

CHRIS BOHN on the pre-natal grumblings of You've Got Foetus On Your Breath. Pictures by PETER ANDERSON



FIRST FOETAL POSITION STAY WELL HIDDEN

FOETUS? FOETUS Under Glass? You've Got Foetus On Your Breath? Phillip Toss And His Foetus Vibrations? Foetus Over Frisco? It might sound like a sick joke to you, bub, something to gag on when you're already sated with pop, punk, rap and funk, but its long-running nature should've convinced you by now of its intent.

During these past few years the Foetus family has been issuing records whose sharp satire and venomous sarcasm have hit and hurt with unnerving accuracy. That is, when they've been heard. They are bitter, twisted assaults on the very things that have spawned them: consumer junk, art masquerading

IS THERE LIFE AFTER BIRTH?

as disposable pop and Vice Versa, trashy TV, bad food . . . More simply, if you are what you're fed, then Foetus bites the hand that feeds it.

It is as shockingly exploitative as *The Thing*, as terribly affecting as *Eraserhead*, as flippant and funny as *Howard The Duck*. The one thing it is not is cute, like *E.T.*

Only something so unerringly right as Foetus would've dared make a virtue out of impatience and intolerance. Foetus songs bark, spit and crackle, ride on a breakneck soundtrack that meshes conventional dance patterns and systems music to found a logic all its own.

So just who is Foetus and why ought you let it under your skin?

Displaying uncommon restraint, Foetus has preferred to stay hidden under a stone, leaving others to fight hand over fist for publicity. The Foetus reputation has nevertheless spread word of mouth, so much so that it has now reached the subsistence level of selling out the first pressings of the six records released to date. The last one, a second LP by You've Got Foetus On Your Breath called 'Ache' (well received by *NME*) prompted an SOS call from John Peel and a subsequent session, to be broadcast shortly.

Foetus, it would seem, is about to burst the cult cocoon. The natural next step is either

back to oblivion or on to world conquest. After due deliberation, Foetus has decided on the second course.

SECOND FOETAL POSITION NATURAL CHILDBIRTH

"WE'RE NOT wilfully obscurantist," asserts Foetus' protector Jim Thirlwell, founder and director of Self Immolation Records, the label set up to nurture the Foetus projects. "We want people to come round to our way of thinking as opposed to observing current market trends and releasing the appropriate product accordingly . . ."

"We don't hold marketing meetings in the recording studio," sneers his artistic alter-ego Frank Want, the one constant through the various Foetus mutations.

"I mean," continues Thirlwell, undeterred, in a wryly monotonous voice, "the artefact must be judged solely on its own merit."

Hmm. Risky.

"Yes," he concurs, before leaving me alone with Want. "In the long run this has generally led to people being scared off, as they have no other yardstick by which to judge the releases. This is not right. Nevertheless, that's why the Foetus family has retained its anonymity to date: so the observer will have no preconceptions about the music via the appearance of the perpetrator."

Looking into the deep sunken eyes of Frank

THIRD FOETAL POSITION CHANGE YOUR MIND/MIND YOUR CHANGE

*(From the 12 basic tenets of the Church Of Immaculate
Preconception, Self Immolation's Mail Order religion,
currently awaiting ordination)*

WHY ARE YOU so Frank, Want?

"There are so many things to get angry about," he storms. "So much dross exists already. . ."

If on first hearing Frank's foetal screams appear to be celebrating that same dross, listen again. Beneath the spluttering rhetoric there lies a savage logic determined by what Frank fancifully calls "aesthetic terrorism".

"That is, plunder the music, use it and abuse it for what it evokes," explains Frank, "make a play on what it is associated with. I mean, a listener has a knowledge of musical language and forms, which can be drawn upon by using a particular instrument or by calling on a distinct mood and then deliberately flinging it out of joint. The same applies to words. . . take a metaphor, mix it, muddle it. Pick up on misheard phrases or paraphrase concepts."

How about an example?

"OK. I give you 'Instead . . . I Became Anemone'. Geddit? Or do I have to spell it out for you?" He laughs. "Ehm, here goes: *'I'm just trying to make my whims meet up with my ideology/When is an indulgence not an indulgence? When it's a necessity. There's no patent on the obvious, only on the seven deadly sins/One man's cynicism is another man's philosophy!/Who cares about the thoughts of a drunken sailor?/Who cares about the thoughts of a sunken failure/One man's fish is another man's poisson'*. And so on."

Care to let on what it's about?

Frank gets slightly flustered before replying: "A social outcast, a one-man-against-the-world parody perhaps. At least the narrator's not self pitying!"

FOURTH FOETAL POSITON LEAVE ME ALONE

WHAT DO YOU want, Frank?

"Basically, my inalienable right to get angry about something, be it pop politics, the USA as a metaphor for stupidity, religion or Jah Wobble. To poke at it and/or kick the shit out of it."

Thanks for being so frank, Want.



FINAL FOETAL POSITION CURL UP WITH:

- Phillip And His Foetus Vibrations: 'Tell Me, What Is The Bane Of Your Life?'
- Foetus Over Frisco: 'Custom Built For Capitalism' 12"
- You've Got Foetus On Your Breath: 'Deaf' and 'Ache' LPs
(Available through Rough Trade)