Thirlwell: the mind, the music, the evolution

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JIM THIRLWELL. J. G. Thirlwell, Clint Ruin, Steroid Maximus, Foetus, names and projects on which noisemaker Jim Thirlwell has worked since 1978. With literally hundreds of works varying in nature from demented big band music to brutal hardcore, soundtracks, producing, and remixing credits, Thirlwell is the epitome of a productive unique artist.

Amazing enough, we caught up with him in the midst of his busy schedule for a Colorado exclusive look into the music, the mixes and the mind of Jim Thirlwell.

The History

Thirlwell, native to Melbourne, Australia, was not thrilled with his surroundings and says, "When I left Melbourne in '78 and moved to London for five years...I was curious about the punk rock explosion and was swept away by that."

It was there that the infamous underground Foetus was initially conceived and executed. Thirlwell eventually found himself in a band and learned, "I didn't like working in a diplomatic environment sharing ideas with people." During that half-decade in the UK he "basically defined [him]self" there.

Time Warp—1993

STERIOD MAXIMUS

Of course, he has done a great deal since the punk era, but time is of the essence, and Thirlwell is doing even more work now than he has ever done. The newest project released by Big Cat Records in the UK (and distributed by Southern in America for the price of yer average CD) is billed under the name Steroid Maximus. The album, Gondwanaland, is material which he has been waiting to release for a while. It bears a striking resemblance to acid jazz, but as far as a category for it, he says, "I shy away from labels" and that ... "people have to drop their preconceptions of instrumental music."

It is reminiscent of material which came about under the name Wiseblood (yet another project of Thirlwellsness) with a brass accompaniment throughout that is really hazardous to your ears. "I've done a lot of mutated big band stuff," he explained. That is the best way to describe it, not just background music to play to unwind with. In fact, Thirlwell firmly believes that "none of my music is background music. Even if you play it in the background, it permeates your consciousness."

What sets this apart from the generally lyric-filled Foetus? "You have to write your own story without the narrative coming from the lyrics, so the interpretation is a lot more open and it's like a personal soundtrack for a movie which people create in their own mind."

Mesorho Enduro

Also in recent happenings for Mr. T is a new compilation of material from various artists including Cop Shoot Cop, Barramart, Tad, Jesus Lizard, Foetus Inc, and The Melvins, along with others. "That's my taste in current American rock," he explained. "I hate compilations usually and I wanted it to be a cohesive album which flows as an album as opposed to a collection of leftover cuts." All the tracks were produced by Thirlwell exclusively for the compilation. All the tracks have that magical touch of production which is slightly earthy, but they still have high-quality sound.

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Lately, J. G. Thirlwell is a name which you have probably seen on a multitude of mixes from artists varying from Nine Inch Nails and Pantera to The Red Hot Chili Peppers. As one can imagine, they are some of the most outrageously harsh reworks of tracks ever to hit the store. "When I do a remix, I put the emphasis on the 'ra,'" he proudly says. Though the new Silverfish album Organ Fan was produced by him, he admits that after all the hard work which goes into production "it's much more interesting to do a remix than to produce a band." They come about when "they give me a tape of their ultimate vision of their song and that's totally liberating to me because I fuck it up as much as I want, and it seems like the more I fuck it up, the more they like it." New mixes which will emerge soon include tunes from Curve, The Cult, Daniel Ash, and a track from Front 242's forthcoming album which, Thirlwell says, "is the best remix I've ever done."

**Everything Else**

Thirlwell is certainly an outstanding idol for the undefined district group of "alternative" listeners. So what of the controversial Foetus? He says, "It's under construction right now, a slow and painful process." Hopefully, it will emerge sometime this year and, don't worry, "Foetus is going to be the main front of my assault." As for everything else, Thirlwell says, "Music is the greatest fucking art form" and "I just want to be able to make great music which I can sit back and smugly listen to." The music is "an oral diary for [him]."

Very special thanks to Jim Thirlwell and the folk at Formula.