

In 1980, Jim Thirwell, noting the "sheer lack of anything worthwhile" in the popular music world, formed Self Immolation Records as a sounding board for his alter ego, Clint Ruin. Few could have been prepared for the onslaught of violent finesse and dada dogma that's followed since, released under the auspices of Thirwell's/ Ruin's "Foetus" family.

It's not the kind of stuff found on sale at K-Mart, so it may have slipped by most people, though Ruin's recent 30-minute *Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel* show at the Rat sold out before ten PM. But the cognoscenti have been treated to a manic, mongrel line of Foetus variations. The first six efforts—including records by Foetus Under Glass and You've Got Foetus on Your Breath—are out of print. Later releases have included dementia from Foetus Uber Frisco, Foetus In Your Bed and other gut churning incarnations of the Ruin clan (sorry—can't name your next band Foetus on the Beach—already taken).

Ruin and his Foetuses operate under several basic psychological and artistic concepts, including aesthetic terrorism (surprise attacks on traditions) and positive negativism (the opposite of escapism). While Ruin seems a bit self-promoting and somewhat arrogant about the purity of intent in his music, he claims he's neither elitist nor purposely obscure. Misinterpretations are, however, welcome since "they can be stimulating."

Ruin's creations take place in an otherworld cabaret where he's the one-man-band ringmaster. He could be called a mid-'80s equivalent to early '70s progressives like Faust or Henry Cow, but that would leave out the moments that sound like a hardcore band doing Vegas showtunes, or the London Symphony playing metallic dirges. His music is incredibly complex—and incredibly arranged—with blistering bookfuls of lyrics in each release. An example from

# SCRAPING FOETUS OFF THE WHEEL

*Clint Ruin explores aesthetic terrorism*

"Hole": *Forcin' symptoms of his own pleasure/a boy for you/a plague for me.* It's performance art for vinyl, since the images that Ruin's creations conjure are as vivid as the music itself. A convoluted assortment of ingredients at best, they all seem to make perfect sense when Ruin glues them together. Don't ask how, just believe.

As Ruin puts it, "*Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel* seeks the pre-apocalypse age to embrace it...exploring the juxtaposition of diverse musical forms, instruments and sound with percussive power and black humor, drawing inspiration from the

despair, disease and desperation inherent in society..."

The latest *Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel* LP, *Nail*, carries on this grand tradition by making the best of a preoccupation with pigs, blood, and fear, turning it into one of the most darkly ingenious records you'll ever have the opportunity to hear. Also keep a bulging eye out for material from Wiseblood, Ruin's project with Swans bassist and German industrial music heavy, Roli Mosimann.

—Tristram Lozaw

*Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel* look at the bright side of the pre-apocalypse age. Photo by Phil In Phlash.

