

FOETUS *Gash* (Sony)

The music of J.G. Thirlwell, in his many incarnations (**Foetus**, **Steroid Maximus**, **Wiseblood**, and more), always brings a wry smile to my face, and *Gash* is no exception. Thirlwell feverishly sketches out his larger-than-life portraits of urban dementia, paranoia, and tension on *Gash*, following in the same uncompromisingly intense vein as earlier Foetus work, with a new compositional maturity. While Thirlwell's controversial, raging stream-of-consciousness vocals may not be as upfront and blatant as on other Foetus albums (hey, there's always the lyric sheet!), his distinctive bristling, guttural howls are no less vitriolic, particularly on tracks like "Mighty Whity" (sic) and "Take It Outside Godboy". Instrumentally, Thirlwell is conducting an industrial-strength, post-modern orchestra inside his studio, bringing together grandiose, Wagnerian orchestration, powerhouse guitar noise (with the help of members of **Unsane** and **Cop Shoot Cop**), avant-garde electronics, smokin' swing-era brass, and hardcore pacing in a non-stop, eccentric and obsessive barrage of overwhelming yet intricate sound. Foetus embodies the spirit of Dionysus in the age of the Apocalypse.—**DSF**