

# The Petards



By Mike Stax

**T**he Petards were a remarkable band, among the most creative, versatile and idiosyncratic Germany had to offer in the late sixties and early seventies.

Between 1966 and 1971 they released four albums—one of them a double—and more than a dozen singles—most of them excellent, some of them dazzlingly brilliant. United by a shared vision, the four Petards—Klaus Ebert (vocals, guitar, keyboards), Horst Ebert (guitar, vocals), Rüdiger ‘Roger’ Waldmann (bass, vocals) and Arno Ditrach (drums)—navigated the sea changes from beat music through pop and psychedelia to Krautrock with resolute focus and a spirit of adventure and discovery.

Not only were they prolific, they were independent to an unprecedented degree for a band operating at their level during this era. Horst Ebert managed the band and handled their PR, Roger Waldmann oversaw a national network of fan clubs; they booked and promoted their own tours, designed their own record covers, logos, posters, stage clothes and light show. Almost without exception, every song released under the Petards’ name was composed by the two brothers Klaus and Horst Ebert.

For more than five years, largely under their own steam, the Petards played, toured and recorded incessantly. They played well over a thousand shows, sold hundreds of thousands of records, and organized the first German rock festival.

Their base of operations was a house in the small village of Schrecksbach in the Hesse region

of Germany.

I interviewed bass player Rüdiger ‘Roger’ Waldmann via email to get the band’s story.

## Chapter 1: Little Red Riding Hood-Land

“Schrecksbach is a small, typical village in good old Germany,” says Waldmann, “a beautiful hilly landscape with many forests, meadows and fields. The people were aware of tradition and connected to their homeland. Geographically, Schrecksbach was the center of Germany at the time, roughly between Frankfurt and Kassel. We four Petards were ‘exotic’ in the village: colorfully and conspicuously dressed, long hair, and we made loud music. The older villagers still wore the typical

*Schwälmer Tracht* costume as you can see in the photo with us. The *Schnatz* on the younger women’s heads was covered with a small red cap. That’s why the area is named after the Brothers Grimm: Little Red Riding Hood-Land.

“You would have thought that we were the outsiders in the village, but the opposite was the case, they were proud of us: ‘You will make Schrecksbach famous.’ When the local newspaper announced our first TV appearance, the streets throughout the Schwalm region were deserted during the broadcast; everyone was sitting in front of the TV: ‘Our boys’ are on TV.”

Rüdiger Waldmann—‘Roger’ to his friends—was born on September 23, 1943. “As a child I played the guitar with the boy scouts and sang hiking songs. Later I went to the Melanchthon School in Steinatal, a grammar school run by the Evangelical Church with a boarding school. The school was in an idyllic location in the middle of the forest, not far from Schrecksbach.”

It was at the Melanchthon School that he first met the Ebert brothers, Horst (born October 10, 1943) and his younger brother Klaus (born March 7, 1945) along with Hans-Jürgen Schreiber, the group’s original drummer. The brothers lived in Schrecksbach where their father was the village doctor.

“Hans-Jürgen and I went to boarding school until we graduated from high school; the Ebert