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*"You tell the truth, you go to the guillotine,
You lose your head but your conscience is clean.*

*Don't buy into no-one else's dream
Say what you mean and say it mean"*

Foetus All Nude Revue - 'Ramrod'

YOU DON'T KNOW YOU'RE BORN

Try as you may to categorise the freakish and frequently fantastic outpourings of Jim G 'Foetus' Thirlwell (aka Clint Ruin, Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel, You've Got Foetus On Your Breath, Foetus Interruptus, Foetus Corruptus In Excelcis Deluxe, Phillip And His Foetus Vibrations etc, etc), you can't help but trip over yourself in an ungainly fashion in the attempt. Foetus, nebulous and enigmatic entity that it is, stands alone, testimony to one demonically driven mind and a whole lifetime of disparate influences that have crossed its wayward path. Foetusworld™ is a sonic landscape where you're just as likely to think of Sondheim as you are of Iggy, Tom & Jerry as Frederick Nietzsche, The Glitter Band as Einstürzende Neubaten, a sweet slug of whiskey as a smack in the face. But at the epi-

He may have been categorised as an 'industrial pioneer', but that doesn't begin to describe the weird and tangled world of Foetus, aka Jim Thirlwell, a world where pulp fiction, B-movie madness, copulating tyrants and a hefty dose of nihilism collide. Jim Martin

talked to the great man himself, about his new album, 'Flow', near-death experiences, and how the apocalypse provokes a strange case of *déjà vu*.

a womb with a view

centre of the aural Frankenstein's-monster figure Thirlwell has painstakingly created over the last 20-odd years has always beaten a heart of pure, 100 per cent proof, badass rock'n'roll.

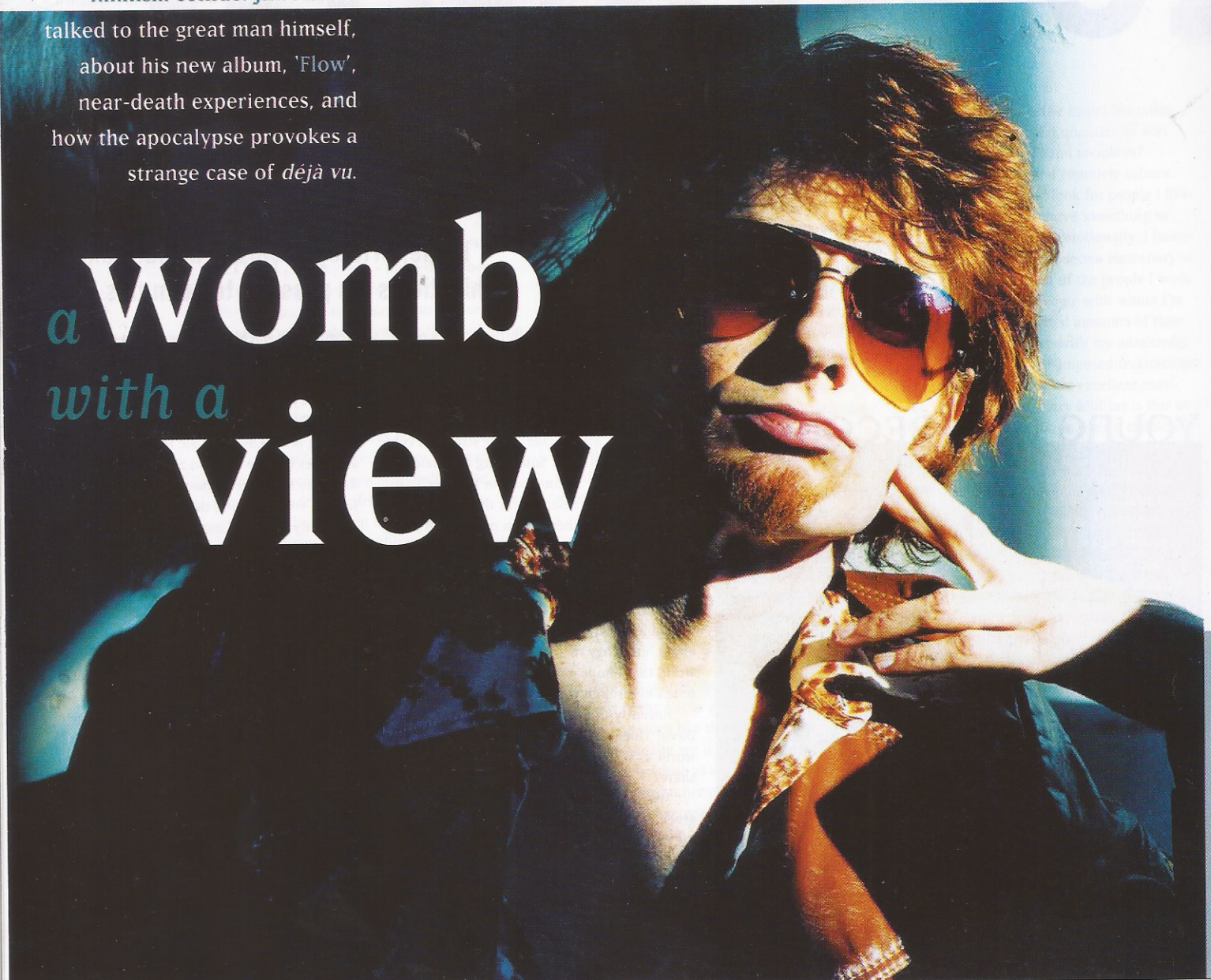
Commonest catch-all tag of all for Mr T over the years, of course, perhaps understandably what with the clanging cataclysms and anvil-clashing percussion of much of the Foetus realm, has been either 'industrial pioneer', or even on occasion, 'godfather of industrial', with his work frequently ending up shuffled into the same category as the likes of Ministry and NIN. How does the man himself fell about this?

"Well, yeah. I've been lumped in with a lot of weird people over the years," ponders Jim across the transatlantic phone-line, "but the fact is that I do straddle a lot of different things. You could put me in with electronic, you could put me in with metal, you could consider me a contemporary of either Nick Cave, or Kid 606, or Rob Zombie or something like that. I always thought Industrial was a record label that was started by Throbbing Gristle, and when you look at what was considered that and put into that term from the 80's, and then you look at what it's become post-

CAESARIAN DISSECTIONS

- THE TOP FIVE FOETUS REMIXES

- 1 **Prong**
'Prove You Wrong'
(Dizbuster/Xanax mixes)
- 2 **Nine Inch Nails**
'Wish' (inc. track, 'Fist Fuck')
- 3 **Front 242**
'Religion' ('Bitch Slapper' and 'Deep Throat' mixes)
- 4 **Cranes**
'Clear' (Ultra Fast Slim mix)
- 5 **Fight**
'Nailed To The Gun' (hell yeah!)



"I was trying to make these end-of-time statements of finality, but you can't keep coming back and saying 'AND ANOTHER THING...', 'AND IN THE LAST ONE I DIDN'T SAY THIS...', 'AND THEN YOU WILL GO TO HELL', and..."

- Jim Thirlwell books his season ticket for the apocalypse

Wax Trax, kinda, dance music with a fuzzbox, its really meaningless. What I've always tried to do is transcend genres, cross-pollinate genres, and invent new things out of that. But that in itself is not the pure intention anyway, it's not like I have to invent a new kind of music every time I turn around."

THE EMBRYONIC MAN

It all began back in 1978, when the teenage Thirlwell moved to London from his native Australia.

"I think I felt culturally isolated, just because of geography. I had vague feelings of what I wanted to do, I didn't know exactly what, but I kind of wanted to go to the other side of the world to do it, to be unhindered with whatever had happened hitherto in my life, which I'm still trying to figure out."

Before he knew it, he was out at gigs by bands like Gang Of Four, Wire and Cabaret Voltaire every night, scraping by on a day job at the Virgin store on Oxford St, and neighbour of fellow legends like David Tibet and Genesis P Orridge, even going as far as to arrange a record-signing of the aforementioned Gristle's 'Heathen Earth' at his workplace.

Somewhere in the middle of this, a frightening amount of quite unprecedented sonic mayhem was also produced, including his first, rough but rewarding two full-length efforts, 'Deaf' (1981) and 'Ache' (1982) on a shoestring budget, before the financial backing of Stevo's Some Bizarre label led him to bigger and better things, namely the remarkable, surrealistic panoramas of upbeat abjection that formed the 'Hole' (1984) and 'Nail' (1985) albums. These were regions where you wouldn't bat an eyelid at being confronted by the onset of WWII, recast as a love-story twixt Hitler and Stalin gone wrong ('I'll Meet You In Poland, Baby') or

a cartoonish, hi-octane romp about the Manson family ('DI-1-9062') long before the likes of Messrs Manson and Warner had helped fling this kind of dalliance into the 'tiresome cliché' bracket. That these albums, along with a brace of killer singles that mainly wound up on 1990's 'Sink' compilation, marked Thirlwell's most successful work yet, alas, seemed to backfire, although with some nicely vitriolic results.

"That was certainly the most high-profile stuff, but I mean, by the time 'Thaw' came out in 1988, I mean, that was such a hate-filled album. I think that was due to frustration. It's interesting when the frustration of business wrangling affects your art. I mean, maybe it's all Andy Warhol's fault, but the artist has the businessman, the promoter, the PR person, the fuckin' janitor to deal with, and that was a source of the identity of 'Thaw.'"

PREGNANT PAUSE

With Thirlwell now ensconced in New York ("There were things I liked about London, but at the same time there are things that are just incredibly inconvenient"), the years following 'Thaw' (his first Big Apple album) were spent on a variety of side-projects along with a whole plethora of remix work (see sidebars). His next full-length, 'Gash', which emerged in 1995, marked not only another ill-fated tango with 'the man' (in this case an ill-fated union with Columbia records) but the point where the full-on highway-to-hell alter-ego that his Foetus guise had always represented very nearly took him over, with potentially catastrophic results.

"'Gash' had reached its conclusion, the conclusion of what Foetus had been trying to do, what I'd been trying to do with Foetus," Jim explains, "which was, I was putting out these albums, if you follow the course of 'Hole', 'Nail', 'Thaw', and 'Gash' where each one I'm trying to make these end-of-time statements of finality, like, this is the last thing you listen to before they drop the big one, and y'know, before you kill your parents and kill yourself. And when you're making these kind of statements, you can't keep coming back and saying 'AND ANOTHER THING...', 'AND IN THE LAST ONE I DIDN'T SAY THIS...', 'AND THEN YOU WILL GO TO HELL', and..." he laughs. "But what happened with 'Gash', and the attendant touring, it was almost like the 'Picture Of Dorian Gray' in reverse, where I was hiding... the records being the portrait, performed in the fourth person, and the portrait was starting to come back and haunt me and manifest themselves physically in me, and my life, to the point where it was life-threatening."

What, literally?

"Yes, literally, like y'know, the whole self-destruction thing had gotten to the point where my life was unmanageable, my life was out of control, and I couldn't do anything. And I was destroying myself. And at that point, I had been



living my life like I wanted to be dead at 30, and I wasn't making any provisions and stuff like that, and when it came down to it - and I was in London when it happened - nothing was working for me anymore, and I could smell death pouring off my skin, and at that point, if you've been intending to be dead at 30, all of a sudden it looks like its gonna be a reality, and you kinda go, 'Er, maybe I changed my mind...'"

TO THE PLACENTA

Thus, to conclude, back to the present day, and the 'Gash' tour debacle goes some way to answering the question many must be asking

"If you've been intending to be dead at 30, all of a sudden it looks like its gonna be a reality, and you kinda go, 'Er, maybe I changed my mind...'"
- Jim Thirlwell realises it's better to blow out the candle than to snuff it

as they revel in the new Foetus opus, 'Flow', which is, as Emma Bunton recently put it, What Took You So Long?

"Yeah well, sometimes life gets in the way, comes up and bites you on the ass, and there's nothing you can do about that," Jim notes.

Still, with an infectious energy to it as well as a somewhat more personal, less world-domination-obsessed feel, 'Flow' marks the beginnings of a whole new chapter in the Foetus saga.

"I dunno if I would say mellowing with age," notes Jim on his new direction. "I would probably say maturing, but maturing from a five-year-old to a six-year-old. I think that my new stuff has definitely got more of a sophistication to it, but I still feel like there's so much more that I wanna do. There's so much further that Foetus can go."

Indeed, 'Flow' marks a definite path in a direction which may prove promising: that of the Broadway musical.

"When I was mixing 'Flow', I was envisaging it as a Broadway musical, because the characters, they enter, they tell their story, and they go off, then there's the next part of the tableaux is created, and it seems to be coming from disparate places, but after a while it starts to make sense in a 'Pulp Fiction' style."

So we might see 'Foetalmania! -The Musical' yet?

"I think the stuff on 'Nail' could totally be staged as a rock opera. If someone gave me, like, a million dollars, I would totally do it," Jim enthuses, "with, like, helicopters descending from the ceiling, and bombs going off and the seats of the audience would be electrified, who knows, like a Universal Studios theme park ride."

Hey, brother, can you spare a million bucks? ☺

FALLOPIAN TUNES

The other ectopic enterprises of JG Thirlwell at present

STEROID MAXIMUS:

Jim-boy's obsession with deranged and sinister instrumental global cartoon music taken to its logical conclusion. Two disquieting albums in the early 90's, and another on the way.

DJ OTEFSU:

"That's something I do around town y'know. I'm a selecta. It's not mixology. It's kind of like life stops at 1975. What it's plumbing now is a lot of obscure soundtrack stuff. Lately I've been digging up some stuff from the late 60's, like whatever has a chase scene or a party scene usually has something good on it, like the movie maybe has Bob Hope or Dick Van Dyke in it, or y'know it delves a lot into the spy/crime world and like go-go music and sorta fake ethnic stuff. I really like the fake ethnic stuff. For some reason it's got this weird take on it."

MANOREXIA:

"It started life conceptually almost as an ambient album and developed a life of itself way beyond that. Some people refer to it as my classical album. I wanted to get something that had a real spatial quality to it, and that came out spontaneously and talked to me what I really wanted to hear, which was pretty chilling. I think it's also a reaction to spending about a year putting out feelers in the music business just trying to get a new structure and business deal, and going just like 'fuck this shit, man!' I'm gonna do something that I just press up myself and distribute to people who really want it, through the website." (www.foetus.org)