

get them, do anything but encourage them. In the Communal Food Trough of Great Rock 'n' Roll, they are the thick greasy scum which the farmer burns off every morning. (Geffen) —Dave Thompson



▲ Jim Thirlwell: You just can't tie a good man down.

WISEBLOOD Pedal to the Metal EP STEROID MAXIMUS Quilombo

Jim Thirlwell, who should be nicknamed Sybil for the number of multi-personalities he's working these days, returns with two more products of workaholism. These recordings feature the input of others, so his perennial name "Foetus" does not apply here. But this doesn't necessarily mean these aren't as weighty as the mighty Foetus filaments.

Pedal to the Metal is the result of Wiseblood, the alliance between Thirlwell and producer/drummer Roli Mosimann. It's much more schizophrenic than their previous album *Dirtish*, as the two ravage blues, big bands and hip hop. "Stop Trying To Tie Me" is a junkie's paen that's far more ferocious than the majority of blue-eyed hip-hoppers. The title track and "Grease Nipples" are sublime big-band swingers that will have Mam-maw and Pap-Pap jitterbugging around the house shoving household utensils into little Harry Connick. This truly sounds like Messrs. Mosimann and Thirlwell fronting Glenn Miller's bandstand orchestra, and when you consider the whole thing is the product of perfectly seamless *samples*, it will swing you higher. If your grandparents can get past lines like "I'd like to strap you on sometime" and "Central Impaling Association/Federal Bureau Of Insemination," then it's Stardust Ballroom time. "Hey Bop A Ree Bop," is an extended diversion on the blues that runs almost ten minutes and is immediately forgettable. A better take is "The Fudge Punch" from *Dirtish*. Still, three out of four makes *Pedal to the Metal* essential.

Steroid Maximus is an all-instrumental installment of the Thirlwell psyche that is both cinematic and compelling. Some of Foetus' foils this time include Hahn Rowe, Voivod drummer Away, pianist Lucy Hamilton and hopeless Foetus-wannabe Raymond "Pig" Watts. Thirlwell hits everything here: tangos, the big bands, rocked-out Gregorian chants, string atonalities and Eastern tropics. Shut your eyes and use the disc to conjure ten mind movies à la Barry Adamson's *Moss Side Story*. The difference is that Thirlwell's program is more like a cable-television remote that he switches randomly. One moment you'll be making love in a sensual boudoir; the next you're taking a fast cab ride through rainy streets looking for Peter Gunn or John Steed and Emma Peel from Brit-TV's *Avengers* series.

If there was ever a renaissance man out of this whole quagmire we call "alternative" music, Thirlwell is it, because when you stay within one set of parameters, then you're a prisoner. (Big Cat, dist. by Cargo) —Jason Pettigrew

WRECKLESS ERIC At the Shop Wreckless Eric

It's not easy liking Wreckless Eric, you know. Mention him in public and people nod knowledgeably. "Ah, yes, 'The Whole Wide World,'" they'll say. And then, "Whatever happened to him after that?"

A few more years, a few more albums—Eric could have been enormous, one of the greatest songwriters ever, just dashing off new epics—this one's for Cliff (Richard, who recorded Eric's "Broken Doll"); this one's for Elvis (Costello, still trying to rewrite "Reconnex Cherie"); and this one is for Jesus (& Mary Chain, whose attempts to out-Velvet the Velvets drove Eric to out-Velvet everyone with the much-missed Len Bright Combo). Yeah, he could have been enormous.

Instead, he's been scribbling away in relative darkness, resurfacing once in awhile with a clutch of new tunes and another ragged variation on a theme of general roughness.

The Combo remain the acid test for anyone who claims they like noise. The Chicken Family took chaos even further. And *At The Shop* is Wreckless as you've never heard him before.

"This is not a slick recording," the culprit admits in his liner notes. "It is probably not an easy record to listen to."

That's not quite true. If you are a Wreckless fan (and let's face it, who isn't?), the fact this record even exists is a miracle; that it was recorded in his native, live environment only makes it more special.

And it is so raw, so chaotic, so overwhelmingly wonderfully loud, that with no effort at all you can picture yourself there, in a Paris record shop with Wreckless playing in one corner.

"Semaphore Signals" everyone knows. Five other songs are more or less familiar from different parts of Eric's past, but pride of place goes to "Our Neck Of