

A YEAR OF METAL BOYS AND THE NOISE OF ART

THE ONLY sense in which the parallel developments of Einstürzende Neubauten, Test Dept and SPK constituted a 'movement' was in the fact that they were *moving* when so much else appeared static.

So let us welcome the few who've had the nerve to stand up and scream, in their many and various ways, of '83. It may not, by conventional terms, be *music* but who cares – music was getting boring anyway. It may be impossible to 'just listen' to these sounds, but they open the way to pleasures less passive.

The first racket to be stirred up was by one man holocaust You've Got Foetus On Your Breath. 'Ache', the second LP by Jim Foetus aka Clint Ruin aka Foetus Over Frisco aka Scraping Foetus Off The Wheels, is a modern classic whose significance grows ever greater. Foetus is an irritable creature who whips up witty queasy quips into a percussive meg-million mania. An immaculate presumptive, he will go far (he's already gone to America and that's quite a long way).

January also saw Neubauten on the cover of the *NME*. March was nothing, but in that month a couple of thousand of us saw the British debut of Einstürzende Neubauten. Playing in support to one of The Birthday Party's last lurches, they revealed a sound spiritually close to The Party's in its outward destruction and inward reluctant sensitivity. And the roots of Neubauten's desperation were painfully obvious on their conversely beautiful *Some Bizzare* LP.

From the time of that debut, the year of noise was set. Cabaret Voltaire were to see the effects on their British tour later in the year as they were pestered in every Northern city by bunches of kids brandishing metal and demanding support slots. Meanwhile Test Dept were emerging ever more strongly as a vague British parallel to Neubauten's shimmering shocks.

Where Neubauten had sprung from the belated translated passion of punk, however, Test Dept started with frustration at the pettiness of a Collapsing Great Britain. Fatality was less ingrained in their culture, theirs was literally a found sound as they began by simply *hitting things* and naturally developed timbre, emotion and a

strong sense of the visual.

Their much delayed, digitally recorded single should hopefully have surprised a few people by the time you read this.

Of course there were the cash-ins, the ones we don't talk about (Thompson Twins – Eeeek!) and the ones we have to: SPK. 'Metal Dance', their contribution to the year was a trite attempt at crossover, infinitely less spontaneous, honest and uplifting than the metal garnished synth-pop terrain marked out by Depeche Mode on the 'Construction Time Again' LP. Thankfully it flopped, which may force them to rethink and release the excellent 'Sandstorm Method'.

Finally The Art Of Noise used metal as more a motif of modernism than a basis of sound – but nothing wrong with that, especially as they swung such a heavy beat on the 'Into Battle' 12". They also get the credit for the slogan of '83: "Noise is Golden – Silence is a Dead Giveaway".

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'83 THE BIG WIND-UP

TEST DEPT. PIC BY ANDREW CATLIN