

MELODY·MAKER

TOMORROW'S MUSIC TODAY

FOETUS IN EXCELSIS CORRUPTUS DELUXE

MALE

(Big Cat)

JIM Foetus doesn't like you. You the human litter strewn unanswerably across the ground, you the mindless scavengers searching for suckers even further below your own lowly position on the evolutionary scale. But mainly, Foetus doesn't like you because you're all figments of his imagination. You're all just like him.

Foetus (aka Clint Ruin and Jim Thirwell) is a bit of an expert on disgust. Over the years he's played out its maze of justifications, its perceptual tricks and theatrical conceits virtually to the point of self-extinction, and this live double-CD, recorded in 1990 at New York's CBGBs, brings them all home to roost. It's sprawling, demented and spectacularly histrionic, Foetus raging throughout as if he's following a lead of his own entrails.

If Nitzer Ebb had been brought up on James Ellroy, Elmore Leonard and PCP, they might have made something like this.

"Male" sees Foetus as some kind of nihilistic gumshoe, his gravel-coated vocal twang narrating his nightmare world of death threats, nuclear family wipeouts and undercover espionage among tempestuous guitars (provided by ex-Swans members Algis Kizys and Norman Westberg) and noir-ish orchestration as if he's the central character in a pulp crime novel. Foetus doesn't just get off on crime's episodic violence, but also on its sub-layers of conspiracy and all-inclusive indictment, uncovering a holistic system of sickness like a mirror image of his own paranoid mind.

"Male" may be camp OTT, but in Foetus' case self-irony doesn't ease the burden, it sparks the fire beneath his cauldron of loathing. I suggest you stew in it for a while.

JON SELZER