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Klaus Dinger, Drummer of Influential German Beat, Dies at 61

By [BEN SISARIO](#)

Klaus Dinger, the drummer for the 1970s German band Neu!, whose mechanically repetitive yet buoyant beats had a wide influence in underground rock, died on March 20. He was 61.

The cause was heart failure, according to an announcement on Wednesday by his German record label, Grönland, which did not say where he died.

Mr. Dinger formed Neu!, which means New!, with the guitarist Michael Rother in Düsseldorf in 1971, after both had played in an early incarnation of the group Kraftwerk. Over three albums, the two perfected a droning, hypnotic style made up of Mr. Dinger's simple, perpetual-motion rhythms and Mr. Rother's fluid guitar effects.

Exemplified in songs like the 10-minute "Hallogallo," Mr. Dinger's beat was a steady pulse that seemed to extend rock's most basic rhythmic patterns infinitely. The beat came to be known as Motorik, an allusion to the industrial style then prevalent among German groups. (The name Kraftwerk means power station.)

Along with records by Kraftwerk, Can, Faust and a few other groups, the original Neu! albums — "Neu!" (1972), "Neu! 2" (1973) and "Neu! '75" (1975) — are landmarks of German experimental rock, a genre that was quickly labeled Krautrock by journalists and fans, both affectionately and derisively. (The musicians preferred the term Kosmische Musik, or cosmic music.)

Though the Neu! albums were long out of print before being reissued in 2001, they inspired countless artists, including [David Bowie](#), [Sonic Youth](#), [Radiohead](#) and Stereolab. The Neu! beat can also be heard in recent work by such groups as the Boredoms, from Japan.

[Brian Eno](#), the British producer who championed Neu! and later worked with Mr. Rother, once said, "There were three great beats in the '70s: Fela Kuti's Afrobeat, [James Brown](#)'s funk and Klaus Dinger's Neu! beat."

In his student days in the 1960s, Mr. Dinger played in rock bands that he has described as influenced by the [Beatles](#) and [the Kinks](#). He studied architecture but dropped out after three years to pursue music.

Mr. Dinger and Mr. Rother parted ways after the third Neu! album, and Mr. Dinger formed La Düsseldorf and later La! Neu? He reunited with Mr. Rother briefly in the mid-1980s and recorded an album, "Neu! 4," that was released in 1995.

In a 1998 interview Mr. Dinger complained that he never called his beat Motorik.

"That sounds more like a machine, and it was very much a human beat," he said. "It is essentially about life, how you have to keep moving, get on and stay in motion."