

Foetus Resurrectus

Writer: JORDAN WEEKS

This year Jim G. Thirlwell, the central force behind the sonic enigma that is Foetus and all related titularly modified projects (Foetus Interruptus, Scraping Foetus off the Wheel, Foetus on Your Breath, Foetus All Nude Review), celebrates the 20th birthday of the project, which he's been helming for exactly half of his life. A few years ago, however, the Melbourne, Australia native wasn't even sure if he'd be around for the party.

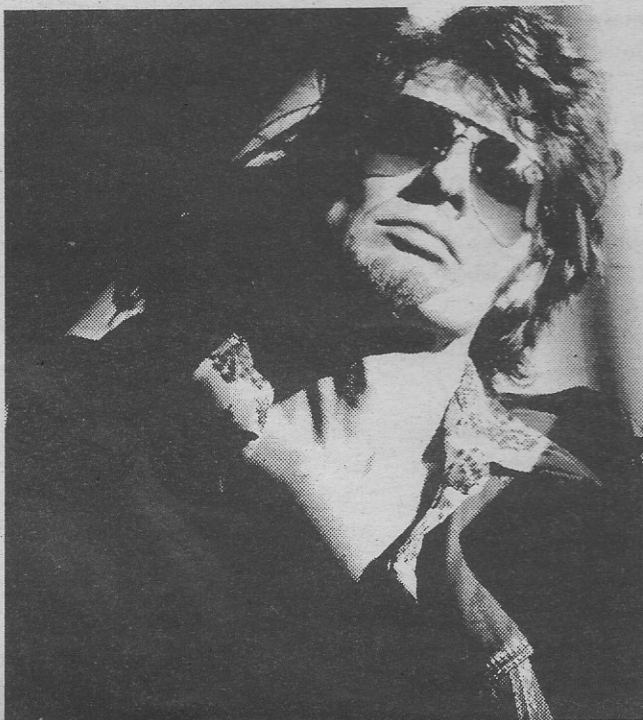
"When you can smell the death pouring off your body," Thirlwell says over the phone from California, "you start to put on the brakes. I was like, 'Hang on — maybe I *don't* wanna die that way.' And that's when you reach the fork in the road. I had to take control of what had gone totally out of control. So it's been a kind of a crawl back in that way, to relearn how to live. And, of course, I wouldn't be here if I hadn't done that."

After a lifetime of what one might euphemistically call nihilistic pursuits, the man responsible for inspiring legions of fringe music fans who would later become formidable musical forces themselves — including Trent Reznor, KMFDM, Mr. Bungle, Tool, and even Marilyn Manson — took some time off to change his ways and get back into the musical fray with a clear head.

"I know that people have preconceptions about, you know — what happens when someone 'cleans up their act,'" asserts Thirlwell with a bit of a snarl. "[People think] they're gonna 'lose their edge.' I find that to be quite opposite, because everything that I was trying to push away, and oblivate, and chemically medicate myself to avoid, is now screamingly raw up in my fucking face. So," he pauses for a laugh, "that's a *good* thing."

Apparently. The tremendous rumble that is *Flow* (Ectopic/Thirsty Ear,

2001), the first new Foetus studio album in six years, evinces that the man of a thousand names (and projects) is back with a vengeance. The album — on which Thirlwell plays all but a few instruments — boasts a refreshingly wide array of sounds and styles. The album pits deadly, distorted drum and guitar bursts



Jim Thirlwell

("Quick Fix") against unsettling, super-catchy lounge-corps ("Cirrhosis of the Heart"), swing-abilly grind ("Victim or Victor?"), and a jazz thump that recalls Mancini ("Heuldoch #7B"). The centralizing force is Thirlwell's gruff, weathered growl and howl, and his cryptic lyrics.

"I don't know how anyone can work with the same instrumentation and format for a whole album," muses Thirlwell. "I get bored with it."

Thirlwell's creative antsy-ness doesn't end with Foetus. In keeping with his

past audio adventures under aliases including Clint Ruin, Steroid Maximus, Wiseblood and DJ OTEFSU, Thirlwell unveils Manorexia, his most recent sonic alter-ego. *Volvox Turbo* (Ectopic Ents Inc, 2001), the debut Manorexia disc, is available exclusively from his official Web site (www.foetus.org) and at current Foetus shows.

Thirlwell has remixed songs for such Foetal sonic progeny as NIN, Coil and John Spencer Blues Explosion, as well as Pantera, White Zombie and Red Hot Chili Peppers. The tables turn this September with the release of *Blow*, an album featuring re-workings of Thirlwell's *Flow* tracks by such notables as DJ Food, Amon Tobin, Franz Treichler of the Young Gods, NIN's Charlie Clouser, PanSonic and Kid 606, among others.

"This is the first time I've actually gotten other people to remix me," says Thirlwell of *Blow*, "and I'm totally thrilled by the results."

As for the current Foetus live show, for which Thirlwell employs a more organic rock approach, he says that "the band is the gun and I'm the bullet."

"That moment that you're up there on stage, and when all of the elements are working in your favor — the band is on, and everyone in the band can hear each other — that's when you can really kind of lose yourself, and that's what it's really all about for me." ☛

Foetus, Hedra and PPDB (Pittsburgh's Premiere Dance Band) play at 8 p.m. Fri. June 22, at the Millvale Industrial Theater. 422-8864.

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