



*Above: Promo card, 1968.*

*Right: Klaus and Horst in Prague, 1968.*



no longer entirely reliant on their own PR efforts, although these continued as fan clubs proliferated.

The group were back in Munich at Trixi Ton the following month to record their second album. "We recorded the first LP *A Deeper Blue* under great time pressure," remembers Roger. "For the second LP recording, *The Petards*, we were able to try out the new technical possibilities in peace and this is how our probably most versatile LP was created."

Completed in five days, October 14-18, 1968, *The Petards* is a massively impressive album, their songwriting, vocals and musicianship scaling new heights, the nuanced arrangements perfectly showcased by Loch's expert production. The electrifying "Flittermouse" opens the album with a hum of feedback and a scurry of descending notes before settling into a cool, Hendrix-like groove, Klaus's commanding lead vocal enhanced by the sighing backups of Horst and Roger, until the song breaks off into a wild instrumental section with Klaus's screaming lead guitar bouncing off of Arno's explosive drumming. The group often opened their live sets with this number, and you can imagine how electrifying it must have been at high volume with psychedelic lights flashing.

In an interview in 1974, Klaus explained that while Hendrix had an influence on his guitar playing, it was something he absorbed and reinterpreted rather than consciously imitated. "Of course, there were bands that one orientated oneself on," he admitted. "But what I always found good and where I always orientated my guitar playing on was Jimi Hendrix. I had his records; I tried to play along to them. I was trying to get his feeling for playing. That suited me. We covered one of his songs; that probably influenced me later in my style to play solos but without being conscious of it, without trying to copy anything."

That was certainly true of "Flittermouse,"

which has a Hendrix flavor but still comes across as something uniquely original. It's just one of many highlights on the album. "Girl Where Are You Going Now?" is a stunningly beautiful Bee Gees-like number with soulful, pitch-perfect lead and harmony vocals and a lovely marimba part (played by Klaus, of course), "Out in the Rain" has an insinuating, atmospheric groove with pulsing bass, subtle harmonic accents, maracas, soaring lead guitar and a funky scat vocal section, "Tonight" is high-grade harmony-rich freakbeat, "Some Sunny Morning" recalls Traffic's "Hole In My Shoe" then eclipses it completely with a big bursting pop chorus, and "The Fountain" is a charming baroque-pop oddity that escalates through multiple tempo and key modulations. By now Klaus was playing more keyboards on-stage and sometimes writing on piano rather than guitar, as demonstrated not only by "The Fountain," but also the stark, dramatic ballad "Nevermore" (a solo composition), "Bridal Ballad" with its Bach-like organ, and—the album's sleeper track, its slow fuse emotional time bomb— "Mockingbird Crying," a sentimental, hymn-like piece with a strong Beach Boys vibe

(dig the strategic use of tape delay on the piano on this one). Horst was the sole composer of the album's closing track, "On the Road With My Bag," a searching ballad with haunting two-part harmony vocals and a widescreen cinematic quality, it could be playing as the end credits roll in black & white: "I'm on the road with my bag in my hand / I'm on the road, write my songs in the sand." Roger names it as one of his personal favorites on the album.

Liberty released *The Petards* later that year. The cover photo was taken at Herzberg Castle and the same shot was also included as a poster inside. While the album was successful in Germany it went largely unnoticed elsewhere. Had it been recorded by a British or an American group, rather than a band of mavericks from a small village in Germany, it would be hailed worldwide as a classic.

At the end of October, a few weeks after the album sessions concluded, the Petards travelled to the Czech Republic to play some shows. "We were the first band from the West, after the suppression of the Prague Spring [January-August 1968] allowed to perform in CSSR. The first concert was in Prague in a huge cinema and the second took place in Pilsen and was broadcast live on the radio. I was very impressed by two contrasting experiences: on the one hand, there was the audience, who roared with enthusiasm, screamed and threw coats and jackets in the air. On the other hand: there were hardly any displays in the shops, the bullet holes from the Russian tanks could still be seen on the government buildings on Wenceslas Square in Prague. People told us that when the Russians marched in, in their desperation they twisted the street signs to misguide the tank columns."

Back in West Germany, the Petards' next single appeared in April 1969, and continued the pattern of featuring a catchy pop song on the A-side and a more adventurous experimental piece on the reverse. With its chirpy, sing-song

