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Bio information: **SOFT MACHINE**

Title: **NDR JAZZ WORKSHOP – HAMBURG, GERMANY 1973 CD + DVD** (Cuneiform Rune 305/306)

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FILE UNDER: ROCK / JAZZ-ROCK

One of the most critically acclaimed, far-reaching and influential avant rock bands ever was **Soft Machine**, named after a novel by **William Burroughs**. It was one of the very first groups to bring together jazz and rock, and fuse them into a single, creative music. But unlike the other pioneers of "jazz/rock", all of whom (**Nucleus**, **Miles Davis**, **Tony Williams Lifetime**, etc.) had made their reputation as jazzers first, Soft Machine began as a psychedelic rock band, playing the 'underground club' circuit alongside its friends **Pink Floyd**. Throughout the band's lifetime, its lineup would continually evolve, reflecting the metamorphosis in the band's sound from pop and rock to groundbreaking experiments with electric jazz. The band released its studio albums on major labels, and played numerous shows both at home and abroad. For over a decade, until it disbanded in the late 1970s, Soft Machine created groundbreaking and provocative music that stretched the outer limits of rock– and of jazz.

Soft Machine was formed in **Canterbury**, England in 1966 by **Daavid Allen** (guitar), **Robert Wyatt** (drums/vocals), **Kevin Ayers** (bass/vocals) and **Mike Ratledge** (keyboards). Within a year, Allen was gone, a victim of immigration laws. In 1968, the trio toured the USA twice with the **Jimi Hendrix Experience** and recorded its self-titled first album. Immediately after the second Hendrix tour, Soft Machine disbanded. The group reformed in December, 1968, when the album was released, recruiting old friend and musical cohort **Hugh Hopper** (bass). This trio (Hopper, Ratledge, Wyatt) recorded **Volume II**, and toured until in October, 1969, when it grafted four additional members onto the group: **Elton Dean** (alto saxophone, saxello), **Marc Charig** (cornet), **Nick Evans** (trombone) and **Lynn Dobson** (soprano and tenor sax and flute). The financial and logistical realities of a septet meant that this experiment was hugely influential but short-lived. By January, 1970, Charig and Evans were gone. By the time Soft Machine recorded its highly lauded **Third** album, in the spring of 1970, it was a quartet composed of Dean, Hopper, Ratledge, Wyatt. After recording the **Fourth** album, Wyatt left the group and Soft Machine fell into disarray. Free-jazz drummer **Phil Howard** joined, but Howard only remained in Soft Machine a mere four months. Hopper and Ratledge were uncomfortable with the free-improv direction that Howard was taking the band, and asked him to leave. Their decision created an aesthetic rift with Dean. Soft Machine recruited the versatile jazz drummer **John Marshall**, (who had previously played with **Jack Bruce**, **John Surman**, **Nucleus**, **Graham Collier** and others) as Howard's replacement. Marshall and Howard each performed on one side of Soft Machine's **5** album. Despite Dean stating retrospectively that, "In all honesty, he was the ideal drummer for the band," Dean left within six months, being replaced by **Karl Jenkins** (soprano and baritone sax, oboe, keyboards), another Nucleus alumni. The quartet of Hopper, Jenkins, Marshall, Ratledge recorded Soft Machine's double album, **Six**. Feeling that he had said all he wanted to say within the confines of the group, Hopper then left Soft Machine, being replaced by the third Nucleus alumni, **Roy Babbington** (electric six string bass).

By the time this remarkable document was recorded at the **NDR Jazz Workshop** in 1973, Soft Machine was a dominant presence on the now widely popular jazz-rock scene, which had evolved out of the unique and edgy sound that the band had pioneered a few years before. Soft Machine maintained a significant and influential presence on Europe's rock and jazz scenes, with the band and its individual members consistently ranking high on the music polls. Soft Machine remained beloved throughout the course of its career, in both the UK and on the European Continent, and particularly in Italy, France and Germany.

Cuneiform's **NDR Jazz Workshop – Hamburg, Germany 1973** is a DVD+CD set featuring a previously unreleased Soft Machine show recorded for Germany's famous **NDR Jazz Workshop** series. Soft Machine had assembled a special show for this high profile appearance, with four sets and several special guests. The first set featured the Ratledge-Marshall-Jenkins-Babbington quartet; Cuneiform's release is the first-ever live release by this line-up, which would later record Soft Machine's **Seven**. For a later set, two guests – **Art Themen** (tenor and soprano sax) and **Gary Boyle** (electric guitar) – joined the quartet for a unique appearance, an exciting twist to Soft Machine's repertoire not captured on any other recording. For another set, former member **Hugh Hopper** joined the band as a guest to perform "1983", his last composition written for Soft Machine; included as an audio-only recording on Cuneiform's DVD, this is the only known live version of "1983". Cuneiform's double-disc release includes a CD featuring most of the music that Soft Machine performed at the NDR Jazz Workshop, and a DVD featuring the televised performances and bonus material. Soft Machine's televised concert at Germany's NDR Jazz Workshop has never been seen since its original broadcast over 35 years ago. This Cuneiform release is the single best quality video document that exists of Soft Machine in any of its lineups, featuring clear and beautiful visuals and superb live stereo sound.

NDR Jazz Workshop is the eighth Soft Machine CD released by Cuneiform. Each of Cuneiform's Soft Machine releases have focused on rare and previously unreleased recordings, documenting different lineups of the band, now extending about 5 1/2 years, from Autumn, 1967 to spring, 1973. Tracing the evolution of Soft Machine's music over personnel and time; presenting rare tapes to the public, usually for the first time; and helping to expose this legendary band to new audiences in the 21st century, Cuneiform's Soft Machine recordings are essential for long-time Soft Machine fans and captivating introductions for those approaching the legendary band for the first time.

PROMOTIONAL PHOTO

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of this image are available for download on www.cuneiformrecords.com in the "Press" section.



OTHER SOFT MACHINE ARCHIVAL RECORDINGS RELEASED ON CUNEIFORM RECORDS:



Middle Earth Masters (2006, Cuneiform Rune 235, CD)

Middle Earth Masters captures the 1967-era Soft Machine trio in full concert glory, recorded live at London's legendary Middle Earth club. The performance is unbelievably freaky for 1967, with songs that feature unusual structures linked by wild solos and improvisations. Those of you who know and love the first Soft Machine album will be amazed at how much more insane and insanely loud the band actually were and also surprised to hear that Mike Ratledge was doing the crazy solo fuzz organ parts (ala the opening of Facelift) in 1967. Includes rare, previously unissued photos and a short essay by Michael King about these tapes and his work to make them sound as good as possible.

Middle Earth Masters Line-up:

- Kevin Ayers – guitar, bass, vocals
- Mike Ratledge – organ
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals



Grides (2006, Cuneiform Rune 230/231, CD+DVD)

Grides presents the most famous version of the band recorded live at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam on October 25, 1970, in a high-quality, previously unreleased recording, just a few months after the release of Third and at the peak of their popularity. It showcases them in transition between releases, with the band performing 3 of the four works from Third, as well as some of the earliest recordings of material from the upcoming Fourth, including some very different arrangements to what would eventually end up on that release. Also included in this set is the first-ever DVD release by Soft Machine! It was recorded at the TV studios of Radio Bremen on the same date (March 23, 1971) as the radio session that Cuneiform released as Virtually, but is a

Grides Line-up:

- Elton Dean – alto sax, saxello, e. piano
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals

completely different performance.



Live in Paris May 2nd, 1972 (2004, Cuneiform Rune 195/196, CDx2)

The Soft Machine line-up of Dean, Hopper, Marshall and Ratledge lasted under half a year and recorded just one half of an album (side two of "5"). Live in Paris is a rare recording of this quartet during that lineup's final days; Dean left Soft Machine later that month. It is also a special, rare example of a Soft Machine concert recorded and released in its entirety. Live in Paris shows Soft Machine playing in top form. As Aymeric Leroy points out in the liner notes, "the music illustrates main composers Ratledge and Hopper's shift in compositional style towards looser and more minimalistic themes." The tracklisting consists of works from "Third" and "5" in often significantly different versions, as well as several pieces not recorded elsewhere.

Live in Paris May 2nd, 1972 Line-up:

- Elton Dean – saxello, alto sax, e. piano
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- John Marshall – drums
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ



Backwards (2002, Cuneiform Rune 170, CD)

Backwards is comprised of recordings from three different eras of the band: First on the CD is a recording of the quartet from May, 1970, made just about the time that the band had finished recording their Third album. This may be the single finest recording of the quartet version of the band, surpassing even their official studio releases. Next is two performances from November, 1969, featuring the septet version of Soft Machine. Since the only other available material by this version of the band is 20' of BBC recordings, this is an invaluable addition to the band's recorded legacy. Lastly there is Robert Wyatt's

Backwards Line-up:

- Elton Dean – alto sax, saxello (#1-5)
- Mark Charig – cornet (#4-5)
- Nick Evans – trombone (#4-5)
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals
- Lyn Dobson – soprano sax, tenor sax (#4-5)

original demo of "Moon In June", which would eventually appear on Third. The first half of this demo version was recorded in the USA in the fall of 1968, after Soft Machine had disbanded after their 2nd US tour, but before the band reformed for their 2nd album. Then, in 1969, the trio version of Soft Machine recorded the ending to their piece, and spliced on the final half.



Noisette (2000, Cuneiform Rune 130, CD)

Noisette is the third in our Soft Machine series, recorded January 4th, 1970 at the same concert as "Facelift" on Third, by the short-lived quintet formation of the group: Elton Dean & Lyn Dobson-reeds, Hugh Hopper-bass, Mike Ratledge-keyboards & Robert Wyatt-drums & vocals. Noisette features the rest of the concert, & showcases a band in transition from their earlier psychedelic/ progressive sound towards the jazz rock sound of Third & Fourth. It features the quintet performing versions of material from their 1st two albums as well as material not available on their studio albums.

Noisette Line-up:

- Elton Dean – alto sax, saxello,
- Lyn Dobson – soprano sax, flute, vocals
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals

Mastered directly off of the 30 year old 15ips master tapes, this release boasts superb live sound for the time period, & includes rare, unseen photos and liner notes by Aymeric Leroy.

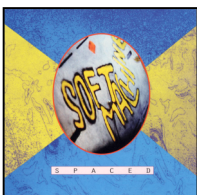


Virtually (1998, Cuneiform Rune 100, CD)

The previously unreleased show captured on Virtually, recorded 3/23/71, presents the classic quartet Softs [Elton Dean/Mike Ratledge/Hugh Hopper/Robert Wyatt] during their final European tour & just 4 months before their dissolution. The recording [licensed from German radio & taken from the master tapes] is superb for the time period, & the performance really sparkles, with everyone shinning, although special note must be made of Robert's drumming, as he plays with more gusto on this show than most from this period. With versions of all the tracks from Fourth, most of Third and much more, this 78' release, which captures the entire concert, is absolutely essential for any Soft Machine fan.

Virtually Line-up:

- Elton Dean – alto sax, saxello, e. piano
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals



Spaced (1996, Cuneiform Rune 90, CD)

Spaced is previously unreleased studio recordings recorded in early/mid 1969 by the "classic" Soft Machine trio line-up of Hugh Hopper [bass], Mike Ratledge [electric piano/organ] and Robert Wyatt [drums]. These heavily manipulated/ looped/etc. recordings were originally presented as the backdrop to a multi-media work entitled Spaced. After it's week-long performance, the tapes were forgotten for over two decades until rediscovered by Mike King. These recordings feature the band at their most radical, and while they would never again use the studio in such an extreme fashion, the work done here definitely influenced later

Spaced Line-up:

- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Robert Wyatt – drums
- Brian Hopper - saxophone

works such as Third and Hugh's 1984. With liner notes by Hugh and Bob Woolford.