

CREATIVE LOAFING

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May 30, 2001

New direction

Foetus keeps the ideas *Flowing* with new album

By Chad Radford @ChadRad

From the beginning of recorded history, every culture has dreaded its own myths about the end of the world. For Jim Thirlwell, the driving force behind the symphony of destruction known as Foetus, doomsday is just another day on the job. Since 1981, the Australian-born, New York City transplant has given birth to a soundtrack for Armageddon via an amalgamation of musical styles. After a six-year hiatus, Foetus has reemerged with *Flow* (Thirsty Ear), a second coming that breathes new life into Thirlwell's apocalyptic vision.

Performing under the guise of various Foetal monikers (Scraping Foetus Off the Wheel, Clint Ruin, Wiseblood), Thirlwell combines quirky industrial clatter with scorching sambas, jazz and crunching guitars. Coming of age alongside pioneering industrial acts such as Cabaret Voltaire, Einsturzende Neubauten and Throbbing Gristle, Foetus transcends the confines of industrial music by punctuating machine-like rhythms with a heavy dose of shock value.



Jim Thirlwell (aka Foetus)

Rating: 0.00000

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GET GRIP GOOD

The Atlanta underground music legend has the city's support in the fight for his life
BY GAVIN GODFREY P.32



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1 Get Grip Good
After being diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, the

"The 'I' word really devalues the musicality of what I do," explains Thirlwell. "[Foetus] gets lumped in with industrial music because I'll use found instruments, but in reality I'll be a singer/songwriter with a prepared piano in one breath and an electronic artist in the next. I know these things are misconstrued by people, and it all feeds into my demented sense of humor."

With song titles like "The Only Good Christian is a Dead Christian," "Mighty Whitey" and "English Faggot," the musician's message often is misunderstood as well. But don't expect to find some spiteful, racist homophobe at the helm. Rather, Thirlwell is an artist with a sense of humor that's as twisted as his music.

"The song 'English Faggot' comes from a message left on my answering machine by a guy who wanted to beat me up," Thirlwell says. "He called me an English faggot, and being that I'm neither English nor a faggot, I found the whole thing quite amusing and wrote the song from his perspective."

With his 1995 recording, *Gash* (Sony), Thirlwell reached further into the depths of aggression and sheer loathing than ever before, sealing his apocalyptic vision in an envelope and pushing it over the edge. Shortly thereafter, his contract with Sony was terminated, and Thirlwell dropped out of public view.

Six years later, Foetus signed on with Thirsty Ear to release *Flow*. He hit the road with a lineup featuring former Swans/Unsane percussionist Vinnie Signorelli, Congo Norvell bassist Brian Emrich, Frodus guitarist Howard Pyle and keyboardist Paul Benomo. In addition, Thirlwell unveiled *Manorexia*, a new instrumental project available exclusively through his website, www.Foetus.org, as well as *Blow*, a remix album which features contributions from Kid 606, Pan Sonic and several others. Each project acts as a step in a brave new direction for Foetus.

"When you've made the ultimate statement about the end of the world, you can't keep saying, 'and another thing.' It's already been said," says Thirlwell. "At that point, you have to take a step sideways and move on. The very title of *Flow* suggests a continuum of ideas instead of finality."

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From the deluge of mechanical beats in "Quick Fix" to the genre-bending mambo and film-noir soundscapes of "Suspect," *Flow* surges with unexpected arrangements. But the most poignant offering is *Flow*'s 13-minute climax, "Kreibabe." Cluttered distortions and unforgiving vocals conjure the brutish course of Foetus' entire body of work. As the music progresses into classical melodies that move from brooding to creepy, the song takes shape as a passageway to the next step of Foetus' vision -- a hellish image of what happens after the end has come and gone, and crosses into the unknown.

Foetus plays the Echo Lounge on Tues., June 5. Doors open at 9 p.m., Show starts at 10 p.m. Admission is \$10.

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