

“The Best Music of 2015: A Banner Year for the Bold.

... I've listened to...about 1,500 new albums in the past 12 months...**here are a dozen albums released in 2015 that I savor repeatedly for their musicality, clarity of statement and courage. ...**

“X” by Schnellertollermeier (Cuneiform) marries brutality to avant-garde rock and jazz. A classic power trio from Switzerland, **the band plays with punk fury and dazzling technical dexterity to create booming, bone-rattling music that stalks, confronts and astonishes.** On occasion, the trio steps back and offers wavy, vaguely threatening interludes, but soon that mighty force returns.”

-Jim Fusilli, **“The Best Music of 2015,”** *The Wall Street Journal*, 12/17/2015

“... Schnellertollermeier...have developed an approach to music where distinctions between conventionally marked terrains -- heavy metal, post-rock, prog, electric jazz, new music, improvisation, noise, modern composition, etc. -- meet in one place (the "X") and vanish. In their place is a music that is aggressive (at times brutal), wildly ambitious, and indefinable by common standards. ...The title track...acts as a manifesto for the rest. Everything happens at once: rhythmic dissonant harmonics, fractured melodies, spiraling dynamics, and polyrhythmic aggression confront, then converse and transform into one holistic thing. ...As quickly as the listener can identify a reference point -- whether it be King Crimson, Raoul Björkenheim, Ornette Coleman, Meshuggah, or Stravinsky -- it vanishes into the moment that emerges, sprawling with enormous force... **Schnellertollermeier's X makes a statement about what is possible for the guitar trio in terms of composition and performance in the 21st century, yet asks many new -- and at the moment unanswerable -- questions about them as well as we. 4/5 stars”** -Thom Jurek, *AllMusic*

“This young Swiss trio...helps redefine the conventional guitar-led power trio format and succeeds on many fronts. It's an adrenalized outfit... amalgamating progressive rock, metal, minimalism and Sci-Fi style free improvisation amid devastating and drums interactions. ...**the band's high-volume force-field could make Black Sabbath sound like a hotel lounge act.**

...the musicians operate on a markedly different plane than most power trios, which is...a tantalizing proposition for ...the trio's forthcoming projects. **4/5 stars”** -Glenn Astarita, *All About Jazz*, July 5, 2015

“A tumultuous trio which doesn't know when, or how, to stop. A thrilling, rampaging white-knuckle ride...” - “Swiss Jazz No Rules”, *Jazzwise*, October 2015

“AllMusic Best of 2015: Favorite Metal Albums: Schnellertollermeier X 4/5 stars. The Swiss power trio develop an approach to music where distinctions between conventionally marked genres meet in one place and then vanish” -“AllMusic Best of 2015: Year in Review, Favorite Metal Albums,” *AllMusic.com*

“...this Swiss trio explore the jagged boundaries of progressive and math rock. Alternating between stop-on-a-dime rhythm and thoughtful ambiance, X provides a take on modern experimental music from musicians too young and demiurgic to care about artificial labels such as genre. ...

Schnellertollermeier can be likened to some of the aggressive prog rock / noise from Japan, such as Happy Family and Ruins...They are well-placed with other math-rock labelmates such as Ahleuchatistas and Upsilon Acrux. **X is a worthy replacement for...anyone looking for a new take on the power trio format.”**

-Mike Borella, *Avant Music News*, 2/8/2015

“25 ALBUMS OF 2015... Schnellertollermeier – X (Cuneiform Records)

Lucerne, Switzerland – **Beginning with polyrhythmic melodies, adding in syncopated beats, and then blending it all together in a Swans-esque haze.** The 3pc calls it **“brutal jazz.”**

- Sean Warkentine, *CKXU*, <http://ckxu.com/news/25-albums-of-2015/>

“Schnellertollermeier...have managed to create...a musical universe that is only limited to whatever they allow themselves to be limited by. This three-piece...don't...keep to the original setting of a power trio. ... the reward is in the discovery of music you probably have never heard before in your life. Even though their music takes from influences as diverse as industrial, math metal (free) jazz, ambient music, psychedelica, ...they...sound every bit as coherent as possible.

It is their music that sets them apart. ...Their music is all about movement, spreading energy and challenging those who...listen. **...an album that is as fine as any Swiss clockwork. Perhaps it is the perfect definition...it all fits together like a machine never mind the details at work, just experience the music as a whole. ...** What was quite the magic experience, was that it so easily had me reliving experiences of listening to very young Pink Floyd and early Deep Purple in live settings. ...

... Utterly compelling... [9 out of 10]” -Marcel Hartenberg, *DPRP*, December 13, 2015

“...this is excellent stuff, off-kilter and unpredictable, noisy but not relentless. It's not quite as nutso as Ahleuchatistas, but

often in that same zone of really unconventional guitar-trio arrangement. ...**the result is jazz with a deep appreciation for the avant-garde of both jazz and rock.** The music often uses repeated patterns...that feature unconventional sounds, especially of the guitar; clicks, scrapes, harmonics, and what-all are strung together into phrases that are cycled hypnotically... **Infusing the entire set is a sense of adventure and discovery, of enjoying doing these strange things to the instruments rather than torturing them, of ignoring the existence of musical boxes...**"

-Jon Davis, *Exposé*, May 9, 2015, www.expose.org

"...Schnellertollermeier – a band whom one could compare to acts as far apart as Laibach and Magma, but only if you drop the elements that render those others so instantly distinctive, and replace them with the **relentless musical brutality that you could almost term "industrial" if it wasn't so organic.**

Space rock, if it was made only by the engines that got the rock into space in the first place, X is crunching, harsh, occasionally discordant, often repetitive. The title track is twenty minutes of relentless minimalism; other cuts are shorter.. closing track, apparently titled "///^\\///," and that's pretty, too. Or, at least, that's what Schnellertollermeier want you to think.

-Dave Thompson, "Cuneiform Records – Thirty-plus Years of Essential Listening", *Goldmine*, May 5, 2016, www.goldminemag.com

"**Schnellertollermeier's music itself is...menacing: it does not only set to explode, it explodes! And...then you realize you're in a string of explosions, with the band going from strength to strength.**

...the rhythmic reliance and focus of the pieces...makes the difference. On X the music constantly delivers a chugging vibe, and while it does have its melodic tidbits - these are woven into the rhythmic fabric. **It's a mindfucking experience. [Rating: 9/10]** - Avi Shaked, *Maelstrom*, www.maelstromzine.com

"...curious what Swans would sound like if Michael Gira finally embraced the animal within and lit out for the territory. Swiss trio Schnellertollermeier's jazz rock freak out "X" conjures up...that glorious racket would sound like. ...**there is nothing bloated or excessive about the aggressive, stripped down assault of bass, drums, and guitar... there is nothing academically pretentious about their sound. In "X" they've managed to yoke the frenetic energy of punk to the musicianship of jazz.** More importantly: **they sound cool as hell doing it.**" - Peter Schultz, *Nothing Sounds Better*, January 27, 2015, www.nothingsoundsbetter.com

"...X is beautifully recorded and mixed. I can almost see the skins resonate on the drum kit. That attention to detail is evident in capturing every noise that the band makes. Despite the production values, this is not an easy album to listen to. An incredibly tight and well-disciplined unit, this is a very talented bunch of musicians. The music is complex, extremely rhythmic and, within the confines that they undoubtedly set for themselves, varied. ... **The twenty minute title track...is brutal. ...it is if they are presenting pure music. ...It is a physical album...**This is experimental music.....**this material deserves to be heard.** It is extreme and it shows how good extreme music can be. **It is indicative of the breadth of the musical spectrum it shows that the spectrum can be stretched.**Perhaps that is the experiment in "Experimental Music". You are not going to put this album on and be bored... It is not for the faint-hearted, this is **an album made by supremely talented musicians probing the limits of what three people in a band can achieve. ...**" - Phil Lively, *The Progressive Aspect*, April 29, 2015, www.theprogressiveaspect.net

"**25 favorites of 2015 ... 8. SCHNELLERTOLLERMEIER - X, Cuneiform Records.**"

- Scott Scholz, "Favorites of 2015," *words on sounds*, January 20, 2015

"... On last year's X (Cuneiform), Schnellertollermeier collide jazz impulses, hard-rock aggression, and proggy complex the group's record label has called them a "brutal-jazz power trio." Guitarist Manuel Troller, bassist Andi Schnellman, and drummer David Meier play in tight lockstep, ripping through shifting time signatures, extreme dynamic swings, and breathless compositional patterns with a weightlifter's power and a gymnast's finesse. ..."

- Peter Margasak, "Clear out your brain with Schnellertollermeier's 'brutal jazz'", *Chicago Reader*, November 8, 2016

"This is one of the most exciting records that have come out of this country [Switzerland]" - Christoph Fellmann, *Tages-Anzeiger* (CH), February 2015

INTERVIEWS:

"SONIC EXPOSURE :: Schnellertollermeier", by Nocturnal Ghost, *Igloo Magazine*, April 12, 2015, igloomag.com
<http://igloomag.com/profiles/sonic-exposure-schnellertollermeier>

"...Schnellertollermeier...operate as one compact organism. This organism is savage and dangerous, but can be caressing and dreamy when it wants to.

...there's nothing quite like Schnellertollermeier's music out there at the moment. **With X, we get the trio at its finest form,**

twisting, stabbing and swirling, with full, merciless power. Elements of rock, jazz, metal, noise, industrial and ambient all there, but woven and merged in a genre-defying way. The six compositions simply burst with electrifying energy and edgy experimentalism, providing a skull-shattering, mind-boggling and body-stimulating experience. X is ambitious and wonderfully bizarre and hectic. ...

Meier :: ... I knew about **Cuneiform Records** through **Raoul Björkenheim** whom I met in Helsinki. I also play in a band in Finland called Equally Stupid. The tenor sax player is **Pauli Lyytinen** and he plays in **Björkenheim's Ecstasy** (they have a re out on Cuneiform). ...

...The music we play is really the essence of the mix of our musical personalities. We have spent a lot of time in the practice room melting our ideas into one sound. Our backgrounds (and maybe also our interests) were a bit different... this created a nice tension. We challenged each other and had to adapt and shape our voices into this emerging Schnellertollermeier sound. Our music is definitely very physical, people can feel the energy in a physical way. This could be called the rock element. Then there are of improv and contemporary music techniques and aesthetics as well. ... It seems to have an effect on people. Sometimes trance like, often just energy.

Troller :: I think the idea of a band sounding like one compact organism with each element/voice having its own importance is a big part of our new album. The music is a lot about energy, playing "on the edge" (sometimes also physically) but also a lot of finesse, textural work. The process of melting different ideas into one compact sound... Also the messing around with contrast the music fits indie/experimental pop venues as well as open minded jazz clubs or festivals. ...

... For the recording, we also did a lot of research, planned the room/studio/miking-situation really precisely. We used much more microphones than we ever did before...also recording the reflections on glass to get a lot of natural brilliance etc. ...the whole of sounding like one organism...was an important element to develop the new compositions and also to push the boundaries of classic guitar/bass/drums trio regarding the functions of the instruments, sounds, everything.

... Something that's also funny, people often hear some "clear" connections to King Crimson or other Prog bands in our music so far have never listened to a Crimson album or Yes or Genesis or other "classic" Prog bands..."

-*excerpts only; to read complete interview:* <http://igloomag.com/profiles/sonic-exposure-schnellertollermeier>

ARTICLES

"(((O))) Feature: Schnellertollermeier's Brutal Jazz Explorations," by Tristan Kneche, Echoes and Dust, December 14 2016, www.echoesanddust.com

<http://echoesanddust.com/2016/12/schnellertollermeiers-brutal-jazz-explorations/>

"September 1962: jazz legends Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, and Max Roach gather in New York City for a session that set the standard for the jazz trio. ... today, rock is still being pushed further, coming full circle with the "brutal jazz" sound of Switzerland's Schnellertollermeier... Sonically, the band is as far from Duke's trio as one could get, but Andi Schnellmann (bass), Manuel Troller (guitar) and David Meier (drums) have learned from *Jungle's* cohesive unit of playing as a single instrument. They're exploring jazz's complex intricacies, melodies and dynamics within rock's muscular impact. It's an update, but also a rebellion.

Troller corroborates the methodology. "The idea that the whole band can sound like one organism evolved in the process of writing [our third LP] *X*. Soloing, which happens in jazz a lot, is not really important to us anymore. ...Now it's more about precision and dynamics, interplay and energy."

...the crossover genre appeal of their sound enables the band to play both in open-minded jazz and rock festivals... STM is similar to the long metal instrumentals of Russian Circles and Godspeed You! Black Emperor, but also to the math structures of tradit piano trio Gogo Penguin, and Jersey Band... For all the post-rock overtones on their records, the band's more likely to lister John Cage than King Crimson. All three band members studied at the School of Music Lucerne, and interpolate strong theoret jazz ideas through their playing. Schnellmann, Troller and Meier also regularly hone their chops with other experimental jazz bands. The brutal jazz moniker then, only provides a framework through which to consider their musical tradition.

... the title cut... 'X' is STM's crowning achievement. ... the ultimate calling card for a band versed in various styles and eag showcase them. ...

After a recent live show, Troller asks if the performance was brutal enough for me. The set was an energized, exciting, tumultuous din – in other words, a bit brutal. But it was also just plain good fun."

- *excerpts only; to read complete feature:* <http://echoesanddust.com/2016/12/schnellertollermeiers-brutal-jazz-explorations/>

CONCERT REVIEWS of Schnellertollermeier

" Three young men from the Swiss Alps...take the stage at Umea's NorrlandsOperan to open [12 Points 2014](#), and nothing could more clearly signal the current generation's rejection of the conventions of jazz than the instruments they are carrying.

Schnellertollermeier's weapons of choice are made by Leo Fender and are plugged, through a battery of effects pedals, into lo

amplifiers. To open this peripatetic Irish festival, tagged "Europe's New Jazz", with such a loud bang is a daring programming decision... There are echoes of punk, metal and krautrock, and there is still that sense that it may all descend into chaos at a moment, but beneath Schnellertollermeier's punkish exterior beats a more urbane heart... **There are many paths to the water these days, and few members of the younger generation want to call it jazz. But whatever it is, it's the glowing edge of creative music, and in chilly, warmly welcoming Umea, Schnellertollermeier have got it off to a flying start. 5 stars**" - Cormac Larkin, "Review 12 Points – day one: Schnellertollermeier; Elin Larsson; Pixel," *The Irish Times*, April 9, 2014
"... Playing on a hastily assembled borrowed set-up their lack of panic was admirable and quickly eclipsed by **their music, a relentlessly tight and intense combination of clockwork interactive patterns and sudden grunge rock outbursts, playing full guitar/bass/drums thing for all they were worth.** The fractured sections of "Massacre Du Printemps" thus owed more to Captain Beefheart than Stravinsky, but the careful design of the music was its own thing. **This young adventurism will defin go far and was unquestionably my weekend highlight.**"

-Tony Benjamin, "Review: Cheltenham Jazz Festival 2017", *Bristol 24/7*, May 2, 2017, www.bristol247.com

"The young guitar-led Swiss power trio Schnellertollermeier struck Springs' mellow afterglow like electrocution. ...they ripped into frenetically strummed avant-rock assaults, minimally ping-pong melodic loops over chattering rimshots, threateningly crackling electronics and even Stravinsky (in a piece quite properly named Massacre du Printemps) in a set c noisily virtuosic, spectacularly undaunted fury."

-John Fordham, "Cheltenham jazz festival review – a canny mix of populism and creative eclecticism", *The Guardian*, May 2 2017

"... Today's performance...nearly didn't happen. An airline mix up found the band in Birmingham and their equipment in Amsterdam.

...**Bass guitarist Andi Schnellmann, guitarist Manuel Troller and drummer David Meier played with skill, flair and atti on the hired kit, their music a convincing amalgam of jazz, rock, electronica and contemporary classical music influences...**

The repeated figures and interlocking rhythms of the lengthy opening piece suggested the inspiration of both the minimalism of Steve Reich and the beats of contemporary electronic dance music. ...the music gradually became more layered...the interlocking rhythmic and melodic patterns sometimes recalling "Discipline" era King Crimson...

Orthodox soloing in the jazz tradition isn't what Schnellertollermeier are about. Instead the trio comes **over as a single conjointed entity, a textural and rhythmic juggernaut.** ...But for all their abrasiveness Schnellertollermeier can also be highly atmospheric suggesting further influences from the world of ambient or film soundtrack music...

Although one or two jazz purists were less than convinced the general reaction to Schnellertollermeier was overwhelmingly positive. I was certainly extremely impressed and would love to hear more... If the trio could sound this good on hired equipment what would they be like utilising their own gear? **In any event they were definitely one of my Festival highlights.**"

-Tim Dickeson, "Sunday at Cheltenham Jazz Festival, 30/04/2017", *The Jazz Mann*, May 9, 2017, www.thejazzmann.com

"Guitarist Andi Schnellmann, electric bass guitarist Manuel Troller and drummer David Meier brought **music full of deep in-moment interaction, rhythmic complexity and stunning about-turns.** The three musicians...gradually built up heavily culminating stretches, moving with an ebb and flow but also like squalls, with their sudden turnabouts. They were able to go **from serene hush to violent storm, from innocent tinkle or lullaby to high speed metal in convincing and touching ways.** They worked their way through "Moonchild," "White-Room" and "Albatros" modes, impressing with deeply into and out-of-moment dynamics, only to go further than where other noise groups have become stuck. **They were the music they played and they nailed it, always pushing the envelope.**"

- Henning Bolte, review of 12Points Festival in Umeå, *All About Jazz* (US), April 2014

"...**doubts about the edgy and contemporary nature of the festival...were soon put to rest by an excellent set in the club venue by the Swiss trio Schnellertollermeier.** For me, **this group is one of the most effective groups in Europe at integrating elements of jazz and rock into a whole; their set is constantly inventive** moving from slow build ups to very intense full-on passages, and contrasting the slow development of ideas with sudden changes of direction that reminded me of the Wayne Krzyzo Trio."

-Tony Dudley-Evans, reviewing STM's 2016 Moers Festival appearance, thejazzbreakfast.com