

Foetus takes Times Square

For the past 14 years, Jim "Foetus" Thirlwell has recorded aggressive, melodramatic songs that resonate with militant beats, shuddering, apocalyptic rhythms and grinding electronics. His corrosive style has markedly influenced a host of industrial acts including Nine Inch Nails, Ministry and Cop Shoot Cop, which may explain his contempt for the genre.

"It's just a bunch of uninspired people who put a distortion box on their voice and use a dance beat," Thirlwell says from his dilapidated apartment in Brooklyn, N.Y. "I used to feel kind of bitter about all the people who've copied me, but now I just sort of laugh. Besides, it's going to take at least five years for anyone to be able to rip off my new album."

Indeed, *Gash* is a dense, jarring concoction of brilliance and bile that abounds with experimental phrasing and unconventional structures. Juxtaposing jazz swing, punk, pop and dance music styles in an elusively compelling manner, Thirlwell has created an intensely personal record that glorifies the existential agonies and frustrations of everyday life.

And what a disturbed life it's been. For Thirlwell, even walking to the corner store is an agonizing event, as he poignantly expresses in "They Are Not so True." "It's about standing in line after midnight in my neighborhood, which is right across from these heavy projects—being outside the bulletproof glass at the deli and feeling totally intimidated while people hit you up for money."

In contrast to its desperate, blood-streaked surface, *Gash* is filled with kitschy melodies and ironic touches that celebrate the glorious decadence of pop culture. Six television commercial phrases surface on the album, including "I can't believe it's not butter," "Be all that you can be" and "Why ask why?" while the cover art features a drawing of a naked woman broadcast over the giant TV screen in Times Square. Although the image is simple enough to grasp, it wasn't so easy to execute. The people who own the screen refused to let Thirlwell broadcast breasts with nipples and insisted a bra be drawn onto the picture. Thirlwell fixed the image in postproduction, removing the bra and reinserting the nipples.

"It was a lot of work, but it's totally hilarious," he says. "I love the concept of taking over Times Square. Having my name in lights next to signs that say *Cats* and Minolta is totally subversive, and I think that's a big statement."

—Jon Wiederhorn

