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THE EX

Press Contact: N / A

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"Starting out as an anarcho-punk band from Amsterdam and Wormer, The Ex has developed over the years into a melting pot of divergent musical styles, interweaving noise, folk, jazz and ethnic music, under one unique umbrella: Ex-music. Other features are the discordant, highly rhythmic guitar work, the rolling almost African drumming style and the furious way in which Sok delivers his often sarcastic lyrics. In the first few years The Ex denounce political and social evils in their typical black and white manner, and its members, active in the squat movement, come across as genuinely driven and committed individuals. They set a significant example for the alternative music circuit by the manner in which their records, accompanied by posters, booklets and other relevant readings, are released and distributed by the group itself."

Formed in early 1979, the first half-year the group concentrates mainly on an extended hit and run graffiti publicity campaign (the name being chosen based on the fact that it could be sprayed on a wall in two seconds flat!). Starting from scratch they decide who plays what by drawing straws. Next to Terrie and Sok there's RenŽ on bass and Geurt on drums. Coby takes care of the group's live sound. End of August and the first gig becomes fact, after which they begin playing regularly, especially in squats and youth clubs.

In June 1980 The Ex make their record dŽbut with the EP All Corpses Smell The Same. Bas takes over the bass and a couple of months later follows Disturbing Domestic Peace, their first album, produced by Dolf Koeienverhuur, an independent sound engineer who they will work with often in the years to come. Disturbing... contains rugged, short punk-statements, in which the delivery of the message is more important than the musicianship.

1981 sees Geurt leaving and Wim (post-Rondos, pre-De Kift) joining, and the group releases Weapons For El Salvador, a benefit-single for the resistance movement in El Salvador. They play everywhere, often with SvŠtsox, fellow squatters of Villa Zuid in Wormer.

In early 1982, after releasing History Is What's Happening which is a big musical step forward, they embark on their first Swiss tour. Together with twelve other local bands (a real punk boom: the "Wormerwave") they release the Oorwormer compilation-elpee.

A highlight in 1983 is Dignity Of Labour, the box of four singles inspired by the rise and fall of a paper factory in Wormer. Sabien plays the drums now, and for Tumult, released soon after, they have Dolf and British producer Jon (Mekons) Langford to help them out and they produce a sonic and adventurous record with a high level of sound quality.

After one more line-up change the 1984 quintet of Sok, Terrie, Luc, Yoke and Sabien make *Blueprints For A Blackout*, a real tour de force, an amazing achievement, much of it produced while improvising in the studio, containing experiments with more complex song structures and unusual results achieved by the combinations of unlikely instruments such as violin, oil drums, accordion, oboe and marimba, which gives a new twist to the Ex-sound. Later that year they release a split-7 inch with the Iraqi Kurdish group Awara, which marks their first encounter with non-western musicians.

After the benefit tour for the striking British miners, Sabien hands over her drumsticks to Katrin, and in January 1985 Yoke decides to call it a day. The Ex starts recording *Pokkeherrie*, once more a tight ramshackling guitar record. Then along with BGK they do a benefit tour for the anti-militarist Onkruid organization.

Former Rondos singer/guitarist John van der Weert joins the group in 1986. They achieve surprising sales-success, especially in England, with the double single *1936*, dedicated to the Spanish revolution, which partly consists of arrangements and adaptations of Spanish folksongs and is accompanied by a beautiful 144 page photo book, originals from the CNT archives. They play for three weeks in Italy and Switzerland and later in the year team up with Chumbawamba. Together they record the 7" *Destroy Fascism!*, under the pseudonym of Antidote.

In 1987, The Ex prove they are again open to new musical influences with the double album *Too Many Cowboys*, partly recorded live and revealing the influence of contemporary noise bands like Sonic Youth and The Membranes. The album is accompanied by a poster with lyrics, a 24-page newspaper and a flexi-disc with the song *Wie Vermoordde Hans K?*, based on Bob Dylan's *Who Killed Davey Moore?*. It's a year of extensive touring, playing in Britain, Austria, Germany, Greece (where they are, suddenly, eh... famous!), and in their fluorescent fire-engine they scour Eastern Europe. They make a very successful appearance at the Carrot Festival in Warsaw (the first Eastbloc-festival where bands from the West are allowed to play) and are immediately booked for the following year in Budapest. (Which results in a world record at the Czech border: a 17 hours hold-up!)

In 1988 The Ex do a tour through Italy and Switzerland with Chumbawamba, plus a 15-date tour in Britain. Jeroen is the new live-sound engineer. In the same year they release *Hands Up! You're Free*, a compilation of three John Peel sessions for BBC radio from the period '83 -'86, and record *Aural Guerrilla* in Rochdale, England which is again produced by Langford. By that time guitarist Nicolette has joined the group. The music is noisy, intense and frantic, with fierce lyrics. There is also a very special treatment of Peter Hammill's *A Motorbike In Afrika*. Meanwhile in Holland the group cause a stir with the anti-apartheid single *Rara Rap*, as well as appearing on *Intifada*, one of many well-documented compilation-albums The Ex have contributed to, showing their commitment to the Palestinian uprising.

Meanwhile reduced to a steady fourpiece, on the double-album *Joggers and Smoggers*, recorded in Amsterdam's squatted ADM-complex, The Ex is supported by a whole slew of guest-musicians, such as Ab Baars, Wolter Wierbos, Wilf Plum, and Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo and Thurston Moore. The album is slightly reminiscent of 1984's *Blueprints...*, but the musical palette is even more extreme, jazzy and experimental. Late 1989 the extended group performs *Joggers...* live during Rotterdam's *Dissonanten*-festival. In the autumn The Ex successfully tour the East Coast of the US for three weeks.

As befriended band Dog Faced Hermans takes a year off, their guitarist Andy joins The Ex. Spring 1990 they tour Russia, along with Dolf Koeienverhuur's band Morzelpronk and Estonia based Ne Zhdali. For the first time on the record front it's a bit quiet for a change. They release the single Lied Der Steinklopfer, the 10" album Dead Fish that comments on the decline of the indie music scene, and a split-7 inch with The Mekons.

The keynote of 1991 is the Ex-singles project 6: for one whole year every two months subscribers receive a single with extras such as posters and pamphlets. Every issue has a special theme, the music goes in many different directions, from rock and folk to jazz and rap, together with Kurdish saz-player Brader, Amsterdam improvisers and the Belgian comedians Kamagurka and Herr Seele. During the summer The Ex tour for four weeks through Canada with NoMeansNo and in November tour Britain and Ireland with Dog Faced Hermans. On top of this The Ex and the New York cello-player Tom Cora begin to work together, resulting in the well received album Scrabbling At The Lock, in which The Ex add a new musical dimension to their already impressive oeuvre. On this album the urge to experiment and the search for sounds that don't fall under the specific rock music category come to full growth.

The scouring Ex-noise and the improvisations of Cora are not just a success artistically. Scrabbling... is the best selling record in their history. Their constant drive for renewal, their social involvement and the incorruptible manner in which The Ex keep their ground within the pop industry wins them an unexpected recognition with the award of the Dutch BV Pop Prize '91.

Most of 1992 The Ex tour extensively with Tom Cora in North America and Western Europe. In May they release the Live at the Bimhuis video, the recordings from a special improvised concert they gave a year earlier. This results in an invitation to play the Bimhuis October Meeting; a gathering of important contemporary improvisers.

The recording of And The Weathermen Shrug Their Shoulders in 1993 is a further development of the double-unit Ex-Cora. Katrin sings a traditional Turkish tune, while Sok more than ever intelligibly conjures politically affected lyrics into beautiful aphorisms. Colin, bass player with Dog Faced Hermans, joins at this point to mix the live-sound. And Yoke returns, as the group's uncrowned queen of merchandise. Concerts with Cora take the group to Switzerland and Holland again and to prestigious jazz-festivals such as Nickelsdorf, Mimi and Moers. On their own they tour France and Germany. Kat also in this period joins the Ig Henneman Tentet for a Dickinson CD and tour.

After a US tour with Tom Cora in early 1994, and a couple of festivals in Nancy and Vilnius, The Ex work together with musician/performer Joop van Brakel (a.o. ex-Nasmak) and a dance-group led by choreographer Wim Kannekens. The concerts of the project It's All Too Beautiful are presented as performances, in which music and modern dance confront each other. By then, Dog Faced Hermans have done their very last concert and Andy joins the Ex-ranks full-time! This doesn't keep him from shooting a video documentary with Isabelle Vigier about Montreal's rebel news orchestra Rhythm Activism, comrades of The Ex for a decade. Sound-man Jeroen moves to Zürich, Switzerland, and is replaced by Colin, also of former Dog Faced Hermans.

Next to more Beautiful performances, in 1995 The Ex tour with Braaxtaal, the band based around vocal dada-performer Jaap Blonk. With the release of Mudbird Shivers The Ex is joined by vocalist Han Buhrs (a.o. Schismatics). His blues- and Beefheart-influences give

the Ex-sound an even more robust and at the same time experimental dimension. Terrie and Andy also team up for a series of improvised guitar-concerts. Shortly after, an even more intense collaboration follows with people such as Bennink, Baars and Wierbos from the Dutch impro-scene: the surprising double-CD *Instant*, full of instrumental, humouresque improvisations. An extended version of the group described as *The Ex* and guests tours Western Europe, including in its midst two highly contrasting drummers, namely Australian Tony Buck and Amsterdam based American Michael Vatcher. As well as this Luc, Andy and Terrie join Katie Duck's dance-group *Magpie* for a series of improvised performances. In December *The Ex* throw a musical party at the *Paradiso* club, announced as "Een Plezante Aangelegenheid" (i.e. a pleasant affair), after which the group's activities are postponed for exactly one year.

Although *The Ex* do not play in 1996, due to Terrie's year long round-trip through Africa, its members are not idle. Sok tours with the troubadouresque punk-folk posse *De Kift*, bass-player Luc can be heard on *The Untraceable Cigar*, the CD of the melancholic free-jazz quartet *Roof* (featuring a.o. Tom Cora), and Andy plays with the energetic klezmer-noise outfit *Kletka Red* who release the CD *Hijacking* on John Zorn's *Tzadik* label. In December *The Ex* do one short European tour, and Terrie joins in again in Austria.

Early 1997 Buhrs leaves *The Ex* to work with his own bands *Schismatics* and *Diftong*, and Katrin has a second post-pregnancy leave, while the others play a string of concerts first with drummer Han Bennink and then with Tony Buck. G.W. Sok publishes *Ex-rated*, a collection of the lyrics he wrote during the first 17 years of *The Ex*. In August Katrin is back behind the drums. *The Ex* are offered the "Jazz Compositie Opdracht" by the Dutch broadcasting company NPS. They are commissioned to compose an hour of music and invite the *Instant Composers Pool (ICP)* to join them for the performance in Groningen. Then the five-piece go back on the road, first in Holland, on tour with the Malinese kora-player Djibril Diabate, followed by the American East Coast and Chicago.

In 1998 they tour France, Holland and North Germany, and play various festivals: in Madrid (Spain), organized by free radio *ELO*; *Victoriaville* (Canada); and *Moers* (Germany; where they are joined by the *ICP Orchestra*). In June they record their new CD in Chicago (USA), recorded and produced by Steve Albini, an old fan, in his recently built studio. The new album, released in October 1998, on *Touch and Go USA* and *Ex Records Holland*, is called *Starter Alternators*. The well-received album is dedicated to Tom Cora, who died earlier that year. After the Summer *The Ex* tour Holland, together with *Lanaya*, a trio from Mali, with a.o. Djibril Diabate.

In early 1999, in February, *The Ex* embark on another U.S. tour. This time they visit New York and Houston, and then head for the west coast, where they join *Fugazi*, with whom they play seven more shows. Back in Europe they play Germany in April and early May, and later that month sees the release of the joint *Tortoise/The Ex* collaboration for the *In The Fishtank* series, a special studio and recording project of music-company *Konkurrent*, their distributors.

End of May they celebrate their 20th anniversary at the sold-out *Paradiso* in Amsterdam, where audience, invited artists (such as *Shellac*, *De Kift*, *Kamagarurka* and *Herr Seele*, and Eritrean vocal legend *Tsehaytu Beraki*) and band all have a wonderful time. The next week, in early June, they tour Scandinavia together with *Shellac*. In October they tour Italy, for the first time in 12 years, there's a concert at the *Hungaro Carrot Festival* in Budapest, Hungary, plus three shows in a row at *Instant ChavirZs* in Paris, France (with special guests), followed by a US east coast tour in December with *Fugazi*.

In the Spring of 2000 The Ex tours France and Poland (where their van gets stolen), and the Terp label releases two improv-duo cd's with Terrie, the first one is Hef, with saxophonist Ab Baars, the second is The Laughing Owl, with drummer Han Bennink. Kletka Red, Andy's other project releases Hybrid (on Red Note). Around the same time The Ex produces the soundtrack for director Dick Hauser's short dance-film Men Of Good Fortune. The next project, due to an invitation for the renowned Holland Festival, is the 20-piece big band called Ex Orkest. Directed by Hamish McKeich (of the New Zealand Opera), and with lyrics by author and ex-soccer international Jan Mulder (ex-Anderlecht, ex-Ajax), the orchestra plays the festival in June, followed by a short tour. It's an imaginary trip through the Netherlands with a series of bizarre, cultural and social curiosities. Live-recordings of this tour are released a year later as Een Rondje Holland. During late October early November the band does an extensive tour through Italy with the band Zu from Rome.

Early 2001 G.W. Sok releases Van God Los, the columns he had written as Goeroe Overflakkee for the now-defunct independent Opscene music-magazine. In April there are two new cd's, since next next to the aforementioned Ex Orkest live-album, there's the new Ex-studio-album Dizzy Spells, once again produced by Steve Albini. Partly served with the same sauce as the Starters album from 1998, but with ideas and performance more stratified and varied. The sleeve shows the band-members as tourists trying to find their way in a capitalist world. In contrast to many fellow-musicians of their generation, they haven't lost their original principles. As of old they rant against nowadays' consumer-society and the power of multinationals. The band plays the All Tomorrow's Parties festival in England, and tours France, Holland, and the USA. In June Luc and Terrie visit the studio together with members of Sonic Youth and ICP-orchestra, to record another Fishtank-session. Bass-player Luc tours with the band 4Walls (ex-Roof) through France and Canada. Andy plays guitar with Katy Duck's dance-troupe Magpie. The Ex Orkest makes a short European tour. In November The Ex is curating the 15th version of the three-day Unlimited festival in Wels Austria. During the International Documentary Filmfestival in Amsterdam IDFA the documentary Beautiful Frenzy has its premiere. The film about The Ex is made by the independent Swedish filmmakers Christina Hallström and Mandra U. Wabšck of cut Productions, and the film is also released on video in January the next year.

In January 2002 The Ex and drummer Han Bennink travel to Ethiopia for a very special series of concerts. In February Ex-drummer Katherina goes on tour in Belgium and Holland with Czech violinist/singer Iva Bittova. In April, shortly after their 1000th gig (which took place in Tourcoing, France) The Ex once again play the All Tomorrow's Parties festival, this time with the Ex Orkest, leaving a big impression on the international audience. In October the recordings of the previous year with members of Sonic Youth and ICP are being released in the In The Fishtank series. At the end of that month guitarist Andy plays with the Trio Moore/McLean/Fuhler (with Cor Fuhler and ex-Dog Faced Herman Colin Mclean). Together with elektronical musician Kaffe Matthews he releases the cd Locks. The duo tours France (Festival DensitZs) and Italy. During the same festival in France Terrie plays an improv-duo gig with Han Bennink. In November Andy and Terrie form a four-piece with Han Bennink and Hamid Drake at the Unlimited Festival in Wels. The cd Fiets consists of eleven improvisations by Terrie and double-bass player Rozemarie Heggen.

After 19 beautiful years together with the band, Luc has said goodbye to The Ex in September, although he does carry on on bass, with 4Walls. He's being replaced by Rozemarie, who already played with the others as a member of the Ex Orkest. Her musical background is modern music, and now, in early January 2003, she makes her official Ex-debut. By this time Grrrt has replaced Colin as sound-man. The band composes the music for Two Men Walking, a new short dance-film by Dick Hauser, and in February The Ex goes on tour for the first time with the new line-up, and with a brand new set of songs. They do shows all over Holland, together with the group Konono from the Republic of Congo.
