



**JIM G. THIRLWELL is the master of the re-mix, often taking songs into utterly amazing, totally unrecognisable territory. JAMES SHERRY talks to the man on the eve of the release of his 'Mesomorph Enduros' compilation!**

**J.G.** Thirlwell, aka Clint Ruin, aka Foetus Inc, aka Steroid Maximus and a million other side projects, is the original studio hermit. Forget Al Jourgenson and his Chicago Wax Trax crew, J.G. Thirlwell has brought new meaning to the term 'not so much a studio as a way of life' by shelling himself up within the enclosed walls of his personally-built studio and heading at high speed down a one way road called 'creativity'. Christ, this man's got it in his blood. This month not only sees the return of Jim's dangerously fucked-up creation Steroid Maximus, but has also seen him find the time to put together what could quite possibly be (for

# MIXAMORPHOSIS

want of a better name) the ultimate alternative grunge compilation. Titled 'Mesomorph Enduros', it brings together the groundbreaking sounds of Cop Shoot Cop, The Jesus Lizard, Tad, Melvins, Pain Teens among others and acts as a perfect introduction to the wonderful world of ultra-noise! Jim tells it as it is:

"Big Cat Records were talking about putting together a compilation of American bands and I kept saying to them 'well, so and so should be on there, etc. etc.' until they finally just said to me 'well, why don't you just put it together?'. I contacted all the bands I wanted to be involved and chose the songs – some of which were especially recorded for the album and about half which were previously unreleased. It's taken a while to put together but I reckon it's a good cross-section of what's happening now."

Could this be the ultimate Thirlwell compilation tape? Is this your ideal companion for those long journeys whilst on tour?

"Yeah, you could say that," cackles Jim down the rapidly diminishing phone line. "If I were going to make a compilation tape to go on the road with, then this is what it would be. There are a lot of good bands around at the moment, but I'm not trying to document everything that's happening right now. I really have no idea what's going on in England at the moment, for instance, which is why there are no English bands on the compilation."

Jim actually lived in England a while back and found the place a little depressing to say the least. A reflection of his lack of knowledge of current English music perhaps?

**"I really have no idea what's going on in England at the moment, for instance, which is why there are no English bands on the compilation."**

"I've done my time there. I lived there for five years and when I left, I felt like I'd got out of prison. It's a very oppressive country."

But isn't America more so?

"Not really, you can be so oblivious to things here. It may be in some ways, but you can put blinkers on that and just disappear into your own little world. England's too small to do that."

Getting back to the compilation, do you see it as a kind of introduction for people new to this style of music?





"Sure, it can be good for that, but it's not meant to serve any purpose. It is what it is. I guess Nirvana had a lot to do with opening kids' minds. For instance, Sonic Youth played here last night and the whole place was full of fourteen year old kids! It's really good that people like that are becoming aware of underground music, even if a lot of it isn't that underground anymore. It's good and healthy. I'd rather see stuff like that in the charts than the vast majority of the shit that normally makes it to the top of the hit parade.

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"The term 'alternative' has become useless now anyway," continues Jim. "Do you call R.E.M. an alternative band? I don't think so... A lot of the bands that are being labelled alternative aren't exactly doing anything really alternative."

Working with bands from Curve to Prong and back again, Jim has developed into one of the most sought-after re-mix masters in modern, alternative music. Combining his extraordinary talent for taking a once traditional verse/chorus song and breathing new life into its tried and tested ideas with the already established music of his own, Jim is the doctor of music. He can re-build it. He can take a once puny and pathetic teenage guitar romp and transform it into something with both substance and ground-breaking atmosphere.

"It's funny, because there are a lot of people who have no idea that I do my own music as well," giggles Jim openly. "But yeah, re-mixing other people's stuff is really enjoyable for me, because the more I push the parameters of the song, the more people seem to like it. It can get to the point where one of the mixes I did earlier ended up featuring five minutes of me and one minute of the band!"

It would certainly be fair to say that Jim leaves his mark upon a band's song, twisting it way beyond recognition and churning it all up until he hits a point where the song may be completely unrecognisable from the original recordings.

"I do put a lot of myself in there. The band's already made

their statement and they pay me to do something totally different with what they've already done, so that's what I do."

Do the artists ever give you any strict (or not so strict) guidelines to follow, or is it a case of 'here's the song, do what you will'?

"Nope, they'll just give it to me and say 'fuck it up as much as possible', and believe me, I do! In most cases, I have to vaguely like the song in the first place before I can begin distorting it. I can take a song that I don't think is really great in the form that I'm given, but by the time I'm through with it I can normally turn it into something I really like."

Is there any particular Thirlwell sound?

"I'm too close to it to tell. I don't really go for a formula, I just kinda do it. Sometimes I'll push it as far as possible to see what happens. Sorta like playing chicken!"

Planned for release at some point next year will also be a brand spanking new Foetus Inc album that's just beginning to take shape in Jim's already over-loaded mind.

"I'm planning to make this one all vocal songs because the last couple of albums have been pretty much completely instrumental."

Are you going to be dealing much more with traditional, song-based ideas?

"Yeah, to a certain extent, but I wanna



**Master of Sonic ceremonies**

break down some of the barriers that exist in everyday rock music. I've got it all mapped out in my head, but it's a long process between what's in my head and finally getting it down on tape. Besides, what's actually in my head and what eventually ends up on tape is another story altogether."

Don't expect to hear from Jim for the next

few months. He won't be seeing daylight or experience the company of another human being for the next few months. To create the sounds that Jim has made his trademark, he'll impose self-isolation upon himself and hit full speed on the creative throttle. "I'll be performing, producing and engineering. I have to work nights so that there aren't as many distractions around. It also means I can wander around my house and mike up shit like furniture and stairs and whatever I feel like at the time. I really like the solitude of working on my own. There's no-one else about to muddy my vision of how everything should be."

A true artist. A man with a vision. A man who will not rest until the boundaries of music have been so drastically distorted, no-one will know whether they're coming or going or what particular youth culture each sound should be the anthem for. Just one culture. A fucked-up culture and Jim is our leader. This is where we score. This is where we have the fun. Follow. Blindly... ◀

