequently lapsed into. Maybe it's early Rush? No, there aren't enough prog-rock twists and turns. You break down and ask the party's host, "What record is playing?" The Sword? Why have you never heard of this band? If you smoke pot, lots of pot, own a Queens Of The Stoneage album or lava lamp, or believe you've experienced an epiphany while listening to Black Sabbath, you should already know about this band. You should have picked up some unique, subconscious vibration in your brain that foretold of The Sword's coming. These dudes have their shit down. From the far-out, fantastical song titles—"Barael's Blade," "The Horned Goddess," "Celestial Crown," are just a few examples—to the Tarot Card artwork gracing the disc's cover, and the thick slabs of kinda psychedelic, but mostly metal guitar, bass, and drums this quartet brings down like a hell hammer on your head, *Age Of Winters* doesn't miss a thing. And these guys can play. Old school metal heads, consider your prayers answered.

—matt barber

**Group Name:** Stone Row

**When/Where playing this week?**

Friday (March 17): Amherst Gaelic League Fundraiser at Hearthstone Manor 5:15-7:15pm; Buffalo Irish Center, 8:30pm-12:30am (Tentative gig Live on 103.3 The Edge at Charlie O' Brien's Pub, 8-9am)

Saturday (March 18): Desiderio's, 10:30pm-2:30am

**Band Members/Names/instrument...**

Glenn Bernardis—bass, multi-instrumentalist, vocals

Nick Corallo—drums, percussion, vocals

Robert Insana—acoustic guitar, multi-instrumentalist, vocals

Paul Runfola—electric guitar, vocals

**When did the band form?**

Officially, the band formed in the spring of 2005. Paul and Glenn played together in Kilbrannan for eight years; Robert played with Glenn in the acoustic rock group The Mudslingers; Nick and Glenn played together in the Leah Zicari Band.



**You might like our music if you like....**

Celtic and world music with a contemporary edge, three hundred year old songs with blistering electric guitar, ethnic percussion, musicianship and entertainment, fun, Guinness, bad jokes, influences ranging from Celtic folk and Middle-Eastern Dance music to Queen and Van Halen.

**List of Recorded Releases**

Three song demo is available. We are currently in production for our first full-length CD.

**Upcoming events:**

Many pub and festival shows including the Syracuse Irish Festival, the Albany Tulip Festival, the Amherst Scottish Festival and America's Fair.

**Worst show the band ever played:**

At a yacht club. Not so much a bad gig but Mr. Howell's monacle dropped into his Manhattan several times. Every gig teaches you something of value.

**Best show the band ever played:**

Many. Just this past weekend at the German House Concert Hall in Rochester we had an appreciative crowd, great sound and lights and a gorgeous old concert hall. The communication between the band and the audience was nothing short of stellar.

**Anything else you would like our readers to know about the band?**

Stone Row creates a new and unique niche in the Celtic/World music genre and appeals to a wide variety of ages and musical tastes. There is truly something for everyone at our shows and the band has fun no matter what.

**Contact information:**

www.stonerow.com

To respond to this article, e-mail [editorial@artvoice.com](mailto:editorial@artvoice.com) or write to: Artvoice, 810 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14202

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