

# So far so Gut

Musician, producer, label-owner and DJ, **Gudrun Gut** (pictured) has been a prime mover on the Berlin scene for over 20 years. She arrived from West Germany at 17, attracted by the 'breath of freedom' Berlin promised. After enrolling in art school, she played with an early incarnation of Einstürzende Neubauten and co-founded the all-female band Malaria! with Bettina Köster. Despite (or because of) the band's severe, very German aesthetic, it gained international notice, including support gigs with New Order and John Cage. Gut describes 1980s Berlin as 'a city of young people and pensioners', and says it has always attracted misfits.

After Malaria!, Gut began exploring electronic music technology with the band Matador and numerous other projects. In the mid 1990s she started the Ocean Club ([www.oceanclub.de](http://www.oceanclub.de)), a loose collective of like-minded artists. Gut and collaborator Thomas Fehlmann also began hosting and producing a weekly radio programme of the same name on RadioEins (Friday 11pm-1am, repeated Sunday 1-3am; 95.8 FM) to showcase an eclectic selection of music. And she founded the label Monika Enterprise ([www.monika-enterprise.de](http://www.monika-enterprise.de)), whose excellent releases by artists such as Barbara Morgenstern, Quarks and Contriva she describes as 'poppy electronica with an edge'.

When asked what makes the Berlin scene unique, Gut describes the city as a 'grey oasis', pointing to its relative affordability and

tolerance as factors in attracting artists. That tolerance, she says, has helped create a multi-layered musical culture that offers 'many niches to be filled'. But rather than having a typical sound or genre, Berlin's music scene is distinguished more by a subversive attitude, a Berlin tradition she sees as dating back to at least the 1920s.



Perhaps that attitude feeds what Gut sees as the rigorous criticism musicians in Berlin can expect from their peers. Artists get feedback quickly and directly. For that reason, Berlin musicians tend to start tours elsewhere, wanting the set to be perfect before it reaches the hometown crowd. But that, says Gut, doesn't mean there's no sense of community. While every label does its own thing, there's a sense of co-operation rather than competition.

'There's still that communist perspective, where you say, "Together we're stronger than on our own."'

Gut regards the creeping yupification of Berlin and the recent closings of illegal clubs with concern, pointing out that the renegade spirit of those places is part of what makes the city's scene what it is. But in general her view of the future is positive: the crisis in the music business appears to have been overcome, with major labels and independents now each doing their own thing. And she's unfazed by Berlin's financial crisis, saying she's 'never experienced a prosperous Berlin'. After more than 20 years helping to shape Berlin music, she's not about to let budget cuts get in the way.