

An **Original**Music preview/ review section of
Wilmington

CD Pick of the Week

Kraftwerk

"Trans-Europe Express"

TODD THOMAS
STAFF WRITER**THE NIGHT SCENE**All covers and starting times are subject to change at the door.
JANUARY 11-JANUARY 17

	WHERE	WHO	TIME	COVER
TH	Charley Brownz	T.M.C.	10:30 p.m.	No cover
	Diamond's Grille	Stretch	9:30 p.m.	No cover
	Firebelly Lounge	Catching Red	10 p.m.	\$2-\$4
	Katy's Great Eats	Winter, Open Mike	9:30 p.m.	No cover
	Rusty Nail	Mojo Collins	9:30 p.m.	\$5
F	Captain Bill's	Kelly & Woody	7:30 p.m.	No cover
	Cat's Cradle	Fighting Gravity	9:30 p.m.	\$5
	Circa 1922	Nic's Orchette	8 p.m.	No cover
	Firebelly Lounge	Humchuck Fire	10 p.m.	\$2-\$4
	Rusty Nail	Cape Fear Blues	9 p.m.	\$3
S	Charley Brownz	Nature Kids	10:30 p.m.	\$5
	Circa 1922	Nic's Orchette	8 p.m.	No cover
	Diamond's Grille	Mojo Collins	9:30 p.m.	No cover
	Firebelly Lounge	Polar Bear Band	11 p.m.	\$2-\$4
SUN	Charley Brownz	Stable Roots	10:30 p.m.	\$5
	Reel Cafe	DJ Craft-e	9:30 p.m.	No cover
M	Charley Brownz	Todd & Bret	10:30 p.m.	\$5
	Reel Cafe	Stretch	9:30 p.m.	No cover
T	Diamond's Grille	Open Mike	9:30 p.m.	No cover
	Katy's Great Eats	Karaoke	9:30 p.m.	No cover
	Reel Cafe	Stretch	9:30 p.m.	No cover
W	Charley Brownz	Brenda Norris	10:30 p.m.	No cover
	Reel Cafe	Eddie Deaver Duo	9:30 p.m.	No cover
	Rusty Nail	2-Blue	9 p.m.	No cover

Any local brainiac with a wall calendar and a telescope can tell you that it is January 2001 that marks the beginning of a new century, not 2000. So, finally, as we clumsily cross the threshold into the precarious future of modern music, it is important to reflect back on how the hell we got where we are. There seems to be no album more significant to the direction of contemporary music than Kraftwerk's 1977 seminal opus "Trans-Europe Express." If Radiohead's heralded 2000 release "Kid A" was any kind of crystal ball for the course of music, then "Trans-Europe Express" deserves more than a mere head-nod of recognition.

In the early 70's, a young German band, eventually settling on the name Kraftwerk, which is German for "power station," set out on an obscure musical path. With short haircuts, ties and business suits, the four visionaries experimented with various sound effects/noises, early synthesizers, drum machines, and even built some of their own electronic instruments. On stage, the band was rigid and robotic, appearing to be concerned only with propagating their propulsive rhythms, reiterating their musical themes of modern technology's influence on humans. By the mid-70's, the band was playing music that was strictly electronic based, something scathed and unheard of in the decade ruled by big rock guitar riffs from the likes of Boston and the Eagles. Far before the technological typhoon of the 1990's, Kraftwerk was writing songs about the perils of "Computer Love" and the joys of operating a "Pocket Calculator," both appearing on 1981's *Computer World*.

With few influences apart from a vague association with the heavily experimental group Can, Kraftwerk set up the framework for what would become modern electronic music. More importantly, their electronic surge powered the roots of dance, hip-hop, techno, most anything beat oriented and what would become called ambient music. Artists like Aphex Twin, Tortoise, Oval,

New Order, Depeche Mode, Devo, Radiohead and even Bjork would find it much more difficult to reach the musical stratosphere without the fuel of early star-gazers like Kraftwerk.

Almost a quarter century in age, "Trans-Europe Express" could easily pass itself off as a contemporary release. "Metal on Metal" dabbles in the use of industrial noises that synchronize themselves creating a mechanical symphony, including accelerated percussive techniques that were years ahead of their time. Combining constant deep beats, hypnotic repetition, short melodic synth phrases and the occasional mechanical voice-over, "Trans-Europe Express" is a minimalist masterpiece of continuous thumping and chirping that keeps heads bobbing without lulling neurons to sleep. The stark and mesmerizing title-track, "Trans-Europe Express," was one of the first to be recognized for its use of the vocoder, a device that mechanizes the human voice, causing it to sound strangely robotic. The dark and spacey "Hall of Mirrors," with its zombie-like German accented vocals, is a slow and chilling epic that spawned countless imitators. The flow of songs and seamless continuity of "Trans-Europe Express" only makes it easier to pay homage to musical genius that is actually listenable.

Whether it's the sounds of a DJ on the club dance floor or the infectious thump of hip-hop at a local party, there are few artists today who are not indebted to those four German geeks from the 70's who initially described their own music as "robot pop." Is it any wonder that Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood, an admitted Kraftwerk lover, so often primps himself to appear like a mannequin? Despite their stoic poses and occasionally inhuman appearance, the legacy of Kraftwerk proves they will always be much more than "Showroom Dummies."