A LANKY BOY IN GREEN VELVET
pants smoked the tires on his spray-painted Kawahondazukihama outside on
the sidewalk, drowning out Industrial Dance Night for a
moment at the shit-bag decafab bar
next door to my apartment. The
house electronics were juddering
with Thaw by Foetus Interruptus.
Two greasy goth slummers and a
drunk hairdresser holding a pool
cue were mouthing along to Jim
Thirlwell, choking out the verse to
"A Prayer for My Death": “The
strain is showing as the veins pop
outta the side of the head / They
burst, bloodying the pristine driven
snow / Dribbling in burning
tributaries all the way down to San
Antone.”
A deeply unsettling record, Jim
hung just enough irony in Thaw to
make it playale in public—the big
brass band fanfares and splatter-
film/Bugs Bunny soundtrack
dynamics. Even Chuck Eddy, and
Jimmy Johnson and Byron Coley at
Forced Exposure, just walked
around their kitchens, arms
Fuck,” when they got Thaw.
Thirlwell has, it seems, disgorged
a zillion records since he left
Melbourne in 1978: the ceaseless
shrieking of his many personas.
Clint Ruin. Wiseblood, with the
Swans’ Rob Moren. The
Foetuses: F Under Glass, F Uber
Frisco, Phillip and His F Vibrations,
Scraping F Off the Wheel, You’ve
Got F on Your Breath, F All Nude
Revue, F Interruptus. Film scores
for Richard Kern and others. Scores
for live performances and
recordings with longtime paramour
Lydia Lunch and just about any
other Gothamite you can think of.
Lots of it you can take with six
fingers of Sauza, and watch Jim’s
devilish visage seep out in a plasma,
one enormous smirk. But the liquid
tissue that makes them all kin, that
bears the Thirlwell imprimatur, is
the music’s manifestation of
psychotic rage.
The older he gets, the more
readily Jim shreds those caricatures,
those accents, those swaggering
personas, to bare himself. And there
I sit in that idiotic goth bar,
wracked by a terrible sense of
"finality." And there you sit in your
car, caught in the glare of this man’s
commitment to truth. To pathology. To . . . hatred.
No recording can touch what a
man can say with his eyes. Which is
why I bring all this up in the first
place: Foetus live. The late-1990
Foetus appearance at San Francisco’s Club DNA was the
single most satisfying, disturbing
show I saw all last year. Worse than
watching Jacob’s Ladder from the
front row on fungal hallucinogens,
which I’ll address at another time.
The enormity of his vision was with
him, the human frustration, thrust
like a prow through the leading
wave of his own kind of movie
soundtrack. His cover of Alex
Harvey’s “Faith Healer” was
sublime in its aggression.
Unmatchable. Jim hunched down at
the front of the stage, his eyes
turned back inside his head, the
gaze sweeping by slowly as his
howling faded.
At his best, Thirlwell fucks with
your ability to spectate. His psychic
-compositions have
accomplished a feat almost
unknown in the age of song/video
format: They cough up more arbor,
more confrontation, more tears,
and more pure hysteria from his
own person than from what lays as
potential among the multiple
instruments in his recordings, or
even in a video of that same
performance. The sense of
"finality" in his music ain’t a product of a bad
day in the monstrous warehouse

So wake up. By DEAN KUIPERS.

which didn’t fall under any of the
previously known Foetus monikers,
featured guitarist Norman
Westberg (Swans), bassist Allys
Kiys (Swans), drummer Vinny
Corso, violinist Hahn Rowe
(Bracca, Hugo Large), and
keyboard/guitarist Dave Ouimet.
Jim himself admits "the material
wasn’t composed to be played live."
I’ve known Jim for a few years,
and I suspect that he can’t tolerate
so much time spent clawing closer
dearer to oblivion and thus
backs off almost habitually, looking
for relief in collaborations and
stints as producer. His neurotic
"ensoucning" in his home studio
is telling. Who can slow this man?
Slatec for 1991 release are an LP
and two mini-LPs under the name
Gondwanaland, a series of
 collaborations with Raymond
Watts (PIG), Away (Voivod), Mark
Cunningham (Mars, Don King),
Lucy Hamilton, Don Fleming
(B.A.L.L.L.), Rowe, Mosimann, and
others. A new Wiseblood LP A
Clint Ruin-Lydia Lunch remake of
Blue Oyster Cult’s “Don’t Fear the
Reaper.” He’s committed as well to
producing NYC bands The Unsane,
Swans, and White Zombie.
And then there’s the next Foetus
project, where the cycle of
pathology begins anew. Jim either
jacks it into his deck, or it consumes
him. The hound of hell chases his
tail. And bites us in the process.