

BRÖTZMANN/BENNINK
SCHWARZWALDFAHRT 1977
TEXT BY DAVID KEENAN

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Dark Forest 1977

by David Keenan

In the spring of 1977, two musicians – Han Bennink and Peter Brötzmann – disappeared into the depths of a German deity named Dark Forest. They piloted a windowless Citroen van, painted black, from the Gasthof Hirschen in Donaueschingen, then plotted a rectangle around Buhl, Achern and the Schwarzenbach Reservoir, where they sang the song of the birds. In doing so, they become the mirror of Dark Forest.

They photograph its reflection, its empty spaces, each other. They make sounds; animal sounds, body sounds – true freedom – into the air. When a sound is released into the open air, where does it end? They are using tools of the time — a Japanese Stellavox portable recorder, a stereo microphone — in a quest for timelessness. Now, no tree falls in the wood, no leaf falls from a tree – for a weekend, at least – without Bennink and Brötzmann bearing witness.

In the heart of the wood there is a body of water that plays with the light. There is a stack of felled trees that plays like a xylophone.

In order to drive through Dark Forest you require a permit. 70% of Dark Forest is owned — temporarily, for who could own Black Forest in perpetuity – by the family Fürstenberg.

In Dark Forest there is a hideous statue of Hermann Hesse, its inexplicable ugliness as unnerving as the cone at the heart of the forest in Thomas Bernhard's *Correction*, where an artist is consumed by his own creation in the heart of the wood.

People had been forced to pay attention to Brötzmann's early-70s trio with pianist Fred van Hove and drummer Han Bennink. Their detonating of European jazz demanded it. In 1976 Joachim-Ernst Berendt, who ran



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