Scraping Foetus
Off the Wheel

Nail
Homestead Records

The obvious question: Is Scraping Foetus Off the Wheel some kind of put on or what?
The obvious answer: Sort of.
Consider (or don't) the play of names and products, the Foetus variations, from the renowned Foetus Family (You've Got Foetus on Your Breath to The Foetus of Excellence), as well as the Werewolf project (e.g., "Motorshag"). Consider (or forget) the man behind the curtain, Clint Ruin (aka Jim Foetus, aka Jim Thrivelli). If you provide the world with enough alter egos, there's bound to be something for anybody. Better yet, shuffle the ID cards, deal a hand, then sweep the deck (but not the stakes) off the table with a flourish and a sneer.

Nail: a catalog of musical and textual clichés aggressively recombined, turned on their heads, ground squirming into the sidewalk. What do you expect from an aesthetic philosophy that suggests "embracing negativism as a reaffirmation and a tool?" An iconoclastic fervor is evinced from the get-go, with "Theme From Pigdom Come," a neo-Romantic overture that points back to the turn of the century, crashing the table for ca
tastrophes to follow.

Catastrophe one, "The Throne of Agony" ("I rule my body from the throne of agony / My conscience and constitution's naggin' me"), kicks in (and out with the charming intercourse of, say, Tom Waits singing, say, the James Chance Songbook arranged by, get this, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, with the Mission Impossible theme thrown in at no extra cost). And catastrophe two ("Pigwill"), on the other hand, uses that most modern of musical clichés, industrial music or "junk rock," as Ann Landers recently called it, to reinforce some nasty lyrics about a mass murderer whose mission in life is to "destroy all girls." Eat this, liberal swine.

Such titles as "Enter the Extirminator," "Descent Into the Inferno," and "Private War" hint at Clint Ruin's general thematic drift. The lyrical terrain runs the gamut from warmed-over scatology (with emphasis on the "scat") ripped from the hollowed pages of Antonin Artaud and (if) rather by Céline, to dire little ditties that might've been writ by nearly everyone's favorite Timesavers gregking, Henry Rollins. "Best" couplet: "I am the son of man / I am the son of slam."

Hey, that wasn't very good, was it? That's because the sound was off. If on, you would have heard fantastic bombastic blocks of rhythmic pazz (imagine Trevor Horn's evil twin). Because something disturbing's going on here; somebody's rocking the roll boat with sadistic abandon (Jimmy Page isn't the only one who can claim, "I never hurt anybody who didn't want to be hurt"). Foetus is a mad baby, a bad baby rattling the bars on his crib. He's screaming for something to eat. Give him pabulum and there's gonna be trouble. Well?

—Richard Gehl