FOETUS DEAF / ACHE
(THIRSTY EAR/OUTSIDE)
FOETUS & MARC ALMOND SLUT
(SOME BIZARRE/THIRSTY EAR/OUTSIDE)

Jim Thirwell's one-man band started in London in the early '80s when several singles and two albums were released by his Self Immolation label. The albums, Deaf and Ache, have been out of print and collectable ever since, but now are finally on CD (albeit in limited editions of 4,000 copies each). Released under the name You've Got Foetus On Your Breath, Deaf and Ache set the stage for the fuller produced mayhem on the albums released by Some Bizarre a couple of years later. Based around Farfisa organ, lo-fi drum machines and multi-tracked vocals, 1981's Deaf featured the classic rant "I Am Surrounded By Incompetence" and the crooked funk of "Today I Started Sloggin' Again," The Foetus sense of industrial-pop produced several noisy moments, including the early manifesto "Negative Energy." 1982's Ache displayed Thirwell's obsession with propagandistic graphics, and more of his mixed-up Merry Melodies-gone-berzerk style. Foetus' "hard art" concept was to mix and match these cultural extremes, regurgitating them with a cynical and violent edge. On Ache's "Kid Hate Kid," he distorts the safe, happy theme of the Monkees' show for this tale of a budding psychopath. Thirwell was also tuned into the avant-garde, so the Foetus chorus treats the "rolling, rolling" lyric from "Rawhide" as if it was arranged by an Einstein-era Philip Glass on "Whole Wheat Rolls."

Also out now is a collection of collaborations between Jim Thirwell and Soft Cell's Marc Almond. Almond, for all his hits and pop crooning, tried his hardest to dirty his commercial image by participating in leftfield activities like PTV's pierced play times and a tour with Nick Cave and Lydia Lunch as the Immaculate Consumptives. His first collaboration with Foetus was on the Marc & The Mamrats album Torment & Toreros and a subsequent remix that was credited to Karl Satan & The Transvestites From Hell. Their second work together was the Slut EP, containing three tracks released in 1987 under the name The Flesh Volcano, which sported a cover painting by Robert Williams. On the title track, Almond emotes his balls of in an attempt to match Thirwell's feedback-laden track, which was actually made for the transgressive 1985 Richard Kern film Manhattan Love Suicides. "The Universal Cess Pool" was also in that film and is one of Jim's better instrumentals, all layers of drums, industrial percussion and pounding piano that build up to a frenzied climax. The final four cuts on this CD are from the Marc Almond single Violent Silence, which was released only in the Benelux in 1983 to commemorate a festival dedicated to the writer Georges Bataille. "A Million Manias" (originally from Torment & Toreros) is the most Foetus-like track, as riotous drums and circus organ back Almond complaining about his adoring fans. Marc and his management don't approve of this release so if you don't have the originals, buy it while you can.

-Chris Twomey.