

JUNE 1993 *free*

INDIE FILE

THE CAROLINAS' MUSIC MONTHLY

ALSO

White Zombie
Cell
Dillon Fence
Studio B
upcoming releases
Jazz etc.
reviews
and more...



J.G. Thirlwell A.K.A. Clint Ruin/Steroid Maximus/Foetus Inc.

The Faces And Moods of J. G. Thirlwell

By Anne Heller

Jim Thirlwell is a man of vision with the talents to back it up. Originally coming to America from London in the mid-'80's with Lydia Lunch, Nick Cave, and Marc Almond for their Immaculate Consumptive tour, Thirlwell decided to stay in New York City.

He has created some of the most mind-bending music of our time, using such pseudonyms as Foetus and Clint Ruin (among others). His latest projects are Steroid Maximus (a disc called *Gondwanaland*) and the compilation *Mesomorph Enduros*, both released on Big Cat Records of England. Thirlwell also has produced remixes for the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Pantera, EMF, Prong, and a host of others. And he does all of the cover artwork for his solo project Foetus. Quite a lot for one mortal to accomplish in a lifetime, and his has barely begun.

Indie File: So Much of your music sounds like movie soundtracks. Do you plan this or is this just in your head or...

Thirlwell: No, I don't particularly plan it. May be it just has a kind of cinematic scope to it. But, Steroid Maximus material being all instrumental, I guess, leads to that sort of thing a lot more.

Indie File: Also, the Foetus stuff that you did I felt could easily be used as a soundtrack. Of course, I know about your work with Richard Kern, and I've seen a couple of films that you've collaborated with him on. So, is it just a manifestation of the movies that run through your head?

Thirlwell: I don't know where the movie quality might come to it. I'm kind of too close to it to really say. I take each song as a separate entity and create it as such. I don't really have a formula. Each piece is an entity unto itself. I use a lot of high peaks and valleys to create drama (in my music).

Indie File: Do you have any favourite movie soundtracks in particular?

Thirlwell: I like *A Touch of Evil* (directed by Orson Welles in 1958). The soundtrack to that, I think, is great. It's also one of my favourite songs. And I've got a great soundtrack which has music from the M-Squad. It's pretty cool. But, you know, divorced from a movie, I just listen to it as a piece of music. A soundtrack is a piece of music and because of the exaggerated emotions that (the characters) are going through, makes it a more intense listening experience.

Indie File: Who did the soundtrack for *Touch of Evil*?

Thirlwell: I think it was Mancini.

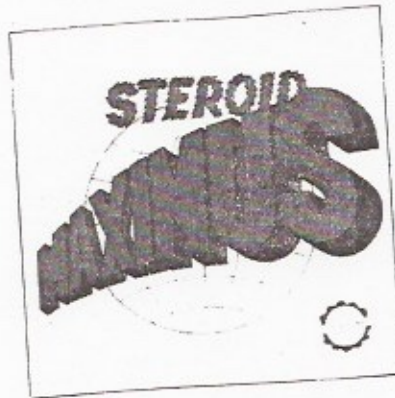
Indie File: I know that you collaborate with a lot of different people, not only on your own work but on remixes. Do you feel that different energies are created when you collaborate with these different people? How do these energies affect you and your work's outcome?

Thirlwell: Each collaboration is kind of different. Some might be collaborations (where) the people who I'm collaborating with may not actually play anything on the whole (recording) at all. It's a collaboration whereby if that person wasn't there and giving me input, it wouldn't have turned out the way it did or it may not have been created in the first place whereas other collaborations have been more directing co-composing and I'm sort of steering it and others and starting with their own ideas and molding it and I'm engineering and producing. Like with remixing, I'm pretty much given free rein. The band is not there and they've already made their final decision and they turn it over to me to put my input on, which is what I enjoy most. It's kind of no-hold-barred. I can do what I want. The further I can push the envelope, the more they seem to like it. So, I have a lot of creative input with that.

Indie File: Could you name some people you've enjoyed working with more than others?

Thirlwell: Not particularly. I mean, they all have their own qualities and often the collaborations are only for one song or something and each thing has its own identity, so I can't really pinpoint anything specific. If I've released it, I wholeheartedly believe in it so I dig them all for different reasons.

Indie File: Do you think you might do any more Steroid Maximus



projects?

Thirlwell: Yeah. Pretty much, I'm honing down just now. I'm writing a new Foetus album and that'll be where all my energies are going to be going for the next year or two. The only constants are going to be Steroid Maximus and Foetus for quite some time now. I want to keep the Steroid thing going as another outlet of different feelings and there are certain people I want to collaborate with on future Steroid material. But it's just going to be Foetus and Steroid material.

I've used so many different names that it's been really difficult to promote and educate people that this is me and now that kind of seems to be filtering into people's brains. I'll stick to those two.

Indie File: But you have such a distinctive sound. Even when I heard Wiseblood (another project of Thirlwell) for the first time, I had no idea it was you, but I thought, "God, this sounds like Foetus. This really sounds like Foetus. It's got to be Thirlwell."

Thirlwell: I'm kind of too close to it. I see Wiseblood as different musically in that it's more blues-based and, in some ways, a more American sound and has a different intention to it. I can't see another Wiseblood record in the near future. My and Roli's (Mosimann), schedules are so hectic. The making, five years from beginning to actual realization.

Indie File: That's a long time to work on one project.

Thirlwell: Bits of it were conceived and then put on ice for a few years and we came back to them and revitalized them and threw a bunch of stuff out. It finally came around to what it was.

Indie File: When you recorded Steroid Maximus, did you ever have all the guest musicians, guest collaborators together at once to record or did you just do it in bits and pieces?

Thirlwell: No, it was all done in my studio so I was engineering everything and my studio is customized in the way that I can work. It's pretty much impossible for me to record two things at once unless they're going straight into the deck. So, it was more of - taking people one by one and feeling out what I felt needed to be put on and then bringing in the specific musicians for the specific parts that I felt like - the violin part needed to go down on or the flute part or whatever. Those people would come in separately and pretty much I'd piece it together after that.

It was a pretty long process. I didn't even know I had finished it until I got out of New York for a while. I had been so close to it, I didn't even know I had finished the album.

Indie File: So, it took you about five years?

Thirlwell: No, it took me a lot less than that-- the Steroid stuff. Probably about two or maybe even less. Not necessarily two years nonstop, I was working on a bunch of other projects in between.

Indie File: What inspired you to create the Wiseblood--Clint Ruin persona?

Thirlwell: Initially I wanted to, when I first came here, I wanted to create a live performance situation. The idea was to work with three drummers or four drummers. The first drummer I approached was Roli

