

## Foetus

*Gash*

*Null* EP

(Columbia)

So who is this guy careening from synth angst ("Mortgage") to lounge lizard ("Slung"), deep Mideast ("Hammer Falls") to "Iron Man" riff worship ("Steal Your Life Away"), for whom soundtracks and samples, swing bands and synths, are all grist for the global mill? J.G. Thirlwell, a.k.a. Foetus, who's been making his glorious brand of noise since before Trent could play keyboards. Foetus' latest are a full-length album entitled *Gash* plus a companion EP called *Null*. *Gash* illustrates why Foetus is rightly lauded as a forefather of all that is Ministry/NIN/etc.. For all his misanthropy, bitterness and general abhorrence, Foetus

has a fine-tuned sense of humor, and he lets it slash at will. His lyrics would entail a story of their own. Suffice to say the usual incantations of death, depression, and society gone bad (in a world gone wrong) are presented with more than their usual share of humor and savoir-faire.

Foetus is the original and still the best, crashing genres into his unique vision. Witness "Mighty Whity" (sic), a speed sample stomp with orchestral flourishes, a C&W inflected chorus and a big band bridge. Speed, twang and swing are all elements which he revisits for further exploration: "Friend or Foe" hones in on the C&W vibe with foot-stompin' rhythm, Tom Waits-esque vocals and wailing harmonica woven throughout. "Take It Outside Godboy" starts with what appears to be serious soundtrack music. As your senses are lulled and you begin to descend, unclenching from the previous pummeling, Foetus rears up, in your face again. "They Are Not So True" is my fave cut: elegant, dignified, thick keyboards, crazed strings and trademark Foetus distorto-vocals. "Verklemmt," the first single, is also treated to its own EP: *Null*, featuring 3 remixes. Also on the EP are 3 non-album tracks, each of which can stand on their own and none of which made the album for a reason. *Null* is total crank-with-abandon fun, but *Gash* is more vital. For those who remember their first Foetus in the early '80s, spread 'em wide and say "welcome back." For those new to the fold, listen and learn.

**Paul Resta**