

SCRAPING

OFF THE WHEEL

foetus

The Strawberry Girl chats with Jim .

C: What do you do before a show to psyche yourself up?

J: Well, I don't really need to, it's enough for me to listen to Deathrape 2000 for 3 minutes. I usually spend the entire day worrying about it--just all the technical details, whether it'll be loud enough--so that usually gets it out of the way. I mean, I hate the time between the soundcheck and the gig, that's usually when I really feel tense, once I'm up there, I'm fine.

C: You use backing tracks. Why?

J: Since I've played every note on the tape, there's no real reason to recreate that live. It wouldn't be true to transpose it to a live group. A--because I wouldn't get anywhere near the fullness of sound I'd like, B--I don't know anyone I'd like to play with, C--it's a pain in the ass.

C: On the album Nail, you have, at the end, positive negativism?

J: It's a concept which, I think, permeates my work, basically making a statement which initially seems negative, but may have a positive outcome. Just embracing negativism. What I say may be negative but there may be positive outcome, both in the fact that someone may be able to identify with it, I don't know if people can or not, and it's positive if you can have a feeling articulated, and for me it's another positive outcome. At the moment, I think the new direction I want to take is negative negativism.

C: What would that be?

J: Just pure negativeness.

C: To offend people?

J: Everything--That's kind of how I feel. I don't know how it'll come about, whether it'll come about. No, Positive Negativism--That's what I embrace.

C: What are you going to do in the future?

J: At the moment, I'm working on an LP with Roli Mosimann, which is going to come out under the name Wise Blood and called Dish. It's 3/4 completed, it's going to have six or seven songs. I've got a 12" coming out in April by Scraping Foetus Off the wheel, the two songs on that are "Ramrod" and "Boxhead". And later this year, a 12" by the Foetus All Nude Review.

C: How do you feel about the movement to censor pop music?

J: I think it's totally ridiculous. But I don't even think about it because ever since I started putting out records I've been censored. It's no different now than it ever was 'cause if people see a group named "Scraping Foetus Off the Wheel", there are immediately going to be a certain amount of people horrified. So I don't see it any stronger now, it's just more in the public mind. That censorship exists is totally absurd, you have the right to say whatever you like. It's scary.

Most of the groups that have any amount of success have already had censorship imposed on them, either by themselves because they don't want to make waves, or by their record company. People generally do tow the party line.

They played a video of mine on MTV and they wouldn't even say SF OTW. They said, "This is Clint Ruin, who works under many different names." The same thing happened when they reviewed Hole in the New York Times. They wouldn't say SFOTW--they said this is an LP by Jim Thurwell. I mean, what's the use? They may as well not have printed it. When I tried to place ads in the music papers for Hole when that came out, they refused the ads--NME and Sounds. All along the way I've put up with a lot of censorship. When Stevo initially signed me and I recorded Hole and a couple of 12"s, trying to license to a major label and every label was too horrified by the name. They like the music, but they couldn't handle the name.

C: What made you use 'Foetus' in the name?

J: It just came to me--there wasn't any great grand philosophy behind it, apart from the fact it was a name that hadn't been exploited yet--there are a lot of names around. But it's pretty much the lowest common denominator. Everyone has been one and it's a very volatile subject, very touchy. If you juxtapose it with other words, people get totally horrified.

C: How does your role differ when you produce other people vs. doing your own projects?

J: When I'm doing my own stuff I'm calling all the shots, and I'm playing every instrument, so it's not like I have to put up any facade of democracy because I'm the only person that I'm dealing with. Whereas if I'm working with a group I'm pretty pushy in terms of getting my idea across of how the sound should be. I'm adamant about my ideas, I've been known to throw people out of the studio.



foetus

C: Coil--Tainted Love--How did you get involved?

J: I knew the guys anyway--mainly Jeff (John Balance) had asked me and I was interested in doing it. Coil originally was going to be a one-off project which was just me and him. We were going to do a performance at this filmmakers co-op in London, but we wanted to do it totally anonymously, but as the day crept forward, one of the newspapers got hold of it and announced that it would be happening. So we decided not to do it because it wasn't supposed to have any focus on it whatsoever.

Then Coil did a couple of performances which were sleazy and when they got around to recording, they asked me to produce it. They also asked me to work on their next LP but we couldn't get our schedules to coincide so hopefully I'll be doing some work with them over the summer.

C: What new bands are you interested in/would like to produce?

J: Shockheaded Peter's, I'd like to do some work with, they're an English group featuring Tom Blake--they're pretty noisy, guitar oriented. They asked me to do a single with them, which I would have liked to have done, but I wasn't there. Hopefully I'll be able to work with them in the future.

I want to work further with Coil. Apart from that, it's a secret.

C: What bands have influence you?

J: I'm too close to my own work to pinpoint influences. They're from pretty disparate sources, from every piece of culture that I take. Sometimes I might use a musical genre as a springboard, maybe a genre that I know nothing about, gleaming from the most superficial knowledge of, say surf music, which I know nothing about, which I hate, and don't really listen to, reproducing things on really a half-heard level. I don't think I'm more influenced by forms of music than I am from TV. If you asked me that in ten years about stuff that I'm doing now, I'd probably have a better idea about the influences on my first or second LP, which weren't apparent any more, which were I guess the Residents, John Cage, but transposed to a 'Foetal' point of view.

C: Do you think you're a sex symbol?

J: No, I don't see myself as any sort of symbol. I try not to play the image of a personality to the point where I don't like having my picture taken, I prefer to stay slightly more anonymous, make the records do the talking.

C: Do you like live vs. in the studio?

J: For me, the main thing is being in the studio, that's where I make all the creative decisions, although I don't stop until the record is out. Live, I don't have the same worries about every minute detail, like about whether the beat is in time or whether this guitar is loud enough or so on, because I've already made these decisions. I've got an opportunity to present what I say on a one-to-one level, so it's a totally different process. I like them both.

C: What's your ultimate goal/purpose right now?

J: DEATH. I don't have goals. I don't consider myself ambitious. There are a lot of things I want to do, a lot of music I want to record. I don't have any grand plan, I just want to keep rocking at this point.

NEW . YORK . SCENE cont.

cess is something as simple as a total stranger coming up to you on the street or after a show and saying "thanks" or "Hey, I really enjoy your music". (Those should have been CORN-Y chips in the opening seg--ED.) Scott's first and foremost love is playing live; "Therefore," he says, "nothing can replace the feeling one gets when performing. That's success to me". Finally, Marcelo's feelings about success seem to distance themselves a bit while still holding to the view of the others. He says, "Success in its most practical sense is longevity. It isn't numbers on a chart or plaques on a wall, but a feeling of enjoyment and accomplishment even

if it has meaning to a few people. Having recently finished recording and mixing a new E.P., the band may soon be feeling success in many different ways. They have also been approached to have one of their songs placed on a European compilation consisting of American bands, so things can't be all bad. If nothing else, they can just keep quoting the words of Richie Havens after an outdoor show they did last summer..."I thought good music was dead until I heard these guys". (Suite 1602; 360 East 72nd St; NY, NY 10021)

-Addison Hayes

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