

for and what they have," Cray says, "are open minds and talent. The open mind is so important. I can see where they'll go in the future, but they aren't locked into one groove. I know we can grow together."

Cray's roots are entrenched in blues — B.B. King, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, and the influences shine in his unique vocal and playing styles. Traditionalist to the core, Cray is a beacon in the sea of new guitar heroes who repeatedly sacrifice all their values for the sake of speed. He's one of those rare players whose every note, every word, pierces straight through to the listener's heart. And best of all, he does it with just one guitar—no overdubs, no effects, no state-of-the-art technology.

A dedicated Fender Stratocaster man, he converted from Gibsons "eight or nine years ago." The current opening sets run forty minutes, during which he sticks to a 1964 favorite, with only temporary change to another '64. "We've been talking about using wireless," he remarks, "because Richard and I are on the same side of the stage and as we go back and forth, we get all tangled up in each other's cords. If this set was any longer, I think we'd end up trying ourselves into a big knot!"

On stage concentration focuses primarily on lyrics. "That's the most important thing," he asserts, "to get in the frame of mind where you can sing with conviction and the people can understand the emotion you're trying to get across. And when I play, sometimes my mind wanders off; I can get a little spacey!"

Personal satisfaction comes "when the band is on, the tempo is right, I sing real well, and can push and lead in a supportive role." To the listener, Cray hopes to convey "the feeling of sad blues. In this music, it's important that...I hope people get the point; that if I sing about something they're familiar with, that there will be something in the end that makes them feel better; that tells them they aren't the only ones to confront that situation. My playing, again, is an extension of those feelings. That's why I keep my solos simple so people can understand. The guitar can talk sweetly, melodically, through teasing lines like B.B. King, or if you feel raucous, you can crank it up and just let it burn. I convey all those emotions when I play. It's just a matter of taking it song by song."

JIM THIRWELL

It's been tough going for me — trying to come to some understanding of this figment of the world's collected imagination known as Jim Thirwell, Clint Ruin (father and son of Wiseblood), and a host of truly vulgar Foetus atrocities (the best known being *Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel*). Who the hell is he? Probably all of those figures and more rolled up into something resembling a tab of incredibly nasty acid with arms and legs. Fine, but who is he?

Well, he's Foetus when he's in the mood to point out all the indignities and hypocrisies of human existence. He's Clint Ruin when he feels the need to pontificate a bit more vehemently concerning such subjects. He's Jim Thirwell when he's talking about the other two or simply in need of a cup of coffee. This last entity most likely exfoliated the other two, but don't be so sure it didn't happen the other way around.

Right now, he's Thirwell, at least for the time being, and he's bravely attempting to explain those other guys and the various musical forms with which they express their social inquietude. "It wouldn't be worthwhile if I didn't bare my soul. It's necessary — raw nerves and all that. I like to sing from as deep down as possible and write from as deep down as possible; which I don't think I've thoroughly achieved yet."

It is within such manifestations of the soul that Thirwell exposes the aforementioned characters, the most recent being Ruin on the *Wiseblood* LP, *Dirt Dish*. The album exists as a collection of ramblings — social poetry, if you will — proving the speaker to be an aware yet somewhat hostile MC from the school of psychological didacticism.

The music contained within *Dirt Dish*'s two sides possesses some of the most obvious and insightful honesty ever to be recorded. Granted, some of it can get fairly gruesome — dealing with subjects as diverse as neo-satanism to outright down and dirty sodomy — but it all hits home...violently. It makes the statement that he wanted it to, and that's all he ever wanted to achieve.

Such is the attitude of the artist. Jim Thirwell just happens to be an artist painting pictures with words and sounds that tie in together as music — nothing more, nothing less. The medium, however, poses certain questions about Thirwell and his approach to the entire process of making a product that will actually be sold to the public. "I use *that* medium because I like the avenues of mass communication that are already set up. It's such that I'm making a highly personalized thing and everyone has an original."

Still, he doesn't really make his "inextricably linked manifestos" to please the public — the stuff he cranks out is infinitely too personal for such a tedious climax. "I'm doing this for myself — I'm not a social worker." Indeed, he's the kind of guy who, "speaks to himself through records. If other people get into it, fine." His motivation is his own well being, brought forth by an aural purging of the soul and mind. "It's a form of exorcism. It makes me feel better and somehow more resolved to do it. I have to do it." One man's therapy is another's consolation. Jim Thirwell's therapy is simply a necessary form of his own immolation. — T. Eckert

