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Hunkeler in the wild



HANSJÖRG SCHNEIDER:
 "Hunkeler in the wild"
 Diogenes Verlag, Zurich 2019
 224 pages; CHF 30 or approx.
 EUR 22
 Also available as an e-book

"Hunkeler took a sip from his cup, satisfied with himself and the world." Retired policeman Hunkeler is enjoying a beautiful summer's day in his favourite park cafe in Basel. Suddenly an elderly lady comes rushing in, calling for the police. Out of breath, she tells the Turkish cafe owner that a man is lying dead by the park wall.

Hunkeler recognises the deceased immediately. He was a retired journalist who used to write scathing literary and theatre reviews. Hunkeler spots two pétanque balls situated between the man's legs. The third ball is nowhere to be seen. Was it the murder weapon? Hunkeler, who has no inclination whatsoever to get involved, returns home to his house in Alsace. Yet the episode continues to play on his

mind, so he starts to make inquiries. In this thriller, Hansjörg Schneider introduces us to the world of former Detective Inspector Hunkeler. However, Schneider's book is more than just a murder mystery. This is because the author cares little for the conventional whodunnit. Instead he is more interested in Hunkeler, the man and his mind. The story takes us through the broiling streets of summer-time Basel and, in particular, into the seemingly untouched countryside of melancholy-tinged Alsace. It soon becomes clear that there is something more sinister to the natural idyll than meets the eye.

Schneider gives a thrilling account of Hunkeler's excursions into the landscape and forests of Alsace. The scene featuring an intimidating wild dog is particularly expressive. It symbolises the uncontrollable wildness that has infiltrated the cultured environs of Basel since the murder. The author portrays Hunkeler as an obstinate, unruly yet down-to-earth character who follows his own intuition. Pithy dialogue lends vibrancy and a lovely effortlessness to the storyline despite the brutal circumstances.

This is Schneider's tenth Hunkeler murder mystery. Each volume in the Hunkeler series is a complete story and can be read independently of the other books.

Hansjörg Schneider was born in Aarau in 1938. His plays – around 25 of them – have been performed in many theatres. The Hunkeler murder mysteries introduced Schneider to a wide audience, repeatedly topping the Swiss bestseller list. Six of them were made into television films starring prominent Swiss actor Mathias Gnädinger (who died in 2015).

RUTH VON GUNTEN

Old-school hip-hop



CHLYKLASS:
 "Deitinge Nord".
 Chlyklass Records, 2020

Swiss-German rap ceased being a novelty a long time ago. Be that as it may, it feels strange that the Swiss-German pioneers of yesteryear are now forty-something dads – so seemingly ingrained is this musical genre in youth culture.

The men from Berne rap collective Chlyklass belong to the mature generation. The group's individual members had already made a name for themselves at the time of their first album together. "Ke Summer" (No summer) was released in 2005, after which the rappers went their separate ways. It took ten years for Chlyklass to make their follow-up record "Wisö immer mir?" (Why always us?).

The crew have now teamed up again, comprising rap formations Wurzel 5 and PVP as well as solo artists Greis, Serej, Baze and Diens. Their third album "Deitinge Nord" – named after the Deitingen Nord motorway service station – is proof first and foremost that age is no barrier to producing rap music of the highest quality. The rhymes still flow, the rhythms are spartan. Chlyklass remain faithful to their roots, showcasing old-school rap at its best. These guys have been around the block and back – and it shows with each accomplished beat. Many of the lyrics also attest to the band's maturity. Chlyklass know they are no spring chickens anymore. They look back and compare what the rap scene used to be like to what it is now. Their conclusion? "We're doing the same good shit as before!" Keeping it real is one of the most important virtues in rap.

Chlyklass naturally do like to brag, but this is part and parcel of the hip-hop persona. They also rap about some of life's more mundane matters. In "Nid üses Revier" (Not our territory), they tell the story of a father who projects his desire for freedom onto his dog. He sends the dog away and imagines his canine friend surviving in the wild as a wolf.

The 11 members of Chlyklass have adapted their narrative to the more grown-up world that they now inhabit. "Deitinge Nord" is a witty, direct, intelligent and timeless album that proves how old-school Swiss-German hip-hop can age gracefully without losing its relevance. These particular forty-somethings have never been more alive and kicking. Nor, in their best moments, have they ever sounded more polished.

MARKO LEHTINEN