New direction

FOETUS KEEPS THE IDEAS FLOWING WITH NEW ALBUM

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FROM THE BEGINNING of recorded history, every culture has dreaded its own myths about the end of the world. For Jim Thirwell, 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 Thirwell's apocalyptic vision.

Performing under the guise of various Foetal monikers (Scraping Foetus Off the Wheel, Clint Ruin, Wiseblood), Thirwell combines quirky industrial clutter 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.

"The 'T' word really devalues the musicality of what I do," explains Thirwell. "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, Thirwell 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," Thirwell 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), Thirwell reached further into the depths of aggression and sheer loathing than ever before.

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scaling his apocalyptic vision in an envelope and pushing it over the edge. Shortly there-
after, his contract with Sony was terminated, and Thirwell 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/Umsane percussionist Vinnie Signorelli,
Congo Norvell bassist Brian Enrich, Frodos guitarist Howard Pyle and key-
boardist Paul Benomo. In addition, Thirwell unveiled Manorexia, a new instru-
mental 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 state-
ment about the end of the world, you can’t
keep saying, ‘and another thing.' It’s already
been said," says Thirwell.

"At that point, you have to take a step side-
ways and move on. The very title of Flow sug-
gests a continuum of ideas instead of finality.

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

"Quick Fix" to the genre-bending mambo
and film-noir soundscapes of “Suspect,”
Flow surges with unexpected arrange-
ments. But the most poignant offering is
Flow’s 13-minute climax, “Kreishke.”
Cluttered distortions and unforgiving
vocals conjure the brutish course of Foetus’
entire body of work. As the music progresses
to classical melodies that move from

Jim Thirwell (aka Foetus)
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.

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