Steroid Maximus is an all-instrumental installment of the Thrillwulf psyche that is both cinematic and compelling. Some of Foetus' foils this time include Hans Row, Voivod drummer Away, pianist Lucy Hamilton and hopeless Foetus-wannabe Raymond "Pig" Watts. Thrillwulf hits everything here: targas, the big bands, rocked-out Gregorian choirs, string aotnologies 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 Thrillwulf'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, Thrillwulf 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 "Reckless Cherry"); 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 shuffling 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