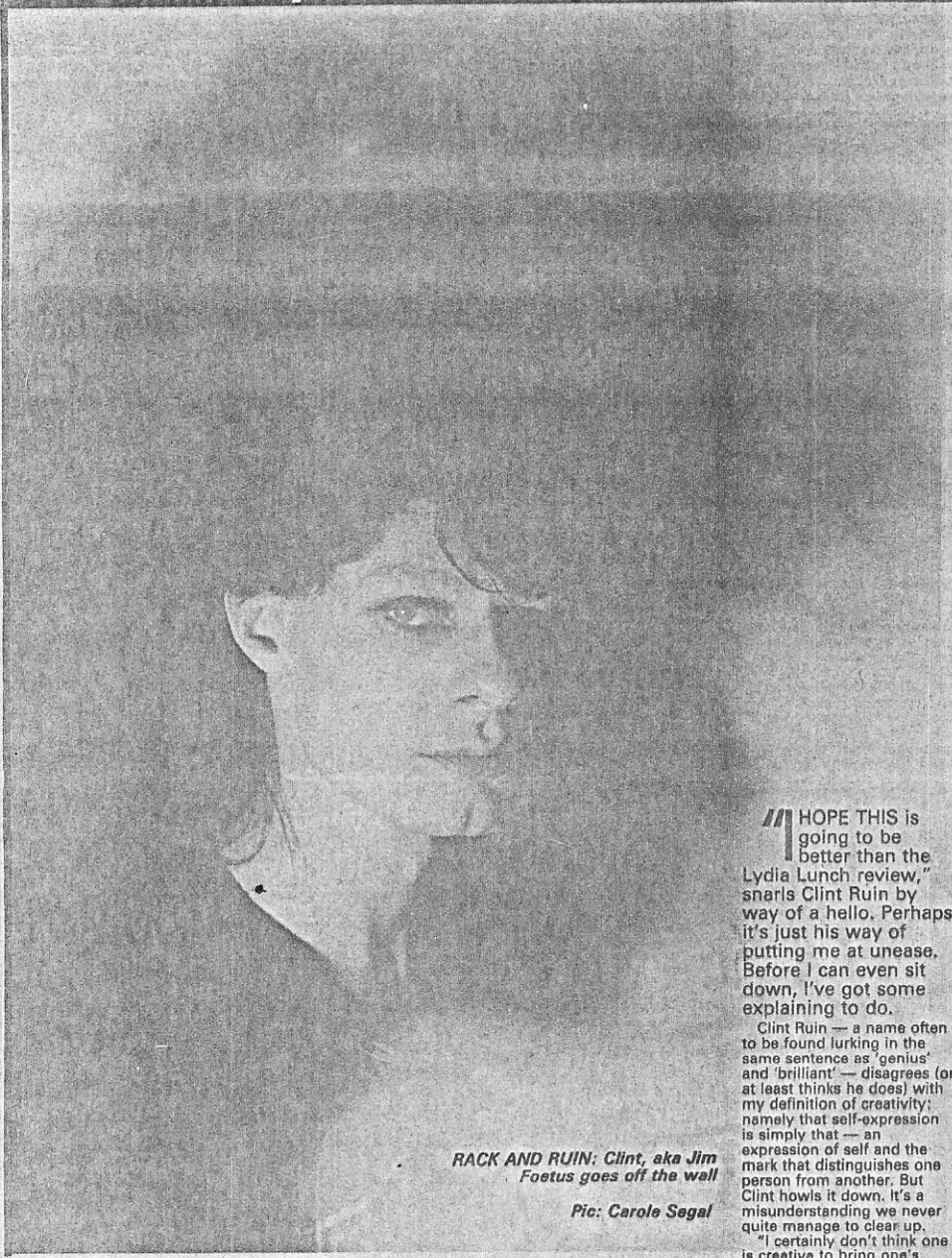


it's the wheel thing

Jane Simon adopts the Foetus position



RACK AND RUIN: Clint, aka Jim Foetus goes off the wall

Pic: Carole Segal

I HOPE THIS is going to be better than the Lydia Lunch review," snarls Clint Ruin by way of a hello. Perhaps it's just his way of putting me at unease. Before I can even sit down, I've got some explaining to do.

Clint Ruin — a name often to be found lurking in the same sentence as 'genius' and 'brilliant' — disagrees (or at least thinks he does) with my definition of creativity; namely that self-expression is simply that — an expression of self and the mark that distinguishes one person from another. But Clint howls it down. It's a misunderstanding we never quite manage to clear up.

"I certainly don't think one is creative to bring one's station above an ordinary person," he fumes, ignoring my protests that this wasn't what I said at all. "I see creativity as a purging of whatever you're trying to get out of your system. And communication. Not making yourself high and mighty."

"I know some people feel a need to be creative or expressive, but I don't see that in myself at all, or in Lydia, as a need to heighten our station or anything. It's just basically expression and getting all this bad blood out of your system."

The latest arterial spurt from the Foetus camp comes in several forms: the third LP, 'Hole', a 'Calamity Crush' twelve inch as Foetus Art Terrorism and more.

"Three weeks after that there's going to be a twelve inch by Foetus Uber Frisco, and three weeks after that there's going to be an empty box called 'Foetus Of Excellence'."

And what's that?

"That's basically an empty box to put all your Foetus releases in."

The story so far: In 1980 Foetus Under Glass ("two Brazilian statistics collectors

and Frank Went, their penpal from Athens, Georgia") released a seven inch, 'OKFM'. Following an assassination attempt on one of the members in Brazil, Frank Went moved to San Francisco where he assembled 'You've Got Foetus On Your Breath', recorded 'Wash It All Off' and the first Foetus LP, 'Deaf'.

Meanwhile, Self Immolation A&R man, Drake Buck, tracked down the original Foetus Under Glass vocalist Philip Toss, and with YGFOYB they recorded 'Tell Me What Is The Bane Of Your Life' as Philip And His Foetus Vibrations.

Back in San Francisco, several members of YGFOYB and others whose names could not be revealed for contractual reasons formed an offshoot, Foetus Over Frisco, and released a twelve inch single, 'Custom Built For Capitalism', a turning point towards greater acceptance. A second LP, 'Ache', followed soon after.

Which brings us to Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel featuring Frank Went and, of course, Clint Ruin.

"I wanted to go on to something harder and it made it easier if I changed the name," Clint explains. "Also, I was sick of the name 'You've Got Foetus On Your Breath'. It had been assimilated by people — it was starting to get a bit tame."

C LINT RUIN now lives in New York, but is back in London for a couple of months. Sadly, there won't be any live appearances while he's here.

In New York, the man and his backing tapes played four or five dates, and as Foetus Flesh with Roly Mosimann from NY band the Swans, there's been an entirely new set with all unrecorded material.

"The motive behind that was to create a very sick, very violent and macho king of music, to have a very strong impact, and it worked really well."

"On stage I just sing. I don't like to be hindered by instruments — I prefer to be a singer/performer/assaulter. Some of the gigs have been getting really violent, which is good — people love it. I'm amazed. They want it. THEY WANT VIOLENCE COMMITTED TO THEIR PERSON."

"Originally, I had this idea for a really visceral group which I was hoping Foetus Flesh (now renamed Wise Blood) would be. But it took a different direction, which I think was just as valid. But at some time in the future, I will put together a proper all live group — the thing is, I don't know the people I want to work with. I don't know hardly anyone I would feel comfortable working with — I could count them on less than one thumb. So I don't know how I'll put together the ultimate live experience, but I'm sure I'll be doing it sometime in the future."

One of the people who must be counted on that thumb is, presumably, Lydia Lunch — "world's finest purveyor of personal politics and communicator of such".

"You can quote me on that," says Clint, so I do. They've already worked on various projects together, including the six-song project entitled 'Swelter' which they took around the States, picking up percussion along the way.

Do you and Lydia think alike?

"Similar, yeah. We have a similar sense of aesthetics, which are manifested in different ways. You know — truth, beauty, filth."

That sounds a bit glib, don't you think?

"Glib? I see it as pretty optimistic, myself. I embrace it."

Another communication breakdown. I hadn't realised before that glib is the opposite of optimistic. Well, what does it mean — truth, beauty and filth?

"Well, the truth — like fact. Beauty (pronounced bewdy) — like bewdy... and filth. Like filth."

How can you talk about truth when your whole career, your whole identity has been, if you'll excuse me, a pack of lies?

"That's only to create an enigma. I wanted to stay in the closet. I wanted to create a third person, if you like, in the form of a seven piece band from San Francisco or whatever, to diffuse the focus from myself. Because my philosophy was, and still is to a certain extent, although I'm finding it impossible to keep up the propagation of these myths — basically that there wasn't any focus on one central person."

"So people don't see this PERSONALITY, you know, or... I'll see what sort of haircut he has so I know what the music's going to be like."

"I wanted to put it one step away from myself, so I could go into a record paper and see the form of a representative Self Immolation records and I've got this great album by this seven piece from San Francisco. So that I'm not saying: 'Oh, here's my album, can you review it?'"

I T MUST have really done you in then, when people started calling you Jim again.

"Yeah — because it's none of their business to call me Jim Foetus. I hate the name Jim Foetus. I'm Clint Ruin."

Have you always been Clint Ruin?

"No, I used to be Frank Went."

Do these people have separate identities?

"Yeah, Frank Went's more of an intellectual, more of a bastard. Whereas Clint Ruin's more of a public figure, he's more of the manifestation of the Foetus phenomenon. I like it when people ring up and say 'Is Clint there?'. It comes from Clint Eastwood, who's a big hero of mine. But it's childish to have too complex a mythology, I think. I get sick of people suggesting Foetus names and stuff. Like people saying 'Oh, you should have a group called Foetus In The Cigarette Machine' or something. Good joke. I'm not that interested in the propagation of the mythology — I just don't want to be known as Jim Foetus."

Down the hole this is what we find. While 'Hot Horse' and 'Clothes Hoist' require little investigation to discover that they are, in fact, just totally about sex, 'Sick Man' is a foible-by-foible dissection of Nick Cave: "I was in a bad mood with him when I wrote that, I think."

And side two is essentially: "A Hell quadruplyology — no — quintology. It was around about late 1982 when I was living in a horrible apartment and I had no money and couldn't leave the house because I was really miserable. I hated everything and that's basically an expression of that time."

"The songs all run consecutively in varying degrees of f---ed-up-ness, starting with 'Street Of Shame', and they run further and further until the extreme of 'Cold Day In Hell', which is pretty heavy."

"Meet Me In Poland Baby", back on side one, is pretty heavy, too — a dialogue between Hitler and Stalin translated into a lovers' exchange."

"I do use a lot of war imagery, specifically World War II imagery. I wouldn't say it's a burning passion, but it's like a *leitmotiv* of my work. The next album takes that a bit further — not the invasion of Poland, but about living in a concentration camp. Not that I've got personal experience of it, but I use this imagery in an analogical sense, taking an experience I was in and transposing it to the Nazi invasion of Poland."

Will this purge go on forever? Do you ever see yourself getting clean?

"Yeah, definitely. I could possibly get to a point where I feel at one and I can sit cross-legged on top of a mountain, I suppose. But don't hold your breath."