FOETUS 7.94 C F
Gash; Null EP (Columbia)
My stereo tried its best to process these

Facial hair

recordings. Ordinarily, it wouldn’t have bothered, since Foetus usually wreaks havoc on its delicate digestive system; but it seems that on his new album, Gash, and the EP Null, Foetus (aka Jim Thirlwell) wants to show the world a softer or at least more palatable side.

Really, though, this is pretty much the same old Foetus. Gash and Null don’t skimp on the trad Foetus accouterments: turgid symphonic deployments, bursts of big-band panache, spy-movie soundtrack snippets, middle-eastern rhythms, and gothic bombast plopped into a corrosive mix of metal-on-metal muscle guitar and Foetus’s trademark nasal bark. More human-sounding than Al Jourgenson or Chrome, less whiny than Trent Reznor, angrier than Tom Waits, but containing elements of all four, Foetus has consistently used a style of vocal processing that’s become a prototype for industrial bands everywhere. It’s only the substantial lessening of the music’s abrasive quality that sets these releases apart from previous recordings in Foetus’s 13-year career.

Believe it or not, Gash is so good that you don’t even miss the thorough cochlea-shred of Foetuses past. From the sluggish blues of “Mortgage” and “Friend or Foe” to the rattlertrap “Mighty Whity” (hearing Foetus shriek “Kill Whity!” over and over is worth the price of admission) and the sophis-