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Small Change

Foetus

Love

Birdman Records / 2005

J.G. Thirwell is still at it. He's been making dense, uncompromising experimental/industrial records since 1981, fer chrissakes. Don't think for a second that the title *Love* means he's quieted down and joined the hippie set. "Aladdin Reverse"'s mega-bombastic finale sounds pretty much like Ministry. But at any given moment, you're equally likely to hear a dulcimer as heavy metal guitars. Thirwell is aggressively eclectic. He could probably make a killer industrial heavy-rock album, or a spooky, laid-back trip-hop record, or a clattery musique concrète disc -- but he'd clearly rather mix them all into one, and it's rare for any song to stay within one genre. *Love* is so disjointed that it's a challenging listen, even if you enjoy all the elements individually.

Thirwell's raspy, unsweetened voice does nothing to make it easier on newcomers (although the guest turn on "Thrush" from Elysian Fields' Jennifer Charles might). But if you're willing to put in the effort, *Love* might well repay you. My favorites are all deep in the disc: "Pareidolia," with its lyrical violin solo, ghost choruses detuned into horror-movie discordance, and startling bursts of noise; "Don't Want Me Anymore," which resembles Portishead's signature "Sour Times" at half-speed; and the crazy, Esquivel-like string and horn flourishes of "Time Marches On."

-- Doug Mayo-Wells, 06/04/05

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